

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 16 December 2024

Report Title

Our Places Fund

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-wide

Report Summary

At the Council meeting on 28 February 2024, an allocation of £2million was approved to deliver tangible improvements in places where residents live and to build on the success of the Towns and Villages Fund. This allocation has been named the Our Places Fund (OPF).

In addition, this report recommends that an additional £2million of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Mayor's Sustainability Fund be allocated to this project. This fund can be used to enhance the existing OPF scheme which in turn will create more impact and contribute to the Council's priority to make 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving'.

Through borough wide consultation and engagement, the Council has identified various themes highlighted by residents as needing intervention to bring noticeable impact to the borough as a whole.

This report seeks approval to develop these interventions into detailed deliverable projects.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the inclusion of the additional £2million from the Mayor's Sustainability Fund which was allocated through SYMCA, so that the allocated funds for the OPF total £4million.
2. Approve the development of thematic interventions described at Section 2 and delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Section 151 Officer to add, amend or replace a scheme should it become unfeasible or undeliverable.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Minutes of the Council Meeting 28/02/24](#) (Section 103/24 (11) p.24)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Our Places Fund

Our Places Fund

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 28 February 2024, it was resolved “that the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F [of the Budget and Financial Strategy for 24/25] be approved”.
- 1.2 One of the capital investment priorities that was identified was the Our Places Fund, with £2million being allocated to its development and delivery.
- 1.3 The funding was allocated to deliver tangible improvements in the places where residents live and to build on the success of the Towns and Villages Fund, which is bringing improvements to centres in 23 locations across the borough.
- 1.4 The objectives of the OPF focus on improving the public realm in key areas across the borough and bringing life back to areas that currently detract from the local environment. The investment will improve the sense of pride of place and will support the Council’s priority for ‘Every Neighbourhood Thriving’.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Areas for Investment

- 2.1.1 Following analysis of borough-wide consultation, a range of emerging areas for investment have been identified, as follows:

Civic Centre Improvements

- 2.1.2 In recognition of the important role local town centres play in the lives of people across the Borough, an allocation is proposed to improve the user experience of civic centres. Residents identified the following as important issues for intervention:

- Condition of shops and surrounding vicinity
- Opportunities provided by underused land
- Environment and street scene
- Condition of paving and green space
- Bins and litter

- 2.1.3 During a scheme development period up to August 2025 local consultation will be undertaken to formulate the detail and feasibility of a programme of targeted and bespoke interventions.

Indicative Allocation = £1,500,000

Cenotaphs, Memorials and Monuments

- 2.1.4 Residents identified the importance and pride in the Borough’s cenotaphs and memorials, the history and the legacy they represent and the need to honour this

through maintenance and improvement. Investment will be made in creating, shaping and updating spaces for people to reflect and respect.

Areas identified in the public consultation include Greasbrough, and Aston and Todwick. In the period up to August 2025, suitable areas will be identified and a programme of interventions developed. This is anticipated to include green space and seating improvements, alongside other improvement themes identified in this report.

Indicative Allocation = £300,000

2.1.5 **Pedestrian Movement**

The addition of the active travel funding will allow the OPF investment to invest in improving the pedestrian experience, which was evident as a consistent theme throughout the consultation responses. Residents highlighted the potential to:

- Rectify uneven paving
- Footpath resurfacing
- Create better accessibility to well used community amenities
- Improve safety and suitability of crossing points
- Improve bus shelters

Indicative Allocation = £1,400,000

2.1.6 The projects proposed will be bespoke to the issues and surroundings of each location centring around the Council's priority of making 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving' and in line with the OPF objectives.

2.2 **Supporting the Borough's Principal Towns**

2.2.1 In addition to the OPF consultation and continuing the theme of investment in local centres, there is existing evidence of demand for further intervention from communities where development work is already underway, areas such as Wath, Dinnington, Maltby and Swinton.

2.2.2 Wath and Dinnington have received significant external funding from the Capital Regeneration Grant (£8.94m and £11.05m respectively) plus an additional allocation from the Towns & Villages programme of £1m was attributed to each area.

2.2.3 Similarly, further improvements have been identified through community engagement in Maltby and Swinton that would benefit from and align with the principles of OPF. The following schemes are developed to design stage and are therefore put forward as a first phase of investment.

