

EXECUTIVE 18th April 2024

Report Title	Levelling Up Fund Cultural Allocation for North Northamptonshire
Lead Member	Cllr Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council
Report Author	George Candler - Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive)

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	N/A
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?	Active, fulfilled lives

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Heads of Terms for the Cultural Fund Investment Plan Panel

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. North Northamptonshire Council has been provisionally awarded up to £5 million of capital funding as part of the Spring Budget, to support local culture projects. This report sets out a request for delegated powers to enable a panel of Executive Members and officers to consider projects to be shortlisted for inclusion in the Councils' Investment Plan submission for Government and secure the capital funding allocation, prior to a final decision being made by the Leader in consultation with the Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive) and Executive Director for Finance & Performance.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 North Northamptonshire Council has been provisionally awarded up to £5 million of capital funding as part of the Spring Budget, to support local culture projects in the area. This provisional funding ensures that all areas that have been previously prioritised for levelling up investment – which includes North

Northamptonshire – have benefitted from government investment through one of the Levelling Up Fund rounds.

- 2.2 To secure the funding, the Council must bring forward an Investment Plan that is focused on supporting cultural activity in the area. As part of this the Council will be asked to confirm that it has consulted with key local stakeholders, which must include the local MPs, before submitting the Investment Plan. An investment plan template has been provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Investment Plan must be submitted to Government by 10th May 2024.
- 2.3 This report outlines the process to engage with stakeholders and the local MPs and develop and submit the Investment Plan. It includes delegating authority to the Leader, in consultation with Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive) and Executive Director for Finance & Performance to agree the investment plan.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive
 - a) Accept the allocation of £5m of capital funding through the Levelling Up Fund and note the funding criteria;
 - b) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to establish and agree membership of a Councillor and Officer Panel to consider projects to be shortlisted for inclusion in the Councils' Investment Plan. The Panel to include the leaders of the recognised political groups of the council and two local heritage and culture sector representatives.
 - c) Delegate authority to the Leader in consultation with the Executive Director (Deputy Chief Executive) for Place and Economy) to approve and implement the Terms of Reference of the Panel as detailed in Appendix A noting any prescribed requirements attached to the allocation of funding ; and
 - d) Delegate authority to the Leader in consultation with the Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive) and Executive Director for Finance & Performance, to consider and accept recommendations from the Panel and submit the Investment Plan to Government.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations: To provide a mechanism for the Investment Plan to be agreed and submitted by the deadline set by Government of 10th May 2024 and to ensure compliance with the funding requirements in respect of projects.
- 3.3 Alternative Options Considered: The Council does not submit an Investment Plan. This is not recommended as the Council would lose the opportunity to access the £5m investment fund to support cultural assets.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. As part of the Spring Budget announcements, North Northamptonshire Council has been provisionally awarded up to £5 million of capital funding to support local culture projects in the area. This allocation is part of £100m which was set aside nationally for levelling up culture projects. This provisional funding ensures that all areas that have been previously prioritised for levelling up investment – which includes North Northamptonshire – have benefitted through one of the Levelling Up Fund rounds.
- 4.2. To secure this funding, the Council must submit an Investment Plan detailing the project(s) it wishes to use this funding for. The Investment Plan should make full justification for the activity planned, fitting within the crucial role culture can play in levelling up and supporting pride in place.
- 4.3. The Council will be the accountable body for the funding and will therefore need to provide reassurance to Government that the project(s) brought forward represent value for money, are deliverable and are a local priority with broad stakeholder support, including from local MPs.
- 4.4. The project(s) will also need to meet any relevant statutory requirements including the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and requirements under the public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010).
- 4.5. On 28 March 2024, a request for projects was issued by the Council to local stakeholders with a potential interest. This was communicated through a press release, social media channels, and direct contact with town and parish councils, voluntary and community sector organisations, and operators of local cultural attractions. It was also shared via partner networks and with the local MPs.
- 4.6. Government has not provided any specific eligibility criteria, such as match-funding, other than it must be a capital project and compliant with subsidy rules. However, the Council will need to articulate the impact funding will have in the area in terms of outcomes and outputs and illustrate how it provide value for money; this will be assessed by the panel.
- 4.7. Due to time constraints and the need for the Investment Plan to demonstrate impact, the Council is initially requesting details of larger projects. This means that projects should involve a capital cost of at least £500k or have a strategic impact on the area i.e., the project will have a reach wider than the immediate locality. As an example, this could involve smaller cultural projects, or combination of schemes which individually or collectively have a significant impact on the area. Impact would be demonstrated through the delivery of anticipated outcomes and outputs, including the expected beneficiaries of the project. Some smaller cultural projects could attract users, or visitors, from a wider area due to the uniqueness or appeal of their offer.
- 4.8. Interested parties are being asked to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) to LUF@northnorthants.gov.uk setting out details for proposed projects including the impact of the proposal, financial profiles, outputs and outcomes, deliverability, local strategic fit and stakeholder support. Projects need to demonstrate ‘value for money’ and be sufficiently developed to ensure that the

