

Public Report with Exempt Appendices
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet - 29th July 2024

Report Title

Wath Projects (Levelling Up Fund) Update Report

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Interim Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Wath

Report Summary

In July 2023 Cabinet resolved to:

1. Accept the Principal Areas of Growth allocation of £19,990,111 into the Capital Programme through the Grant Process.
2. Allocate £8,940,564 to the Wath Project.
3. Delegate the Commissioning of the design of the project based on the parameters in paragraph 2.3.1 to the Strategic Director for Regeneration and the Environment in Consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Economy and the Section 151 Officer.
4. Agree to the development of 'Principal Areas of Growth' projects in Wath with further detail provided to Cabinet in February 2024.

This Cabinet paper reports on progress made since July 2023 and seeks approval to proceed to implementation of the project.

The report also seeks to confirm the provisional allocation £1 million of the Towns and Villages Fund (in addition to the £8.94m previously agreed) to support the regeneration of Wath.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve:

1. The delivery of the Wath Principal Areas of Growth project within the budget and scope as detailed in Appendix 2.
2. Confirmation of the provisional allocation of £1m of the Towns & Villages Fund to works at Wath.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1: Scheme boundary and RIBA Stage 3 plans

Appendix 2: Budget – Exempt

Appendix 3: Revenue Implications - Exempt

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 5: Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Towns and Villages Fund Cabinet report 2022](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

Yes

An exemption is sought for Appendix 2 and 3 under Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as this report contains sensitive commercial information with regards to commercial agreements which could disadvantage the Council in any negotiations if the information were to be made public.

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information, as the parties' commercial interests could be prejudiced by disclosure of commercial information.

Wath Projects (Levelling Up Fund) Update Report

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In response to the Government's Levelling Up agenda, the Council submitted its Principal Areas of Growth bid for funding first in June 2021 and again in June 2022. Despite not being selected in those rounds, in the Spring 2023 budget Rotherham's proposals were identified as one of 16 to receive a share of £200m additional funding for left behind places and in recognition of the high-quality bid submitted.
- 1.1.2 The package of projects aims to transform two prominent sites within Rotherham's principal settlements of growth: Wath-Upon-Dearne and Dinnington. Both schemes focus on high quality place making to restore the cultural heart of the town centres, increase footfall, boost the local economies, and restore a sense of pride amongst communities.
- 1.1.3 On 30th June 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council and DLUHC setting out the terms, principles, and practices that apply regarding administration and delivery of this funding.
- 1.1.4 Design development has been ongoing since Cabinet approval was received in July 2023, which sought to accept the Principal Areas of Growth allocation of £19,990,111 into the capital programme and agree to the implementation of 'Principal Areas of Growth' projects in Wath.
- 1.1.5 This report provides an update to Cabinet on the development at Wath, progress and seeks the necessary authority to progress the project to implementation.

1.2 Site Context

- 1.2.1 Although well used and well loved by the community, due to its design, the current library building in Wath-upon Dearne is difficult to operate. The lack of windows means it doesn't interact well with the surrounding area and it provides very little overlooking of external spaces. Some areas around the building, such as the external staircase, are therefore vulnerable to anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2.2 In a wider context, the large structure acts as a barrier between Biscay Way, which is the main B-road connection through the heart of the Town, and the core Centre, with the library effectively turning its back on what is a key route into the town. Through focussing on active frontages, the redevelopment of the site (as outlined in Appendix 1), is considered to be a key opportunity to open up and connect different parts of the Town. This investment is therefore doubly significant in that it aims to future proof a key local facility and improve the flow and function of the town. Appendix 1 shows the location plan, floor plans, designs of the new building and aerial visualisations of the completed scheme.