Maltby

2.2.4 In Maltby, as part of the Towns & Villages Fund, an extensive scheme of public realm improvements will be undertaken. In response to consultation on the proposed

scheme, an additional allocation will be made from OPF to enable the works to extend along the full length of the High Street.

Indicative Allocation = £500,000

Swinton

- 2.2.5 In Swinton, a redevelopment of the town centre is underway and has to date provided a refurbished library and Civic Hall. Works due to be extended include public realm upgrades. In response to previous community comments throughout the lifespan of this project, additional funding from OPF would enable additional public realm works to be undertaken.

Indicative Allocation = £300,000

2.3 Project Delivery

- 2.3.1 Following Cabinet approval to proceed with the programme, uniquely designed projects will be developed in response to the thematic areas.
- 2.3.2 Design, development, and implementation of projects will be managed by the Regeneration team, in consultation with relevant internal services or using appropriately procured consultant teams if necessary.
- 2.3.3 The OPF is a capital project, therefore, the long-term revenue implications will be carefully considered when developing the programme and throughout the design process. It is important that any scheme delivered can be maintained without increasing revenue implications for the Council, to ensure that solutions are sustainable and long-lasting. Where necessary, a 5-year maintenance budget will be built into the funding allocation for each project.
- 2.3.4 If schemes become undeliverable due to currently unforeseeable circumstances, as recommended in this report, delegated authority to decommission schemes and reallocate funding will be held by the Strategic Director for Regeneration & Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 2.3.5 The £2million SYMCA Mayor's Sustainability Fund can be used for infrastructure improvements, supporting sustainable and active travel solutions. The funding would need approval from SYMCA to be allocated to this project, and this would need to be ringfenced to those parts of the programme supporting active travel and/or public transport. The emerging themes from the consultation support the allocation of this funding to enhance the OPF programme by improving the pedestrian experience.

3. Options Considered & Recommended Proposal

Option 1 – Do Nothing (Not recommended)

- 3.1 Using the funding for the purposes outlined above has been approved in the budget for 2024/25. The do-nothing option would see the funding earmarked for the OPF being reallocated within the Council budget. At submission to Cabinet, it remains a

Council priority to listen to the community and deliver improvements in line with the OPF objectives. This option is therefore discounted.

Option 2 – Do not approve the themes for investment (Not recommended)

- 3.2 The themes proposed reflect those commonly referred to in the consultation exercise and are within the remit of the funding allocated. To divert away from these themes would require further consultation or a rescoping of the fund's remit. This option is not recommended.

Option 3 – Approve themes and add £2million SYMCA Mayor's Sustainability Fund (Recommended)

- 3.3 This option would be to combine the £2million of funding from the South Yorkshire Mayor's Sustainability Fund creating greater impact throughout the borough with the Our Places Funding at £4million. This will require SYMCA approval, and this allocation can only be spent on infrastructure works supporting walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport use.

If this option is taken forward, further detail on the use of the Mayor's Sustainability Fund will be provided in the 2025/2026 Capital Programme Report.

Option 4 – Do not delegate authority (Not recommended)

- 3.4 This option to withhold delegation for decision making would mean consultation with Cabinet would be required once interventions have been developed.

- 3.4.1 It is highly likely that this would cause the Our Places Fund programme to extend beyond the intended March 2026 deadline for delivery and funding spend. As such, it is recommended that this option be discounted in favour of a streamlined programme and reduced risk.

Option 5 – Delegate Authority to Strategic Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Section 151 Officer (Recommended)

- 3.5 This option provides delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Section 151 Officer.

- 3.5.1 Following the December meeting of Cabinet, projects will be developed under the management of the Regeneration Service, with approval to proceed to delivery being granted in accordance with the approved Cabinet delegation.

- 3.5.2 Delegated authority includes the authority to decommission any projects that become undeliverable due to any currently unforeseeable circumstances.

4. Consultation on Proposal

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place across the Borough and ran from 21 October 2024 until 17 November 2024.

- 4.2 The aim of the consultation was to provide all Rotherham residents with an

opportunity to identify specific areas for improvement, and detail what improvements they would like to see made using the newly developed Our Places Fund supported by the funding for active travel.

