

**REPORT OF: Economic Development Manager**

**To: Community and Resources**

**Subject: Delivery of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy and emerging Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy**

**Date: 23.10.2023**

**Reference:**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

To request £20,000 revenue funding from the Economic Development Project Reserve to support delivery of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy and the emerging Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In January 2022 Full Council approved for the Economic Development Department to work alongside Devon County Council to develop a Regeneration Board in Bideford with a view to the development of a regeneration strategy for the town. That Strategy was then approved by C&R in March 2023.

This report requests that C&R approves £20,000 of revenue match funding to support the delivery phase of both the Bideford Regeneration Strategy and the emerging Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy.

**2. REPORT**

In January 2022 when approval was given to being the process of working with Devon County Council on the Urban Renewal programme approval was granted for £15,000 to be assigned from Reserves to deliver urban renewal masterplanning and business planning. However, those tasks were covered to a sufficient degree by the funding provided from Devon County and the work of Hardisty Jones Associates who were appointed by DCC to deliver the programme. As such, that funding was not utilised as it could not be applied where needed, to deliver projects. Quick win funding, as reported in March 2023, was secured which enabled initial steps to be delivered, such as the Discover Bideford website and marketing activity.

In March 2023 C&R approved the Bideford Regeneration Strategy, at which time it was also explained that a restructure would take place to allow the Board to move from a strategy development phase into a delivery period. A sub-group structure is now in place to support that delivery mechanism. Funding to provide a catalyst for those sub-groups is now required and to enable them to develop further plans which can attract further funding and build momentum for the good of the town and the community.

In September 2023 a first meeting was held for the newly formed Great Torrington Regeneration Board. A smaller amount of Quick Win funding will be available from DCC for this phase of their Urban Renewal programme, but there is also significant need to build momentum for the newly formed board and to progress delivery of the emerging strategy. Learning from the process followed for the Bideford Regeneration Strategy it is important to



have this funding in place to help suitably steer discussions and build momentum and positivity.

As a result, to provide revenue match funding for the efforts of DCC, Torrington District Council is keen to provide £10,000 revenue funding to both regeneration boards and ensure forward progress can be achieved in both locations.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

#### Legal Implications

N/A.

#### Financial Implications

£20,000 from the Economic Development Project Reserve. £15,000 had previously been allocated which could not be used due to the wording of the initial request.

#### Human Resources Implications

Delivery of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy and the emerging Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy will involve ongoing human resource input from the Economic Development Officer and liaison with other internal teams, including Major Projects and Planning.

#### Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

Torrington District Council's Climate Emergency declaration and the government's Net Zero agenda will be at the forefront of plans and considerations. Opportunities for regeneration within a net zero agenda and also respecting the Devon Climate Emergency commitments was an element of the brief for this Strategy development.

#### Equality/Diversity

Strategy delivery will need to ensure that it takes into consideration a range of social groupings and demographics in order to further equality and diversity, and creating opportunities for all.

#### Risk Management

- Ongoing reputational risk. However, this is also balanced against reputational damage from not taking any action to support vibrancy and regeneration within Bideford and Great Torrington town centres.
- A strong communication plan will need to be developed in order to ensure that the community is provided with regular updates and has a route to engage. The sub-groups should also provide a critical dissemination and engagement opportunity. This forms part of connected activity through the Shared Prosperity Fund, Funded by UK Government.

#### Compliance with Policies and Strategies

This work will form a significant part of the Northern Devon Recovery Prospectus' goals to not only create more connected communities but also deliver on wider economic growth.



That also connects to the Torridge District Council Strategic Plan ambition to “Develop town centres and the rural offering; recognised as great places to live, visit and invest into”.

The Bideford Regeneration Strategy was approved by Community and Resources in March 2023, which this funding will now support to deliver.

#### Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

Any community engagement responses will need to be stored and used in line with Torridge District Council’s Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

#### Climate change

The threads of Climate Change and sustainability are at the heart of both regeneration boards. Bideford has a sustainability sub-group which is in the process of being formed and the Chair will sit on the main Bideford regeneration board to ensure all decisions align with Climate change needs.

#### Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation- 10.10.2023

“A sensible allocation of funds”, Councillor Robert Hicks

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Town centres play a pivotal role in community life. Although there are many positives in both Bideford and Great Torrington town centres, in particular the independent retail offer, there is far more that can be done to address the issue of vacant units, drive footfall and ensure that town centres serve their communities better, including for young people. It is also essential we build positivity and strengthen community routes to involvement to ensure that other bodies are able to drive the towns forward, all aligned and working to achieve the same agreed goals.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Approve £10,000 revenue funding from the Economic Development Project Reserve to be used for the delivery of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy.
- Approve £10,000 revenue funding from the Economic Development Project Reserve to be used for the delivery of the emerging Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy.

#### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Consultations:                      Date of Consultation – 25.9.23  
    Officers Consulted – Chief Executive, Head of Communities and Place, S151 Officer, Senior Accountant, Head of Legal and Governance & Monitoring

Contact Officer:                      Economic Development Manager