2.1 Proposed Scheme

- 2.1.1 Following Cabinet approval to accept the grant and proceed in July 2023, the Council has developed the scheme feasibility and design as outlined in Appendix 1. The proposed Scheme includes demolition of the existing library and the creation of a brand-new library to create a modern, inviting, and inclusive community facility. The redevelopment is being designed to enhance the visitor experience between Biscay Way and the High Street to encourage visitors into the town centre.
- 2.1.2 The new Wath library development will include:
- Development of a state-of-the-art library building.
 - Improved public realm.
 - Redesign of the site to enhance connectivity and visibility of town centre offer, and address perceptions of security.
 - Provision of a new commercial unit in prime location on the market square to attract new businesses.
 - Improvements to facilities for learning, working, and making.
 - Improvements to the car park.
- 2.1.3 The new building has been designed to respond more positively to the surrounding area, with key frontages on three sides of the building to promote views into the town centre and signal it is open for business. With the new and improved library at its heart the development aims to draw in visitors and promote Wath as a destination and ultimately boost the local economy. The area selected for this scheme and proposed plans are provided within Appendix 1.
- 2.1.4 The library will be better equipped to support skills development locally with purpose-built learning, working and making spaces. Fully flexible bookable spaces will build on the successful events programme and new visitors will be attracted to the modern and inviting facility. The much-loved local library will be future proofed for years to come.
- 2.1.5 The redevelopment will deliver facilities of a modern standard, with sustainable and inclusive design. It will also tackle persistent anti-social behaviour issues through the enclosure of the residential staircase and public passageway that runs between the library and the adjacent residential and commercial block. This intervention will make the staircase accessible to residents of the block only through a private entry system. With the majority of the block in Council ownership, the new enclosed staircase will be managed by RMBC Housing services.
- 2.1.6 The Scheme is proposed subject to full planning permission. An application for planning permission will be made in Summer 2024.
- 2.1.7 A RIBA Stage 3 compliant cost plan has been developed and a breakdown of the capital and revenue financial implications of the scheme is included at Appendix 2.

2.1.8 The Scheme is now sufficiently developed to commence the procurement of a contractor, completion of a detailed design and proceed to the delivery on site. This report seeks Cabinet approval to implement the project within the scope and budget outlined in Appendix 2. Any material variation to this will be subject to further Cabinet approval.

2.2 Temporary Library Services

2.2.1 The proposed Scheme involves the demolition and replacement of the library building which will require decanting of the existing library and associated uses. A reduced library facility will be located elsewhere in the town centre or local area throughout the construction period to ensure access to key services and limit disruption. However, some books and products will be stored centrally throughout this period.

3.1 Governance

3.1.1 A condition of the MOU was the establishment of a Board to oversee delivery. Currently the project is overseen by the Council's Regeneration Board. Following Cabinet approval to implement the plans in July 2024, the project will be transitioned into the DHLUC (Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities) Pathfinder Pilot and overseen by the established Town Deal Board.

3.1.2 The project will be delivered subject to the Council's own capital monitoring, assurance and in line with governance processes.

3.1.3 In line with the Council's Constitution and Governance practices, project specific HM Treasury Green Book compliant Business Cases will be developed at the relevant project stages. Business Cases will set out project costs, route to market, delivery programmes, ongoing management requirements and implications.

3.2 Resourcing

3.2.1 Project development and delivery is led by the Council's Investment and Development Office in partnership with the Library Service. Design work to date has been led by the Council's Building Design Service.

3.2.2 The project is being developed in consultation with the Council's Legal, Finance, Procurement and Asset Management services.

3.3.3 Resourcing costs are accounted for within the Capital budget as well as moving and temporary accommodation costs.

4. Funding Implications

4.1 Capital Implications

4.1.1 The capital funding for the project has been secured by the Council from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities Capital Regeneration

Grant. £8,940,564 is allocated to the Wath scheme, with a deadline of the 31 March 2026 to draw down all the grant. Drawdown of funding will prioritise Government grant first with Council Capital drawn toward the latter end of the programme to mitigate the risk of surpassing the funding deadline. However, along with regular liaison with DLUHC colleagues the project's progress will be monitored through Dashboards and escalation meetings to identify any slippage and assess the Council's risk in proceeding should the project exceed the funding deadline.