4.3 The consultation was undertaken through various channels, including Council online portals and webpages, all social media channels, press adverts and articles, via Ward Members surgeries and Ward Newsletters, via Community Neighbourhood teams as well as emailing to various businesses and stakeholders and subscribers of the Council's e-newsletter.

4.4 The following Communication methods were used:

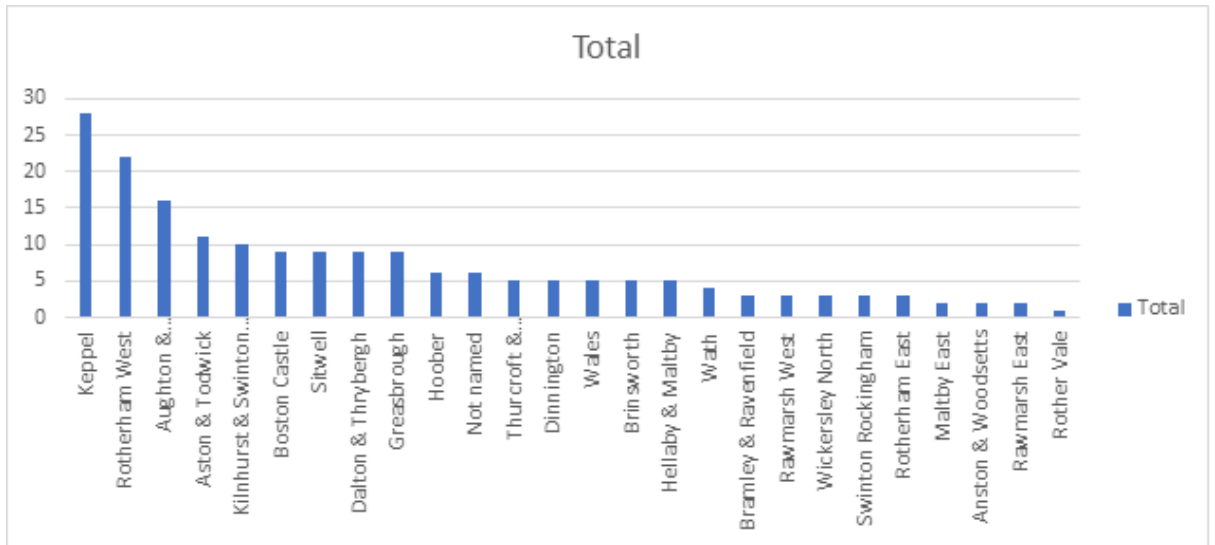
- **Email** – To Ward Members, MPs, Business Growth Board, Town Board and Employment & Skills Board.
- **Newsletters** – All ward newsletters and the Council's Rotherham Roundup.
- **Press release** to local media outlets issued at the start of the consultation.
- **Newspaper adverts** – Half page adverts over 3 consecutive weeks in three local newspapers.
- **Social media** – Council social media channels used to promote the consultation and encourage residents to participate. Boosted social media posts to reach a wider audience resulted in a reach of over 12,600 people.
- **Neighbourhood Coordinators** – Posters, leaflets and general information distributed to neighbourhood coordinators for sharing in their wards.
- **Internal communications** – Information included in Council staff newsletters and briefings to encourage Rotherham based staff to complete the survey.
- **Printed content** - 600 A3 posters and 4,000 A5 leaflets were distributed throughout all wards in the borough and displayed in prominent locations including community buildings, shops, café's, surgeries, churches and leisure centres.

4.5 To enable residents with no internet access to participate, paper copies were made available by telephone and in all libraries and other public Council buildings, with advertising on digital screens where available, encouraging data capture from protected characteristic groups such as age and different ethnic backgrounds.

