



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 5.5

## Market Towns Programme – Approval of Final Project Proposal (Funding Call 10 – March 2023)

To:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
Meeting Date:	22 March 2023
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson
Key Decision:	Yes
From:	Domenico Cirillo, Business Programmes and Business Board Manager
Forward Plan ref:	KD2023/081
Recommendations:	<p>The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Approve the final project proposal received under Market Towns Programme from Huntingdonshire District Council to the sum of £802,150 for the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives.</li><li>b) Consider the request received from Huntingdonshire District Council to extend the grant longstop completion date for the St Neots Masterplan (Phase 1) project from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.</li></ul>
Voting arrangements:	<p>A simple majority of all Members present and voting.</p> <p>To be carried, the vote must include the vote of the Mayor, or the Deputy Mayor when acting in place of the Mayor.</p>

# 1. Purpose

## 1.1 To seek Combined Authority Board approval on:

- Project proposal received from Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) to allocate £802,150 under the CPCA Market Towns Programme for the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives.
- Project change request received from HDC to extend the grant longstop completion date for the St Neots Masterplan (Phase 1) project and to allow sufficient time for completion of agreed interventions against the remaining CPCA capital funding of £285,000.

# 2. Background

- 2.1 The CPCA is committed to helping the region's market towns to thrive and is investing to ensure towns remain vibrant and thriving places. This commitment included the production of a Masterplan for each of the key market towns (based on new research and analysis required to deliver the bold growth ambitions) and their interventions hereby enshrine the importance of inclusive growth, in line with CPIER and LIS recommendations.
- 2.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority funding of £13.1m was allocated across the market towns, with district authority leads able to bid for capital funds for each town. Proposals are invited to support the mobilisation of each Masterplan and against activities which address the needs and those interventions identified as required to drive targeted growth and regeneration of each town in a post Covid-19 pandemic economy.
- 2.2 All project proposals are independently appraised where the strategic need, economic and commercial case is assessed against an agreed set of appraisal metrics. Appraised applications are scored based on programme criteria set and must achieve a minimum pass mark of 75% to be recommended for Combined Authority Board approval.

# 3. Funding Call 10 – March 2023

- 3.1 The following bid is recommended for Combined Authority Board approval. A copy of the independent Appraisal Report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. HDC have proposed to deliver a programme of activities across the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives which will deliver major improvements across the transport network, town centre environment, support for local businesses, in addition to supporting growth in the visitor-based economy.
- 3.2 CPCA grant funding of £802,150 is being requested to match an additional £120,000 of partner investment to deliver the following activity:

## **Huntingdon and St Ives Market Town Regeneration –**

- **Broadway (St Ives) Cycle Link Scheme** – highways-based improvement scheme delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council.
- **St Ives Community Bandstand** - community drive and funded initiative to provide a new venue for cultural events and activities.
- **Shop Front Grant Scheme** - direct grants (of between £5K and £10) towards improving

shop fronts in both Huntingdon and St Ives town centres.

- **Cromwell Museum Expansion** - major investment to ensure the Museum is fit for purpose and includes essential visitor facilities, e.g. washrooms etc.
- **Huntingdon BID Visitor Information** – new facility housed within the Commemoration Hall to provide information concerning the town centre to visitors in addition to providing a base for businesses to visit and liaise with BID staff.

3.2 This is the final bid under the CPCA Market Towns Programme and the £13.1m budget is now fully allocated and approved against a portfolio of 52 projects in total. Overall Programme completion is expected by March 2026.

## 4. Project Change Request

4.1 HDC have also submitted a project change request to extend the grant longstop completion date from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 for the St Neots Masterplan (Phase 1) project. The project change request is attached as Appendix 2 to the report. This is a legacy project that was awarded £609,655 of grant funding was awarded by CPCA to HDC in delivery of the St Neots Town Centre Masterplan and was a pilot for the Market Towns Programme. These funds were allocated to a wide range of projects including footfall cameras, marketing, and work towards a Business Improvements District (BID).

4.2 In July 2021, a previous project change request was approved by the CPCA to refocus the remaining £285,000 capital funding on alternative activities. This changed the focus of the project away from the development of a BID, which upon review was no longer considered viable in a post Covid-19 economy. Furthermore, the co-working space has not progressed due to the lack of suitable space and acceptable commercial terms for such a facility within the town centre.

4.3 Due to these factors, the project has been delayed with an underspend of £260,000 (not including £24,300 of spend on footfall cameras, which will be completed and claimed by March 2023). This change control request is being submitted to extend the grant longstop completion date to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The following project activity has been consulted by HDC with local groups including the St Neots Masterplan Steering Group:

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- **Public Art Programme** – competition to be managed by St Neots Town Council to design and deliver new public art installations, which are community involved/focused and can promote the culture and heritage of the town, thereby supporting the visitor economy. Funding: £50,000.
- **New Stage & Entertainment Area within the Market Square** - to support cultural events at this location, increase footfall and economic performance. Funded: £110,000.
- **Digital Information Service (Wayfinding)** – extension of an existing project being delivered in Ramsey, St Ives, and Huntingdon to also include St Neots. Scheme will provide digital information kiosks, linking to local business services, and physical wayfinding improvements. Funding: £50,000.
- **Co-Retail Scheme** - this will provide budding retailers and entrepreneurs with space within a commercial unit to sell and promote their products. This will generate revenue and support new business growth and retail vitality in the town centre from new and high-quality independent traders. Funding: £50,000.

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## Significant Implications

### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Financial approval is requested for £802,150 of remaining Programme budget (£422,275 for Huntingdon CX1601 and £379,875 for St Ives CX1600) and for £260,000 (for St Neots Masterplan Phase 1 CX8002) to be profiled into 2023-24.
- 5.2 All project payments will be subject to the conditions as set out in the assessment report being met, having a signed funding agreement in place, and the submission of evidence supported grant claims.

### 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Combined Authority maintains the legal agreements with project delivery bodies.

### 7. Environmental & Health Implications

- 7.1 None.

### 8. Other Significant Implications

- 8.1 The Market Towns Programme is a substantial commitment being made between the Combined Authority and the local areas, with scope for significant impacts on the growth of the local sub-economies. Successful delivery will have positive benefits to residents, community groups, and businesses and workers from across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

### 9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Independent Project Appraisal Report (MTP Funding Call 10 - March 2023).
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – HDC Project Change Request (2) - St Neots Masterplan (Phase 1) Project.

### 10. Background Papers

- 10.1 [CA Board July 2021 - 3.4 Market Towns Programme - Approval of Change Requests](#)