



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Growth and Development
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Growth & Development
<b>DATE:</b>	Thursday, 13 June 2024

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Growth and Development
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	Blackburn Central
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	Y

**SUBJECT: King William Street Accelerator Green Spaces Funding**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of the 10 High Street Accelerator pilot projects, King William Street, Blackburn has been awarded an additional £500,000 of Green Spaces Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Led by the Local Authority and a group of key stakeholders making up our High Street Accelerator Partnership and supported by the High Street Task Force, a series of environmental improvements and initiatives to enhance the King William Street area will be developed and delivered over the next 10 months.

The High Street Accelerator Partnership submitted a proposal for how the funding could be spent to address some of the key issues affecting the high street. This report sets out the key elements of that proposal and requests the authority to accept the funding, add to the Council's capital programme and begin delivery.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board approves:

- the acceptance of the £500,000 DLUHC High Street Accelerator Green Spaces Funding as the accountable body for the King William Street High Street Accelerator Partnership;
- agrees a supplementary capital estimate of £450,000 and supplementary revenue estimate of £50,000 funded from the grant referred to the above;
- the commencement for the delivery of environmental improvements and initiatives to enhance the King William Street area, subject to consultation on the detailed designs; and
- the procurement of any services required for the delivery of the initiatives outlined in the report, in accordance with procurement law and the Contracts and Procurement Procedure Rules.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The High Street Accelerator programme was launched by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in 2023. The pilot programme provided £237,000 of funding to 10 areas

to test different activities aimed at reviving traditional high streets. Blackburn was selected as one of the 10 pilot projects.

The King William Street High Street Accelerator Partnership, comprising of key stakeholders, was established in January 2024 to help advise the Council on developing projects to address footfall, the loss of traditional retail, and improve the night-time economy.

Each pilot project was offered the opportunity to apply for an additional £500,000 to address environmental issues and to deliver greening projects that would meet the changing needs of the high street.

The Partnership developed a proposal for the maximum £450,000 capital and £50,000 revenue funding to meet the funding criteria. This has now been approved by DLUHC.

Key elements of the proposals are:

- Creating a more flexible, open and safe space
- More sustainable planting
- Introduction of an architectural play feature
- Greening of the three main entrances to the Mall to enhance visibility and encourage footfall
- Repair or replacement of old planters, benches and removal of obsolete street clutter
- Creative use of street furniture to better manage hostile vehicle risks and unauthorised parking
- Creative lighting to provide a safer and more welcoming space in the evening
- Improvements to pavement cafes
- New planting to link street - New Market Street, Town Hall Street and Lord Street
- Maintenance to existing large trees to ensure their future health
- Volunteer programme to encourage active engagement in the green space and to support maintenance, biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental education and wellbeing.

An element of the funding will be used to engage the skills of a multi-disciplinary Design Team to support the partnership develop these plans in consultation with the Council, wider stakeholders and the community.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

##### **Risk of not accepting grant**

There would be some reputational risk to not accepting the invitation to accept the grant. Blackburn has been selected to participate based on independent research and it is envisaged that the findings of this pilot work will inform future best practice dissemination and funding rounds.

##### **Risk of not being able to deliver a successful project**

The level of funding is modest given the scale of challenges and opportunities, but the funding will complement and support delivery of a variety of other planned capital projects, ensuring the best outcome and maximising impact of any investment.

The pilot nature of the project means there are no risks flowing from any failure to deliver positive outcomes. However, Blackburn town centre already has a strong track record of delivering projects of this nature, and a good understanding of the challenges of King William Street, so it is very much the expectation that the project will provide positive outcomes for our high street and local community.

##### **Risk of not being able to spend grant.**

The Council is expected to complete expenditure by end of March 2025. This is a tight deadline, however the majority of the expertise needed to deliver the project is existing within the Council and

any additional professional services needed have already been scoped and can be procured quickly. There is no penalty if the grant is not spent on time, but any unspent funds may be at risk.

## 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

King William Street and its environment has an important part to play in the continued growth and vitality of the town centre and in particular in supporting an enhanced cultural and leisure offer.

The King William Street Accelerator and environmental improvements will kick-start the delivery of the Council's emerging Cultural Investment Plan 2023-33 (currently in consultation), directly supporting the 5 key missions of: vibrant town centres, aspiration and opportunity, placemaking, community pride and a strong economy.

The pilot project also supports Blackburn with Darwen's Local Plan 2021 to 2037, specifically: Strategic Objective SO12: Town Centres - to widen the range of activities taking place in the Borough's town centres to ensure their future vitality and viability.

Core Policy CP11: Town Centre's and Commercial Development –to promote the growth of commercial development and other town centre uses such as leisure, entertainment, offices, education, arts, culture, tourism and housing.

Core Policy CP8: Securing High Quality and Inclusive Design – ensuring high quality design to making places more attractive, locally-distinctive, accessible, sustainable and safe.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no match funding requirements for the project. All grant is paid in advance of expenditure.

	Year 1 2024/25
Capital	£450,000
Revenue	£50,000

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council will be the accountable body for all grant expenditure which will be subject to grant conditions. All procurement will be carried out in-line with procurement law and the Council's Contract & Procurement Procedure Rules.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Development and delivery of the project will be led by existing staff within the Growth & Development Department.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

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## 10. CONSULTATIONS

The project was developed with the High Steet Accelerator Partnership, including residents, local businesses, and town centre organisations. Initial consultation with key town centre partners and stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the development of the project. A working group will be established to consult on the detailed design and delivery of the project, including relevant Council teams such as Highways, Environment, Community Safety, etc.

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## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

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## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Julia Simpson, Clare Turner</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	22/05/2024
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	
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