4.6 A total of 186 responses were received during the consultation period. A range of suggestions for interventions were made including:

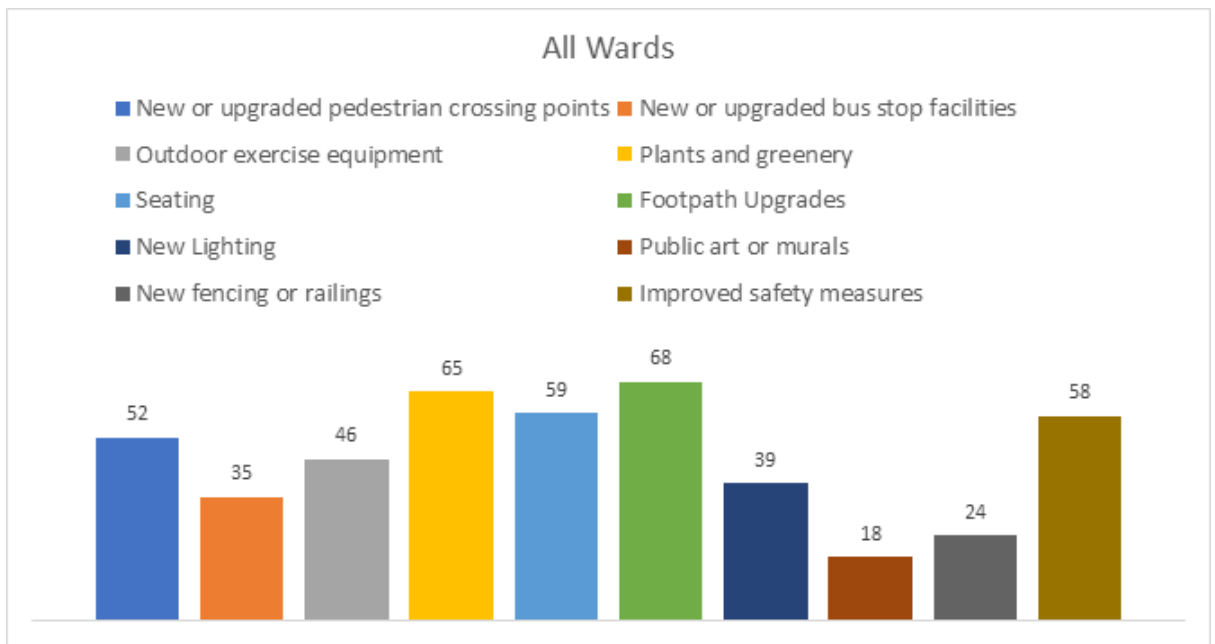
- Footpath upgrades
- New or upgraded pedestrian crossing points
- New or upgraded bus stop facilities
- Outdoor exercise equipment
- Plants and greenery
- Seating
- New lighting
- Public art/murals
- New fencing or railings
- Improved safety measures (e.g. CCTV)

4.7 The chart below identifies the number of responses received for each ward.



4.8 The chart below highlights the types of improvements residents would like to see made. The top three interventions are identified as:

- Footpath upgrades
- Plants and greenery
- Seating



4.9 Respondents also raised a number of other themes which will not be addressed through the OPF:

4.9.1 **Play Spaces:** the upgrade and benefit of play was an overwhelmingly common theme across the Borough. The Council has committed to a programme of play renovations through 2024, 25 and 26. The outcome of the consultation will be shared with the services delivering these schemes and comments will be used to influence the allocation and use of this funding.

4.9.2 **Cleanliness:** litter & maintenance: the need for more bins was a common theme which will be addressed as part of the civic centre intervention above, however a number of other hotspots were identified. While the Our Places Fund is a capital investment this information will be assessed by the Council's Community Safety and Street Scene service to understand how targeted revenue interventions could be used to address concerns.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 To date, the following activities have taken place:

- August – October 2024 – Consultation with residents and relevant members took place to develop initial ideas for project proposals for the funding.
- October - November 2024 Borough-wide Consultation as detailed above took place.
- November onwards project locations developed by officers from consultation information and the Council's priority to make 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving'.

5.2 The proposed timeline for design and delivery of projects is as follows:

Phase 1 Maltby & Swinton

- January 2025 – April 2025 – First round of schemes developed.
- April 2025 – August 2025 - First round of schemes implemented.

5.2.1 Phase 2 Civic Centres, Cenotaphs, Memorials & Monuments and Pedestrian Movement

- April 2025 – August 2025 – Second round of schemes developed.
- August 2025 – December 2025 - Second round of schemes implemented.
- November 2025 – March 2026 – First and second round of schemes completed.

5.3 Due to the seasonal nature of implementing soft landscaping works, projects may need to be delivered in a phased approach to fit with planting seasons.