4.1.2 In March 2023 the Council allocated an additional £2m to establish Round 2 of the Towns and Villages Fund. The Capital investment aims to improve the Borough's local town and village centres.

4.1.3 Under the terms of the MoU with DLUHC, grant payments will normally be made every six months in January and July. In effect, each payment represents payment in arrears for one quarter and payment in advance for one quarter. Typically, amounts paid are adjusted by DLUHC in line with updated profiles of both actual and forecast spend as contained within the quarterly monitoring returns submitted by the Council.

5 Revenue implications

5.1 The proposal relates to a replacement library building of a similar scale which has been designed to reflect existing library service budgets rather than to increase financial pressures. As such the aim of the project would be to keep the staffing of the new library, as well as activities and events within the existing revenue budget for the Wath site. However, current design cost projections exceed current revenue budgets. This is in part due to the replacement building being of a higher specification than the existing, reflective of the Council's objective to lead on high-quality design and place making.

5.2 The new library will be built to modern standards with more efficient heating, cooling and operational systems with maximum life cycles to minimise future maintenance and renewal costs. The newer technologies involved are expected to have higher initial revenue implications however, the environmental benefits will be wide reaching and long term. More detail is provided within appendix 3.

5.3 A separate commercial unit is proposed fronting Montgomery Square that the Council as landlord will collect rent on. The resource to manage the asset will be funded by the income generated.

5.4 Further details regarding the revenue implications of the project are provided at Appendix 3.

6. Consultation on proposal

6.1 The Government supported scheme was developed in conjunction with Wath Ward Members, and the MP for Rawmarsh and Conisbrough.

- 6.2 Since project initiation, an engagement plan has been implemented which aims to ensure thorough and wide-reaching communication with residents and stakeholders.
- 6.3 Two periods of consultation and engagement have been carried out in Autumn 2023 and March 2024, with feedback from these sessions being used to inform and develop design plans. Council officers engaged with over 185 residents and stakeholders at the face-to-face events.
- 6.4 Following the Autumn 2023 events, analysis of feedback from library users highlighted a clear preference for the main library uses to remain at ground floor in the building, with ancillary uses at first floor. This resulted in various alterations being made to the building layout and appearance over the subsequent months. This evidence of design development that was responsive to feedback was well received at the follow up events in March 2024.
- 6.5 Recognising that young people were under-represented at the initial consultation events, further consultation took place with 50 students at Wath Academy in February 2024.
- 6.6 Local newspapers and newsletters have been used alongside social media posts, website content, and printed content to ensure events and key messages are communicated to as broad an audience as possible.

7. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 7.1 The planning application for the proposed scheme will be submitted in Summer 2024.
- 7.2 Completion of final detailed design will take place following approval of the planning application.
- 7.3 Decanting of the library and associated uses will be carried out prior to site clearance and demolition works.
- 7.4 Construction of the new building will follow, with completion aimed at Spring 2026.

8. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 8.1 The procurement activity as detailed in this report, must be undertaken in compliance with the relevant procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023, whichever is the applicable legislation at the time) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.
- 8.2 As outlined in the report the current available capital funding is £8,940,564. It is proposed to increase the funding available with the use of the Towns and Villages budget allocation. The detailed capital budget proposed is within appendix 2.

- 8.3 The revenue costs of operating the new facility have also been reviewed and the detail is contained in appendix 3. This takes account of the new facility and the new commercial unit.

9. Legal Advice and Implications

- 9.1 The proposed regeneration project is consistent with and being managed in accordance with the terms of the MOU between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Council of June 30th, 2023.
- 9.2 The proposal to supplement funding of the project with monies from the Towns and Villages Fund (the "Fund"), whose constitution and purposes was approved by the Cabinet Report of January 24th, 2022, is consistent with the aims of the Fund. The allocation of £1m from the Fund for the project is in accordance with the Round 2 Funding approved for the Fund which increased the original amount by £2m and is included in the briefing paper to cabinet of March 23rd, 2023.
- 9.3 Procurement approach and commercial structures and contractual terms will need to be alive to the design element of the project having been carried out by the Council's own design team.
- 9.4 Procurement of construction elements of the project will need to be compliant with then applicable procurement legislation and the Council's own constitution.

10. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from the recommendations within this report. Project development and delivery will be led by the RIDO team with support from internal and external resources.

11. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 11.1 The library strategy offers a rich core service provision for children and young people with a wide range of initiatives.
- 11.2 The service is aware that the number of young people aged 11 + accessing their library provision is low. The new library will improve the offer for all users but with particular focus on this age group, with the provision of a modern inviting space to deliver a variety of programmes including code clubs, young readers groups, and a makerspace with new digital technology. Young people will also be encouraged to volunteer at their new library.
- 11.3 Consultation has taken place with students from Wath Academy to hear their views on current plans and provide an opportunity for them to outline what they would like to see in the new library. A follow-up opportunity will be provided for these students once the library is complete to show students the impact of their suggestions. It is hoped that this will build a sense of pride in the library for the young people.

12. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 12.1 The project will include demolition and construction which will impact on the provision of the library service and the community provisions that utilise the library building.
- 12.2 The Council is working to provide temporary premises for the library service in Wath centre to enable key library services to operate throughout the construction period.
- 12.3 The service provides safe, trusted, and accessible places available to everyone and is keen to build on current levels of engagement and participation, particularly with under-represented groups and communities.
- 12.4 The redevelopment aims to positively impact on access for a range of sectors of the community with protected characteristics.
- 12.5 An Equality Screening Assessment has been carried out on this programme of work and is attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

13. Climate Impacts

- 13.1 During construction, there will be an increase in emissions from non-domestic buildings, transport, waste, and localised power generation.
- 13.2 The replacement of the existing building will ensure much improved energy efficiency in the operation of the library, commercial units and café. This will slightly offset the increased emissions during the demolition and rebuild of the library. Air source heat pumps and photovoltaic energy production will be included in the scheme. The site is well connected to transport links and is closely located to the Wath-Manvers cycleway; active travel will be encouraged.
- 13.3 The Council will ensure emission reducing measures are implemented wherever feasible in the construction, operation, and maintenance of the building and public realm.
- 13.4 When appointed, the main contractor will be responsible for compliance with relevant building regs and other relevant legislation, which RMBC will monitor carefully.
- 13.5 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 5.

14. Implications for Partners

- 14.1. The project will have a positive impact on the local area providing improved services for local people and an improved sense of place.

15. Risks and Mitigation

15.1 The main risks are:

- Temporary premises for the library during construction.
- General construction market risks
- Delivery timescales and meeting funding grant deadlines.

15.2 **Risk 1:** Issues securing the ideal type of temporary premises for the library could impact on continuity of services and impact on provision temporarily.

Mitigation: The assets team are looking into various options for temporary accommodation. Libraries are developing a plan to continue delivering services via alternative means if the temporary accommodation is not sufficient.

15.3 **Risk 2:** General construction market risks in relation to saturation of the market, availability of contractors and materials, and increasing costs are identified.

Mitigation: Market engagement has continued throughout the project and regular cost management activities have taken place. A procurement strategy that reflects the market will be followed.

15.4 **Risk 3:** The government-imposed deadline for project completion is 31st March 2026, however given the stage the project is at a delay beyond this date is expected. There is a risk that the funder will not agree an extension.

Mitigation: Any required extension or variation will be sought with the funder in advance to mitigate risks to delivery. Additional funding from the Towns and Villages fund, if approved by Cabinet, will allow for spend beyond the March 2026 deadline.

15.5 The wider project risk register is regularly monitored and reported.

16. Accountable Officers

Lorna Vertigan, Head of Regeneration

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	12/07/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	10/06/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	10/06/24

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).