

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Covid recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>The Leisure &amp; Development Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>21 December 2021</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021 -2025)</b>	
Strategic Theme	A Thriving Economy
Outcome	Council facilitates towns and villages in the borough to continue to provide quality environments which evolve to meet the needs of their citizens, businesses, and visitors to them
Lead Officer	Interim Head of Service Prosperity & Place

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date to be completed
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date: to be completed
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: to be completed
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## 1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme and to seek approval for the proposed two strand approach to enable officers to prepare a detailed programme plan for submission to the funding body.

## 2.0 Background

In November 2021 Council officers received notification of the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme from the Department for Communities.

The Small Settlements Regeneration Programme is made up of combined funding from the Department for Communities [DfC], the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs [DAERA] and the Department for Infrastructure [DfI] as follows (final amounts may be subject to some variation):

DfC	£605,920
DAERA	£698,840
DfI	£605,920
[Capital]	£1,911,000

Each Department has criteria relating to how their funding can be used as follows:

**DfI funding** must be used to deliver projects, or elements of projects, that contribute to DfI's policy interests: supporting active travel, promoting connectivity and access to services, and/or create and enhance green / blue spaces, for example could be drawn from the following exemplar project ideas:

- Cycle tracks or lanes - including pop-up cycle lanes and creating space on pathways for cyclists;
- Pavement or footway widening to allow for physical distancing;
- Cycle parking and charging facilities;
- Connection pathways to access town centres the centre of settlements and key services – adapting existing routes and/or creating desirable new ingress and egress routes;
- Tree planting incidental to creating/improving walking or cycling paths.

**DfC and DAERA funding** must be used to deliver regeneration benefits for settlements covered by the programme. Objectives could include support for village investments such as:

- Revitalisation;
- Public realm;
- Derelict and vacant site enhancement;
- Environmental improvements;
- Conservation and upgrading of rural culture and heritage (natural and built); and
- Gateway projects.

Council is asked to contribute 10% match funding which can either be resource or capital.

An additional resource allocation of £148k is also included and can be considered as part of the 10% match funding. The resource allocation and any in-kind element of the 10% partnership funding will only be considered eligible if it relates to additional costs to the Council resulting from the delivery of the programme.

Key aim of the programme is Covid Recovery for small settlements up to 4,999 population. Projects must be strategic and support outcomes that have a substantial impact on local communities.

Programme Principles:

- Projects should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders.
- Projects should be based on agreed local investment plans.
- Projects should address specific local concerns and deliver specific, measurable benefits.
- Programme parameters should be flexible enough to allow for the development of local solutions.
- The Programme can support new and innovative actions; and
- Projects supported should include 'quick wins', delivering visible results within reasonable timescales.

### **3.0 Proposal**

Council officers from Prosperity & Place and the Funding Unit have met and designed a two-strand approach for Member's consideration and approval.

#### **A. Continuation of the Village Renewal Schemes – Circa £1.41M**

Targeting Village Renewal projects that are currently on the Council's capital list.

Substantial research has already been conducted in relation to the Village Renewal Plans developed under the Rural Development Programme and will address the programme principles listed in 2.0 above.

Officers will develop criteria to prioritise the remaining projects and present the proposals to a future meeting for Member's approval. Members will need to be mindful of the criteria from each of the Departments and prioritise projects accordingly to the available budgets.

#### **B. Village Restoration and Reactivation Fund – Circa £500k.**

Grant based to address current or imminent dereliction, restore the vernacular appearance of villages, and improve village life by improving facilities for community use.

Officers will develop criteria for application to the fund and present the proposals to a future meeting for Member's approval.

The programme has some general criteria that the Council is required to apply:

- Settlements 1,000 - 4,999 population. [settlements slightly under threshold may be considered].
- Projects must be within a 1-mile radius of village/settlement centre.
- Projects over £30k will be subject to CPD requirements as dictated by the funders.
- Projects must be deliverable within the spend deadline.

#### **C. Active Travel and Electric Charging Points**

Officers are conscious that there may be too few projects that comply with the DfI criteria to achieve the circa £606k budget spend. In this event, it is proposed that any remaining budget would be used to create active travel infrastructure and/or electric vehicle charging points in qualifying villages.

If this is required to utilise the available budgets, Officers will submit more detailed plans for Member's approval prior to any financial commitments.

Key Milestones:

- High-level Investment Plan submitted to DfC by 23 December 2021.
- Indicative Letter of Offer issued from January 2022.
- Fully agree a costed Programme Plan with the Departments before March 2022.
- Funds spent by March 2023.
- Post Project Evaluation to be conducted.

**4.0 Next steps:**

If this high-level investment plan is approved by Members, it will be submitted to the Departments for their approval. Once signed off by the Departments, officers will develop the detailed programme plan and bring back for Member's approval prior to programme launch.

**5.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members approve this high-level investment proposal for the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme to enable officers to seek Departmental approval.