5.4 An annual report will be provided to Cabinet, updating on progress against the programme detailed above.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The schemes identified will be funded from the £2m capital budget allocation approved as part of the 2024/25 budget. This covers the years 2024/25 and 2025/26. In addition, the report recommends that £2m from the Sustainability Fund be added

to this pot, to create a £4m budget for the OPF. This is subject to approval by SYMCA. The schemes included have been assessed as capital in nature so can be funded from the budget allocation.

6.2 The revenue implications of each proposal have also been reviewed to ensure that there are no new revenue commitments and that any maintenance requirements can be met within existing approved revenue budgets.

6.3 Where there is a need to engage external contractors, this must be procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023 (whichever is the applicable legislation based on the route to market chosen) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The use of the Sustainability Fund monies for the schemes set out in this report is consistent with the terms of the Sustainability Fund grant. Further these terms will need to be complied with in relation to amongst other things outputs, timescales and clawback.

7.2 As stated above, where there is a requirement to engage external contractors, the relevant contract will need to be procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023. An appropriate set of terms and conditions will need to be put in place with each contractor, setting out the full specifications of the projects.

7.3 Where the Council is working alongside a partner and funding is made available to them, a subsidy control assessment will need to be undertaken in respect of each project.

7.4 The functions described in this report are not reserved to Council in legislation or regulations and therefore are executive functions, exercisable by the Cabinet.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 There are no direct implications for Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 It is likely that some proposed projects will result in road closures being a requirement to undertake work. This could impact on transport routes across the borough and will need to be coordinated with other highways work to ensure minimal disruption. Plans will need to include taking into consideration protected characteristics such as disability and age where possible.

10.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 1.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 During construction, there will be an increase in emissions from transport, waste, and localised power generation.

11.2 Many of the proposed projects will include increased planting which will contribute slightly to offsetting any increased CO2 emissions.

11.3 The Council will ensure emission reducing measures are implemented wherever feasible in the construction, operation, and maintenance of the projects.

11.4 When appointed, each contractor will be responsible for compliance with relevant legislation, which RMBC will monitor carefully.

11.5 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 2.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no anticipated implications for Partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 **Risk 1:** Construction market costs of materials may impact deliverability of projects within programme and/or budget.

13.1.1 **Mitigation:** A strong understanding of delivering Minor Works projects will be built throughout the OPF implementation.

A succinct programme and application of contingency aims to tackle potential inflationary impacts.

The landscape design team undertook a market engagement exercise during the summer of 2024 and regular cost management activities will be carried out throughout the project lifespan.

An external works framework is being developed with procurement that will reduce tendering timelines and provide additional resource capacity for in house teams.

13.2 **Risk 2:** Works may require the temporary closing of key highways and access routes causing disruption in localities, which may be particularly impactful to neighbouring properties and local businesses.

13.2.1 **Mitigation:** Design and delivery of the projects will consider road closures carefully to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum.

- 13.2.2 Collaborate with communications, neighbourhoods, design, and delivery teams to engage with local stakeholders to understand access requirements and mitigate concerns.
- 13.2.3 Robust logistics and traffic management plans will be required for all projects to minimise traffic impacts.
- 13.3 **Risk 3:** Works may take place adjacent to strategic highways with significant volumes of traffic which can pose a safety risk to the operational teams delivering the works.
 - 13.3.1 **Mitigation:** Early engagement with the Street Works enforcement team will take place during design and development to identify traffic and timing restrictions.
 - 13.3.2 Safe delivery methods will be developed using the wealth of Council experience of delivering work on busy highways.
- 13.4 **Risk 4:** Governance procedures / processes affect timescales to make decisions.
 - 13.4.1 **Mitigation:** Authority is delegated to Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Section 151 Officer is critical to streamline decision making and support timely project delivery.
- 13.5 **Risk 5:** Council departments capacity to fulfil work to tight deadlines due to different team capacity and resources. This could seriously affect timescales on delivery of the project.
 - 13.5.1 **Mitigation:** More resource and time to support timely project delivery is required.

14. Accountable Officers

Simon Moss, Assistant Director Regeneration and Environment

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	02/12/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22/11/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	13/11/24

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