

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2 March 2022

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Exemption applied: None

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Team Devon's Recovery Group (Devon Place Board) Coastal and Market Towns Urban Renewal Phase 2

Report summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform members about a project that is being progressed by Devon County Council that will benefit both Axminster and Seaton.

Devon County Council's Team Devon Recovery Group (Devon Place Board) has commenced work on a **Coastal and Market towns project**. This work is aimed at tackling the long-term and immediate decline in some of Devon's underperforming towns. It has identified 8 towns that will form part of a pilot project for future investment and both Axminster and Seaton are included within these. Following a study undertaken last year by consultants, DCC are now ready to commence phase 2 of this project. This will involve working with the towns to prepare a Regeneration Strategy and prepare business cases for project interventions. It will also identify some quick win projects and will assist in the creation of a Project Group involving local stakeholders.

There is no funding requirement for the council to support the DCC work. The council will offer in-kind support through staff resources and will provide match funding through the use of the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) on the Axe Valley Feasibility project.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation

1. That Cabinet recommends that:
 - a) East Devon District Council accepts the offer of support to pursue Devon Place Board's Coastal and Market Towns Urban Renewal Phase 2 project for Axminster and Seaton as set out in paragraph 1 below.
 - b) A future report will set out a recommendation for the format of the Project Groups for Seaton and Axminster and their governance structure, following the advice from the consultants appointed by DCC to lead on the Devon Place Board Urban Renewal Phase 2 project.
 - c) East Devon District Council offers a level of match funding to the Devon Place Board contribution that includes in-kind contribution (officer resource), and the use of the WBF for the Stage 1 feasibility work on Axe Valley reported on separately.

Reason for recommendation:

To take up the offer to work with Devon Place Board to pursue the Coastal and Market Towns Urban Renewal Phase 2 project for Axminster and Seaton.

To inform members of the use of the WBF as match funding from this council for the Devon Place Board project.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Appendix 1 - [Urban Renewal in Devon's Coastal and Market Towns](#)

Link to Council Plan

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full**1. Devon Place Board – Coastal and Market Towns Project**

1.1. DCC commissioned consultant, Hardisty Jones, to prepare a report on the potential for addressing the challenges faced by the coastal and market towns identified as being most in need of DCC's assistance and deliver a plan to allow those towns to play a part in the overall recovery of the region. The report was issued last December and is linked as Appendix 1.

1.2. This work will seek to identify solutions to the challenges faced by the under-performing towns in Devon, to tackle long-term and immediate decline, building on opportunities for urban renewal. The study looked at the places that have been hardest hit, but specifically

those with the greatest opportunities for change – covering both the types of opportunity and the process by which change is delivered. The aim is to ensure that these towns have a vision and action plan in place and potential projects identified that can be included in bids for future funding programmes announced by government.

- 1.3. The report recommends 8 towns as pilot projects for future investment. These towns have been selected according to their socio – economic needs based on index of multiple deprivation. Axminster is within the priority group of 4 towns. Seaton is within the second group of 4.
- 1.4. Axminster was the focus of a case study for the report and in August this year was visited by DCC and the report authors along with 2 other regeneration experts for a town tour and workshop with a number of councillors and local stakeholders. The consultants and experts were impressed by the enthusiasm of the attendees and recognised the constraints and opportunities that Axminster faces.
- 1.5. DCC are now ready to move to the next stage of the project and facilitate further work with the selected pilot towns. DCC has identified funding from the Covid Recovery Fund and will appoint one consultant for all 8 towns to undertake the following:
 1. Prepare a Regeneration Strategy for the towns in the priority group and an outline strategy for those in the second group.
 2. Undertake detailed business cases on projects identified in the Regeneration Strategy and an outline business case for those in the second group.
 3. Identify quick win projects.
 4. Support the towns in establishing a Project Group to oversee the delivery of the project.
- 1.6. DCC officers have now reported to their SMT detailing the report findings and recommending that both Axminster and Seaton are included within the 8 towns.
- 1.7. In discussion with DCC officers, we identified the crossover with the work that Avison Young have just commenced on the Axe Valley project (potential LUF bid) as reported on separately. Given that this work focusses on identifying potential projects and preparing feasibilities for both Axminster and Seaton, we recognise that there could be some duplication regarding preparation of Business cases, and will ensure that this is avoided.
- 1.8. The DCC project consultants will support the council in establishing Project Groups. This will be a group of local stakeholders who will be able to contribute their knowledge and skills to the project for the towns. An appropriate governance structure will need to be decided on. Following further advice from the consultants, a report to cabinet will come forward with a recommendation.
- 1.9. There is **no financial request to this council** for funds to support the project. The council's spend of WBF on the Axe Valley Feasibility project could be used as match funding to the DCC spend. There will also be an in-kind contribution from this council through officer time to support the creation of the Project Groups.

Financial implications:

There are no financial implication at this stage.

Legal implications:

Noting that a further report will be forthcoming to deal with governance arrangements, there are no specific legal implications arising from the content of this report.