

## Ramsgate Future initiative and Levelling Up Fund

<b>Extraordinary Cabinet</b>	8 June, 2021
<b>Report Author</b>	Louise Askew, Director of Regeneration
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Rick Everitt, Cabinet Member for Ramsgate Regeneration
<b>Status</b>	For Recommendation
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reasons for Key</b>	NA
<b>Ward:</b>	All wards in Ramsgate

### Executive Summary:

Thanet has the opportunity to bid into the Government's Levelling Up Fund as it is a Priority One area. This report recommends the submission of a bid for Ramsgate on the basis of the information outlined in the report. The timescales are incredibly tight, with a deadline of submission on the 18 June, 2021.

The submission of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund will complement other opportunities that are available to Thanet, including the Parkway Station, Future High Street Fund, Margate Town Deal and Heritage Action Zones. This funding opportunity will support the delivery of regeneration projects in Ramsgate, which will undoubtedly support the whole district's economic recovery and levelling up of its communities.

### Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to agree the following recommendations:

1. Approve submission of a Levelling Up Bid to the 18 June, 2021 deadline;
2. Delegate authority to Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, for final sign-off of the Levelling up Bid.

### Corporate Implications

#### Financial and Value for Money

As a Priority one area for the Levelling Up Fund Thanet District Council will receive £125,000 in capacity funding to support the development of the bid. However, the funding is not due to be allocated to the council until after the first round submission deadline. The council allocated some of the Business Rates pool funding to support the development of the bid, by commissioning external specialist consultants.

The Levelling Up Fund encourages a minimum contribution of 10% which can come from a local authority or other third party (public or private sector). This funding cannot be “in kind”. Any contribution made must be in the form of an actual financial contribution. This will be considered in the development of the projects for the bid.

## **Legal**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The draft bid document will be shared with the Legal Department by way of consultation.

## **Corporate**

The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive funding programme being run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Council have commissioned experienced consultants to support the development of the Bid to help Thanet put the best proposal forward for Ramsgate. Thanet is a priority one area, and the submission of a bid for Ramsgate, on the basis of the area’s deprivation statistics and need for levelling up will provide a good case for a successful submission.

A submission to the Levelling Up Fund supports the Council’s corporate priority for Growth, including continuing to look for a viable future for the Port of Ramsgate and Royal Harbour, encouraging the rejuvenation of our high streets and continuing to promote tourism.

## **Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty**

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

The stakeholder engagement in the development of the Ramsgate Future Investment Plan and Levelling Up Bid will be open to all of Ramsgate’s communities, residents, businesses and other organisations. A stakeholder equality assessment was carried out at the start of the stakeholder engagement exercise.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Growth
- Communities

## **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 In February 2021 the Council launched a major new initiative for Ramsgate to generate and take forward ideas for the town's development over the next few years. The aim of the Ramsgate Future initiative is to build upon existing and forthcoming regeneration schemes to ensure that activity in the town is brought together into a cohesive vision to help transform the town.
- 1.2 The initiative includes the development of a Town Investment Plan which will be based on statistical evidence about Ramsgate, local engagement and a review of the opportunities available for regeneration, in order to create an overarching ambition for the town that unites the wider community.
- 1.2 As the Council was preparing to commission consultants to engage with Ramsgate's communities and develop a Town Investment Plan, central Government announced the Levelling Up Fund, with tight timescales for submission. This is the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, however further rounds are yet to be announced with their timescales for announcement unknown, priorities for delivery unknown, but still within the same timescales for project delivery.

## **2.0 Levelling Up Fund priorities**

- 2.1 Thanet was identified as a Priority One area for the Levelling Up Fund, the priority was identified through a number of different metrics. Step one measured the 'need for economic recovery and growth', including productivity, measured using gross value added (GVA) per hour; 16+ Unemployment rate; and skills, measured using the proportion of the working-age population without a national vocational qualification (NVQ). Step 2 included measures 'need for improved transport connectivity' (in England only) and 'need for regeneration' in addition to 'need for economic recovery and growth'. The need for improved transport connectivity was based on average journey times to employment centres by car, public transport and bike. The need for regeneration is based on commercial and dwelling vacancy rates. In order to band the district areas an index was created and further information can be found [here](#).
- 2.2 The Levelling Up Fund is intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including deprived towns and coastal communities. Central Government recognises that there are significant economic differences across the country, and tackling these and driving prosperity as part of 'levelling up' in different regions is a priority. The Fund will focus on capital investment in local infrastructure and will prioritise bids that invest in regeneration and growth in places in need and areas of low productivity and connectivity.
- 2.3 The Fund will focus investment in projects that require up to £20m of funding, with some larger transport schemes being considered. The local authority is required to consult a range of local stakeholders, potential relevant local stakeholders and partners include local businesses, public transport providers, police and emergency services, community representatives, environmental representatives and universities and FE Colleges. It is also suggested that where relevant, we should also consider

how to reach stakeholders from harder to reach communities. The stakeholder engagement will need to be evidenced in the Bid. MP's are also required to back one bid in their area that they consider to be a priority, and provide written support of that bid.

