

<b>15 November 2023</b>		<b>ITEM: 4</b>
<b>Extraordinary Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Tilbury and Grays Towns Fund Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park, Tilbury and St Chads - Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A	
<b>Report of:</b> Kevin Munnelly, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Kevin Munnelly, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Mark Bradbury, Director of Place.		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## Executive Summary

This report is provided to update Members on progress on the delivery of the Tilbury Town Fund (TTF) and Grays Town Fund (GTT) programmes since the confirmation of funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Homes & Communities (DLUHC) in March 2023.

### 1.0 Recommendation(s)

**That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

#### 1.1 Notes the proposed changes to the original programmes and the progress on delivering the Tilbury & Grays Towns Fund programmes.

### 2.0 Introduction and Background

#### Tilbury

#### 2.1 Tilbury Town Investment Plan (TIP) has been developed as part of a wider strategic plan to revitalise Tilbury. The Plan focuses on creating a new Heart for Tilbury through the provision of a consolidated and inclusive Community Hub, new Education Zone and Youth Centre to provide first class facilities to address long standing calls for support for Thurrock's residents, especially the younger population. The Station arrival experience and river frontage heritage

assets will also be emphasised through improved connectivity through new signage, infrastructure, cycle ways and a new jetty is planned to open up new ferry passenger options. The Tilbury Towns Fund Board has been awarded a grant of £22.8m.

### **Grays Town Centre**

- 2.2 Grays Town Investment Plan (TIP) has been developed as part of a wider strategic plan to realise the vision for Grays as an exciting, high-quality destination for communities to take pride, live, work, learn, shop and socialise. In essence, the Grays TIP aims to create a high quality cultural and recreational amenity that reconnects the Thames riverfront with the town centre. The Grays Towns Fund Board has been awarded a grant of £22.8m.

### **3.0 Programme Updates**

- 3.1 Details of the each of the Town Fund project programmes have been subject of Cabinet approval and previous reports to the PTR OS Committee.
- 3.2 Business case summaries were submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in August 2022 (Tilbury) and October 2022 (Grays). There has been a significant delay in the confirmation of the business cases due for the need for further reassurance and assessment work on governance by the DLUHC and the Commissioners. Final approval was granted in March 2023.
- 3.3 DLUHC released 5% of the respective funding allocations to allow Town Fund Boards to instruct the commencement of design work needed to bring forward the projects in both Town Fund Programmes. For most of the individual projects, design work has been developed up to RIBA Workstage 2/3 – (Outline Design/planning) and further design work is dependent upon project gateways being approved. This design work has then been used to inform the production of business cases, which have been needed to secure the approval of the remaining funds from DLUHC.
- 3.4 There has been significant cost price inflation since the submission of original Towns Fund applications for both Tilbury and Grays. The respective Town Boards have had to review the original programmes and where necessary make changes to ensure that projects can be delivered within the overall programme budget and not result in any financial liability falling to the Council as the Accountable Body.

### **Tilbury**

- 3.5 The Tilbury Towns Fund programme is making steady progress in delivery across a number of the projects, although it has suffered from lack of staff resources in recent months due to uncertainty over the long-term structure of the Department. A summary of the main changes and milestones is provided

below and a more detailed update of recent progress and future actions for the Tilbury Programme is set out in Appendix 1.

- Following a community resource audit the Board agreed that the original proposal to build a new community building and skills centre was not realistic given the amount of surplus community buildings in the area. Therefore, a decision was agreed by the Board to adopt a strategy of refurbishment of existing buildings, which would also allow the reallocation of funds to other projects experiencing cost pressures. Plans are advanced to refurbish both Brennan Road and 15a Civic Square for the new skills centre and community resource centre. Subject to the issuing of a lease on 15a Civic Square, the tender for the refurbishment work can commence before the end of the year.
- Planning Permission for the Thurrock Youth Zone has been approved by the Planning Committee subject to the signing of a S106 regarding the lease and traffic contribution. Work is progressing on agreeing the contractual and lease terms to allow for the development of the site and delivery of the new youth facility. It is anticipated that tendering for the main building contract will commence by April 2024 and work on site will follow the selection of a main contractor.
- The detailed design work on the new pontoon for additional passenger services at the Tilbury Landing Stage has been completed. A planning application will be submitted before the end of the year subject to the receipt of a transport assessment. Work on the implementation/grant agreement and potential lease is progressing with the Port of Tilbury Limited, who will be procuring the Pontoon and managing the delivery.
- Plans for the Connectivity project, improving links from the riverfront to the rail station and Civic Square, have been developed to RIBA Stage 2 (Outline Design). It is proposed that the Council's Highway Term Contractor, Henderson & Taylor, will complete the details design and following further public consultation will implement the scheme commencing April 2024.
- Design work has also commenced on the refurbishment of the public realm around Civic Square. The emerging design concepts are set out in Appendix 1 and these will be subject to public consultation before being passed over the Henderson & Taylor for implementation. It is proposed that the public realm improvement works will be phased to follow the completion of the Connectivity improvements.