funding can be spent by March 2026. Eols must be received by the Council by 8am on Monday 22nd April 2024 to meet the tight timescales imposed.

- 4.9. Submissions received will initially be assessed by officers to ensure that they meet the prescribed criteria and referred to the Panel chaired by the Leader for consideration. Pass or fail criteria include the need for the investment to be located in North Northamptonshire and involve capital expenditure on a cultural project. Other assessment criteria will include:
- Deliverability
 - Value for money
 - Outcomes and outputs to be delivered
 - Strategic fit with key strategies, plans and priorities
 - Identification and mitigation of risks
 - Availability of match-funding if required
- 4.10. It is recommended that a Panel is established to provide recommendations to the Leader of the Council to enable an Investment Plan to be submitted. The Leader of the Council has requested that this Panel include the leaders of the recognised political groups as well as two representatives from the local culture and heritage sector to provide additional expertise and independence, and aid consideration of different projects. The Panel's role will be to recommend which project(s) are shortlisted for the Investment Plan against prescribed criteria.
- 4.11. The Council proposes that the Investment Plan will also include a grant scheme to support smaller capital projects (i.e., less than £500k) and funded through the same allocation. As with larger schemes, these projects will need to demonstrate that they can be delivered by March 2026. It is intended that details of this smaller grant scheme will be released later in the year following approval of the Investment Plan by Government.
- 4.12. Views will be sought from local MPs on the shortlisted projects, and proposal for a grant scheme, as a requirement of the funding. The Investment Plan will then be finalised and submitted to Government by 10th May 2024.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Council could choose not to submit an Investment Plan, but this would mean forgoing the £5m which has been provisionally allocated.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Following submission of the Investment Plan, the Government will assess details of the project(s) proposed, and the wider business case, and decide how much funding to award the Council. It is expected that decisions will be taken during the summer.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1. The £5m provisional allocation was agreed by Strategic Capital Programme Board at its meeting on 25th March 2024 for inclusion in the Capital Programme pipeline.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. Should the Council be successful in the award of capital funding it will receive a grant determination letter from Government. This confirms the allocation of funding and related terms and conditions. The Council will be the Accountable Body for the funding. This means that the Council assumes legal responsibility for the proper management and utilisation of the allocated funds and it will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting processes are established. Any external projects awarded funding will require a grant funding agreement with the Council. Such funding agreements will ensure compliance with subsidy control regulations.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. Investment in Cultural assets will support several of the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2021/25. These include Active, fulfilled lives, Safe and thriving places, Greener, sustainable environment and Connected communities.