- 2.4 This round of funding will focus on smaller transport projects, town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding cultural and heritage assets:
- Transport investments including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. We are requesting proposals for high-impact small, medium and by exception larger local transport schemes to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth and improve the experience of transport users.
  - Regeneration and town centre investment, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
  - Cultural investment maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces
- 2.5 Investment is expected to focus on supporting high priority projects that will make a visible impact in local areas, and it is recognised that priorities for investment will vary from area to area. Projects should also be aligned to and support the Government's Net Zero goals.
- 2.6 To apply to the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, bids must be submitted to the MHCLG by noon on Friday 18 June 2021. Projects are required to demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in the 2021-22 financial year, and all funding provided from the Fund to be spent by 31 March 2024. The [full prospectus](#), [FAQ's and technical notes](#) can all be found online.

### **3.0 Thanet Levelling Up Fund Bid**

- 3.1 35% of Thanet's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) are in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs nationally - that is out of 32,844. The average for Kent is 6%. Of Thanet's 18 LSOA in the top 10% of most deprived areas, two thirds are in the wider Margate town and the other third are in the wider Ramsgate town. Although there are a greater number of LSOAs in Margate in the top 10%, Margate has recently been offered up to £22.2m as part of the Town Deal programme, which is aimed to deliver regeneration where it is most needed, supporting economic growth, job creation and wellbeing.

- 3.2 In April 2021 Thanet had an unemployment rate of 9.7% , which was an increase from 2020 when it was 7.4% and an increase from April 2019 when it was 5.3%. However, the relaxing of restrictions, and undoubtedly the fact that we are heading into a busy season for Thanet, there was a decrease of 1.3% since March 2021. In comparison The claimant count for out of work benefits in April, 2021, compared to Thanet's 9.7% was 5.9% in Kent, 5.3% in the South East and 6.4% in Great Britain. There are some areas of Thanet that are above the district average. Four of Ramsgate's wards are between 11-12% unemployment rate for April, 2021 and three of Margate's wards are above the average, with one at 13.2% and two over 18%.
- 3.3 These figures, alongside the fact that 35% of LSOAs in Thanet in the top 10% most deprived, highlights not only why central Government is focusing on areas like Thanet in its levelling up agenda, but also why Thanet District Council should be submitting proposals and bids to these programmes.
- 3.2 Thanet has had a number of successful bids to central Government, and other national organisations, including the Future High Street Fund, Parkway Station, Heritage Action Zone programmes and the successful bid to MHCLG, with an offer of up to £22.2m for the Margate Town Deal. The Margate Town Investment Plan provides a plan that outlines the ambition for Margate's regeneration. A decision was taken to deliver a similar programme of stakeholder engagement for Ramsgate in order to develop a Town Investment Plan for Ramsgate's Future. It will play an important role in drawing together in one plan all of the opportunities that Ramsgate has, and help to identify key priorities for delivery.
- 3.3 In order to make a significant step change for the whole of Thanet, the most deprived places in the district need regeneration support in order to 'level up'. Margate has a significant opportunity through the Margate Town Deal, it is therefore proposed that a bid for Ramsgate should be submitted to the Levelling Up Fund. The investment opportunity across Thanet is significant, and will benefit Thanet's communities tremendously in this period of recovery required due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.
- 3.4 Through a competitive procurement process Pleydell Smithyman Ltd has been engaged to deliver a programme of stakeholder engagement. This includes online questionnaires for Ramsgate's residents and communities, the town's businesses and third sector organisations. The engagement will also include questionnaires from people across Thanet/East Kent and visitors to the town where possible, in order to get a rounded view or what people think Ramsgate needs for its regeneration. Through the same process of procurement, PRD Ltd and We Made That were engaged to develop the Town Investment Plan and the Levelling Up Fund submission. The Investment Plan will include a range of projects that will deliver in the short, medium and long term, they will be evidence based against factual data about Ramsgate, the stakeholder engagement and the opportunities available to Ramsgate. Some of the project proposals within the Investment Plan will form the Levelling Up submission for Ramsgate.
- 3.5 The Town Investment Plan (and funding bid) will benefit from work that has already taken place in understanding what opportunities there are in Ramsgate for regeneration. This includes previous bids for assets in and around the harbour and the development of a strategic, high level study for the Port of Ramsgate. The council

has engaged with stakeholders about the Port of Ramsgate study and this will be included in the evidence for the Ramsgate Future Town Investment Plan.

## 4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council could wait for the next round of the Levelling Up fund to submit a bid, which could give more time in developing a proposal, however it is understood that the timeframe for delivery is the same and projects would need to be delivered by March 2024. Announcements have not been made about the timescales for bid submission, the amount of money that could be bid for or the funding priorities. It would be a risk to wait, potentially for up to a year, without understanding what the next round of the Levelling Up funding might look like. It is therefore not considered to be an option.
- 4.2 Thanet could submit more than one bid as it is covered by two MP constituency areas. However, this is likely to be an oversubscribed programme (based on other similar funding programmes) and although there is significant need across Thanet it is proposed that the best option is to focus on one bid that has an ask that is at least the £20m potential bid, or greater.
- 4.3 The timescales in place since the announcement of the funding allocation to this programme and the requirements for bids are significantly tight, and the decision was taken to bring in specialist consultants in order to deliver a programme of engagement and to draft the funding bid. With more time a longer programme of engagement would have taken place in the development of the projects that will ultimately be submitted within the bid, however the programme of engagement will support the bids priorities and help to develop an evidenced and clear Town Investment Plan for the long term.

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Reporting to: *Madeline Homer, Chief Executive*

### Corporate Consultation

**Finance:** *Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)*  
**Legal:** *Estelle Culligan (Director of Law and Democracy)*