



Doncaster Council

Agenda

To all Members of the

CABINET

Notice is given that a Meeting of the Cabinet is to be held as follows:

Venue: Room 007a and b, Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU

Date: Tuesday, 15th October, 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Items

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. To consider the extent, if any, to which the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting.
3. Public Questions and Statements.

(A period not exceeding 20 minutes for questions and statements from members of the public and Elected Members to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones. Questions/Statements should relate specifically to an item of business on the agenda and be limited to a maximum of 100 words. As stated within Executive Procedure Rule 3.3 each person will be allowed to submit one question/statement per meeting. A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by e-mail to the Governance Team no later than 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 10th October, 2019. Each question or statement must give the name and address of the person submitting it. Questions/Statements should be sent to the Governance Team, Floor 2, Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU, or by email to Democratic.Services@doncaster.gov.uk).

**Damian Allen
Chief Executive**

Issued on: Monday, 7 October 2019

Governance Services Officer for this meeting:

Amber Torrington
Tel. 01302 737462

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

www.doncaster.gov.uk

4. Declarations of Interest, if any.
5. Decision Record Forms from the meeting held on 1st October 2019 for noting (previously circulated).

A. Reports where the public and press may not be excluded

Key Decisions

- | | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 6. | Transforming Cities Phase 2: Seeking approval to submit Sheffield City Region bid for transport interventions in Doncaster, to the Department for Transport. If successful, approval to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently draw down funding. | 1 - 16 |
| 7. | To Review the Council Tax Long-term Empty Homes Premium. | 17 - 24 |

Cabinet Members

Cabinet Responsibility For:

Chair – Ros Jones, Mayor of Doncaster	Budget and Policy Framework
Vice-Chair – Deputy Mayor Councillor Glyn Jones	Housing and Equalities
Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills and Economic Development
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.



Doncaster Council

Date: 15th October 2019

Report to Chair and Members of Cabinet

Transforming Cities Phase 2: Seeking approval to submit Sheffield City Region bid for transport interventions in Doncaster, to the Department for Transport. If successful, approval to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently draw down funding

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Blackham	Mexborough, Conisbrough, Edenthorpe & Kirk Sandall, Stainforth & Barnby Dun, Hatfield, Thorne & Moorends, Bentley. Adwick le Street & Carcroft, Town, Edlington & Warmsworth, Balby South, Hexthorpe and Balby North, Rossington & Bawtry, Tickhill & Wadworth, Wheatley Hills & Intake, and Armthorpe.	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In September 2018 the Sheffield City Region (SCR) was confirmed as a shortlisted area for the next phase of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF). The requirement was to submit a draft business case to the Department for Transport (DfT) in June 2019 before submission of the final business case in November 2019, for consideration as part of a nationwide £1.22bn funding pot available.
2. This report seeks approval to submit the SCR strategic outline business case to the DfT, for transport interventions in Doncaster. It seeks that if successful, approval be given to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently draw down funding.

3. The bid will be submitted to the Department for Transport with three funding scenarios of low, medium and high. If the funding bid is successful, the total value over the three year programme within Doncaster is:
 - Low - £40.247m
 - Medium - £44.847m
 - High - £49.447m
4. There is an expectation that local contributions will also be required, with a minimum of 15% at a whole programme level being in line with other DfT funding competitions. In Doncaster, the proposed level of local contribution is between £6 million and £7.4 million depending on the low, medium or high funding scenario. The project team have identified eligible match funding from a number of sources, including the Integrated Transport Block, the Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham Local Transport Pot, Section 106 and the Local Growth Fund. The gap funding ask would therefore be between £2.5 million and £3.8 million and would be required from the Council's Corporate Capital Programme over the 3 year programme, which, if successful would commence in 2020.

EXEMPT REPORT

5. Not exempt

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.
 - Approve the Council submitting the funding bid for Transforming Cities Phase 2.
 - Note that further work will be undertaken on the match funding available and the remaining balance will be funded from the Council's Capital Programme due to be approved in March 2020
 - Delegation in respect of the final design of the specific schemes in the phase 2 programme to the Director of Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Mayor and the Portfolio holder; and
 - If the bid is successful, delegate negotiating and agreeing the terms and conditions, and the decision to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently drawing down the funding to the Director of Economy and Environment and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Mayor.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

7. If successful the Transforming Cities Phase 2 Programme has the potential to improve connectivity for Doncaster residents to key urban centres and employment hubs. It will improve public transport on key commuter corridors and provide an improved active travel network.

The potential improvements in public transport and our active travel network could lead to a significant modal shift, leading to air quality and congestion benefits.

The TCF Phase 2 programme contains active travel schemes, the delivery of which is linked to the success of 'Get Doncaster Moving'. Physical activity and sport is one of nine transformational programmes within Doncaster Growing Together and will accelerate the progress of Doncaster's 10yr Physical Activity and Sport

strategy.

This is reflected within the Get Doncaster Moving programme with Cycling and Walking being 2 of the 5 themes and sharing a project board that will ensure that transformational change is achieved and the potential benefits realised.

Potential interventions funded by Transforming Cities are integral to the walking and cycling themes, providing the platform to achieving the outcome of increased numbers of residents making journeys by active travel means.