7.3.2. The Investment Plan will also support the objectives in the recently published Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. The management of risk is a key consideration within the Investment Plan

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Council lacks the skills and knowledge to develop the Investment Plan by the deadline	Internal resource prioritised to deliver task	Low
Council is unable to agree the Investment Plan by the deadline	Delegated authority agreed to submit investment plan	Low
No or few suitable projects identified meaning the Council cannot request the full £5m	Opportunity to submit projects shared widely amongst local stakeholders	Low
Lack of local engagement and support	Early engagement with local stakeholders, including MPs	Low

Government does not approve the Investment Plan	Guidance provided to stakeholders to ensure that the Council is able to develop a robust Investment Plan that meet the Government's requirements	Low
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7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. Details of the funding opportunity has been shared with local stakeholders through various mechanisms, including direct contact, partner networks, social media, the Council's website (see below), and a Press Release.

[Cultural fund | North Northamptonshire Council \(northnorthants.gov.uk\)](https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/cultural-fund)

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. Due to the need to submit the Investment Plan by 10th May 2024, there is not sufficient time for the report to be considered by an Executive Advisory Panel.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. The deadline for submission of the Investment Plan does not provide sufficient time for the report to be considered by Scrutiny.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. An Equalities Impact Screening Assessment has been completed, however at this stage it has not been possible to consider in detail the potential specific impacts of the Investment Plan as project(s) have not yet been identified.

7.9. Climate Impact

7.9.1. With the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2021 and the approval of the Carbon Management Plan in December 2022, we have committed to working towards becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030.

7.9.2. It is not possible to undertake a Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) at this stage, however, climate change impact will be a consideration and projects included in the Investment Plan will be required to complete a CCIA.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. Investment in cultural projects has the potential to contribute to 'levelling up'. improve the Pride in Place and positively impact on local communities across the area.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council has equal statutory responsibility with the Police to exercise its various functions with 'due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area'.

7.11.2. No impact on crime and disorder is expected.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

APPENDIX A

HEADS OF TERMS FOR THE CULTURAL INVESTMENT FUND PANEL

Membership:

- The Leader (chair) (the Decision maker in consultation with the Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive) and Executive Director for Finance & Performance)
- Executive Member for Growth & Regeneration
- Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture & Tourism (and the Deputy Leader)
- Executive Member for Adults, Health & Well-Being
- Executive Member for Housing, Communities & Levelling Up

Advisors and Officers:

- Two representatives from the local Culture and Heritage sector
- NNC Executive Director for Place & Economy
- NNC Executive Director for Finance & Performance
- NNC Assistant Director for Growth & Regeneration
- NNC Assistant Director for Communities & Leisure
- NNC Head of Service for Culture, Heritage and Tourism

Purpose:

The purpose of the Panel is three-fold:

1. Recommend which projects should be shortlisted for inclusion in the Cultural Investment Plan for North Northamptonshire.
2. Ensure that the programme of projects aligns with any criteria and requirements outlined by Government.
3. Consider any feedback from Government and next steps.

Format:

Meetings will not be in public, but decisions and actions will be recommended to the Leader for decision in consultation with the Executive Director for Place & Economy (Deputy Chief Executive) and Executive Director for Finance & Performance and will then be reported as a Delegated Decision Record (see below).

Frequency:

The Panel has a task-and-finish focus with the Council required to submit the Investment Plan by 10 May 2024.

It is envisaged that the Panel will meet at least twice following 22 April 2024, which is the end date for submitting Expressions of Interest, prior to agreeing the Investment Plan.

Quorum:

At least three Executive Members should be present for the proceedings of the meeting to be quorate.

Reporting:

A note of each meeting will be produced capturing decisions and actions. Decisions will be reported through a Delegated Decision Record to be submitted to Democratic Services within two working days of a decision, for publication of NNC's external website.

Recommendations made by the Panel

Any recommended projects with a value of above £500k to be taken by the Leader will be listed on the [forward plan](#) 28 calendar days in advance, or depending on the timescales involved, in accordance with the Council Constitution (Part 5.3 - Access to Information Procedure Rules).

The council will also publish any proposed key decision on the website five clear working days before the individual Cabinet member can consider the decision (publishing period). This includes details of the decision, its status and copies of any relevant reports. A record of the key decision will be published on the council website within two clear working days of being made.

Review:

The terms of reference will be reviewed as required.