### **Grays Town Centre**

- 3.6 Work on Grays project development has been delayed due to a need to substantially review the Programme in the light of the Best Value review of the wider Grays programme, including the proposed Underpass. The review found that projects, especially the Activity Centre and proposed new riverside

Leisure destination, were conceived in a different economic climate and assessed against a different appetite for risk, which is not sustainable going forward.

3.7 The Grays Town Fund Board is due to meet on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to consider and discuss a number of revised options. These are summarised below:

- **Grays Riverfront and Beach:** Reanimate the riverfront and increase the appeal of the waterfront. Transforming it into a welcoming destination with public amenities and an accessible beach; reconnecting the community with nature. The next stage development work to RIBA Stage 3 (Detailed Design and Planning) has commenced on this project as the longer-term regeneration of the riverfront is supported by all stakeholders.

- **Grays Beach Riverside Park & Kilverts Field:** A commercial review of the plans to create a new build Leisure Destination, such as a marquee restaurant, has concluded that this is not viable. It would require the Council to underwrite the project with no clear commercial return. This would not be approved by either the Council's Strategic Property Board or the Commissioners. It is proposed that one of the options previously discounted for a refurbishment of the existing Lightship Cafe is reconsidered by the Board. This would still build on the riverfront project, connecting existing open spaces and opening up views of the riverfront.

- **Riverfront Activities Centre:** Plans for the proposed Activity Centre have become confused and there is currently no coherent plan for how this proposed facility will be built, managed, or operated. If the current proposal were to be submitted to the Council's Strategic Property Board and Commissioners there is a very high possibility that they would be dismissed as unviable. This is because the current business case relies on the Council underwriting the lease and being liable for undisclosed future revenue requirements. This project would benefit from a root and branch review, which incorporates proposed changes to wider cultural offer in the town centre. Meaningful discussions/negotiations also need to continue with the adjacent Yacht Club on potential joint options.

3.8 As part of a wider economic development review is proposed to reassess proposals for cultural and leisure facilities within Grays Town Centre. This is to ensure that emerging proposals do not expose the Council to any ongoing unmitigated financial liabilities and to consider potential opportunities afforded by a refocussed Creative Estuary offer and the potential to integrate any revised Town Funds projects. Going forward the full scheme costs will need to be contained within the Grant allocation or through agreed match funding agreements. Projects will be subject to internal approval by the Council's

Capital Programme Board to ensure that there are no cost overruns that could result in any future financial liabilities to the Council.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the Tilbury and Grays Town Fund projects and progress made.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 The Tilbury and Grays Town Boards comprise business and council representatives, who have jointly developed proposals. Further consultation will be undertaken as individual proposals progress and as part of the planning process. Key decisions on spend and development proposals will need to be approved by the respective Towns Board, Cabinet and Commissioners.

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 Tilbury and Grays have been identified as a Growth Hubs where economic regeneration and housing growth are to be focussed in both the Thurrock Local Plan and Economic Growth Strategy. The Town Deal proposals are listed within one of the five economic growth 'priority projects' for the Council for 2021/22, to:

“deliver major regeneration and infrastructure projects contributing to growth, including the government-funded Towns Fund proposals”

- 6.2 The Refreshed Grays Town Centre Framework adopted by Cabinet in 2017 provides a more detailed context for regeneration activity in Grays. The Framework seeks to enhance the role of the riverfront, improving linkages between the Riverfront and the Town Centre. The Grays TIP also supports these aspirations as clear priorities for the funding.

- 6.3 The GTF supports the Council's Place priority of:

- roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and place

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**  
**Senior Financial Accountant**

It is noted the financial risk associated with the delivery of the proposed projects attaches to the Council (as the Accountable Body) and, consequently, must and will be managed by the Council as part of the capital programme. Current project expenditure is in line with budget allocations and will be subject to further gateway approval including Cabinet approval of implementation/funding agreements and associated leases.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**  
**Principal Lawyer Contracts & Procurement Team**

There are no new legal implications arising from this report.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**  
**Team Manager, Community Development & Equalities**

There are no direct implications arising specifically from this update report. Community Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as required throughout the decision making and planning processes.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

Not applicable.

## 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

## 9. Appendices to the report

None

## Report Author:

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