

Crawley Towns Fund Programme / Towns Fund Implementation Plan

1. Background to the Towns Fund

- 1.1 Crawley is one of 101 towns across England to have been selected by the government to benefit from up to £25 million each from the Towns Fund budget of £3.6 billion. Each town is to establish a local Town Deal Board.
- 1.2 80% of these towns are in the north and midlands. Crawley is just one of 4 towns in south east England to have been selected (the others being Margate, Hastings, Newhaven). For information, fellow post war “new towns” Harlow, Stevenage and Milton Keynes have also been selected.
- 1.3 Government will provide funds once “Town Deals”: are agreed by it with Town Deal Boards, based on Town Investment Plans - focused on priority themes:
- **Urban regeneration, planning and land use:** ensuring towns are thriving places for people to live and work – physical infrastructure schemes which: increase density in town centres; strengthen local economic assets including cultural assets; site acquisition / remediation / preparation / regeneration; making full use of planning tools to bring strategic direction and change.
 - **Skills and enterprise infrastructure:** driving private sector investment and ensuring towns have space to support skills and small business development.
 - **Connectivity:** developing local transport schemes that complement regional and national networks, as well as enabling improved digital connectivity.

2. Town Deal Boards

- 2.1 Town Deal Boards are the local governance expected by the government required to oversee the development and agreement with it of a Town Investment Plan and associated project scheme funding interventions.
- 2.2 Town Deal Boards must comprise representatives of local stakeholders working with the Lead Council, in this case Crawley Borough Council.
- 2.3 Local stakeholders should include: West Sussex County Council; the local MP; local businesses / investors; Local Enterprise Partnership; Community representatives. The Board may also comprise representatives of local Business Improvement Districts, Job Centre Plus and “anchor institutions” like Crawley College and business community representatives.

3. Town Investment Plans

- 3.1 The Town Investment Plans should include: a vision statement of how Crawley “could look in 30 years’ time”; headline outcomes / targets for 2030; the main challenges, needs, opportunities; a comprehensive map of current investments; priority project proposals and their rationale; the community engagement process and business case development process.
- 3.2 The Town Investment Plans are also required to:
- Set out investment priorities that drive economic growth or mitigate down turn;

- Complement pre-existing strategies including the Local Industrial Strategy;
- Align to government “clean growth” objectives;
- Offer good value for money;
- Avoid conflict with the UK’s legal commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050”.

4. Timeline

- 4.1 In their Towns Fund prospectus the government have stated that they require Town Investment Plans to have been drawn up “by the end of the summer” – they consider this process as “stage one” followed by sign off of the Town Investment Plans (TIPs) through Town Deals. Stage 2 is the formulation of individual project business cases anticipated to take place from the autumn. However this timeline is now clearly disrupted by the corona virus crisis.

5. Pump Priming Funds – Budget

- 5.1 The government has provided Crawley BC with £173,000 of funds to support the development of the Town Investment Plan and the development of project business cases through technical support.
- 5.2 The government anticipates this funding to be used for:
- Convening the Town Deal Board;
 - Running business / wider community engagement events
 - Developing the Town Investment Plan
 - Providing technical expertise for business case development
- 5.3 It is proposed that this Town Deal budget is spent on the budget headings as set out in Appendix A to this report.
- 5.4 The primary output expected by government is to produce the Crawley Town Investment Plan so it follows that funds should be ring fenced to commission external expertise to formulate the Plan - hence the allocation in Appendix A.
- 5.5 There is also a strong emphasis in the government prospectus on promoting the Towns Fund to stakeholders, engaging the local community and businesses and running business / community engagement events. It is therefore proposed that a distinct budget line is allocated for this purpose.
- 5.6 There will be a significant amount of “human resource” required to service the Town Deal Board and for liaison work with stakeholder groups and the community in addition to working with the external expertise bringing together the Town Investment Plan. Furthermore, the government has made it clear that they expect funds to be devoted to providing technical expertise for scheme business case development. It is therefore proposed that funds are allocated to support the recruitment of two specific Towns Fund roles – a Programme Manager and Programme Officer for a period of 18 months, in order to resource adequately these functions and tasks.

6. Background Papers

Towns Fund Prospectus:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843843/20191031_Towns_Fund_prospectus.pdf