BACKGROUND

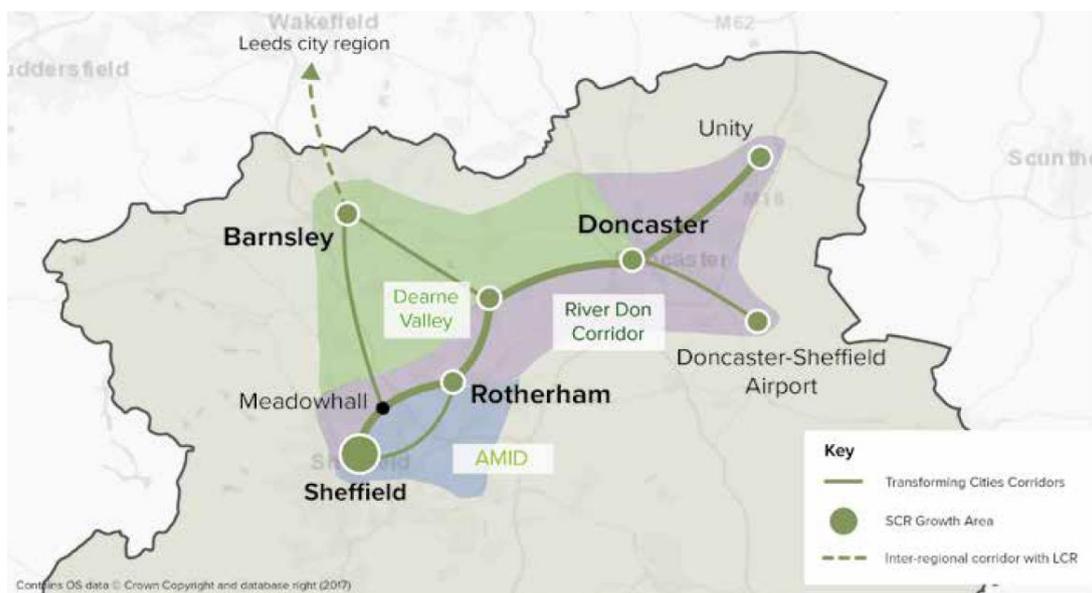
8. The TCF aims to drive up productivity through improved connections between urban centres and suburbs. To do this, the DfT will aim to:

- Invest in new local transport infrastructure to boost productivity
- Improve public transport and sustainable transport connectivity
- Improve access to employment sites, Enterprise Zones, development sites, or an urban centre that offers particular growth/employment opportunities.

A significant TCF allocation will strengthen the SCR's position as a globally significant advanced manufacturing and engineering centre by beginning to reverse the decades of underinvestment in the transport system and wider infrastructure, which has limited the flow of ideas, people and business between the urban areas and major employment sites.

The overall aim of the SCR's TCF bid is to promote a series of interventions that contribute towards the SCR's objective to improve intra-city region connections that either:

- Connect areas of deprivation/transport poverty to areas of economic opportunity by public and sustainable transport modes; or
- Seek to achieve significant mode shift away from the private car on key corridors that could stifle future growth ambitions, across three 'macro' corridors – River Don, Dearne Valley and AMID, as illustrated below.



The draft Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) submitted by the SCR in June 2019 included three funding scenarios as requested by DfT – these are labelled ‘Low’, ‘Medium’ and ‘High’. The bid was for the following values of DfT funding across the SCR over the four-year programme:

- Low - £183m
- Medium - £204m
- High - £227m.

All of the values include 5% for inflation across the funding period and 10% for risk.

The bid itself was endorsed by the SCR Mayoral Combined Authority at its meeting on 3 June 2019, with the Mayor commenting as follows:

"It is critical that we improve the transport system in our region, to create better access to major employment sites, reduce congestion, better integrate different modes of transport and make our transport network fit for the 21st Century. That's why it's so important that we get this Transforming Cities Fund bid right, and why we've been working closely with partners across South Yorkshire to ensure that our bid has real potential to drive transformational change for our communities."

Council Officers have been working with SCR Officers and the DfT to refine the draft SOBC with a view to submitting a final SOBC by 28 November 2019.

The SCR's TCF package comprises three main elements:

- **Public Transport** – infrastructure improvements aimed at improving the performance of the public transport network, principally journey time, punctuality and reliability, within and between the main urban centres and the identified growth locations.
- **Active Travel** – drawing on the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the recent appointment of an Active Travel Commissioner to develop further the network of active travel routes identified in the draft LCWIP, between the areas of transport poverty and the areas of opportunity, the main urban centres and those corridors with the greatest opportunity for mode shift, taking advantage of the relatively low commuting distances across the SCR at present.
- **Rail** – enhancing accessibility to/from and at rail stations within the SCR and interventions that support connectivity to HS2/Northern Powerhouse Rail touchpoints so that the rail network can become a viable alternative to the private car for those taking advantage of the significant economic growth opportunities.

In order to develop the business case, a pan-authority Project Board was established which was led by the SCR Executive Team and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE). Whilst the aim has been to collate a package of schemes which meet both DfT's criteria and the SCR's own local objectives, the Project Board has sought to ensure an appropriate allocation for each of the three corridors commensurate with the scale of challenges and opportunity identified.

Following further development work on the proposed schemes included in the Draft SOBC and an initial appraisal of value for money, the programme of interventions in Doncaster has been refined. The current TCF programme includes the following:

- Schemes that improve accessibility to our local train stations
- Improvements to connectivity to key employment sites, including iPort
- Enhancements to our urban centre transport network
- Interventions to improve bus journey time on key corridors

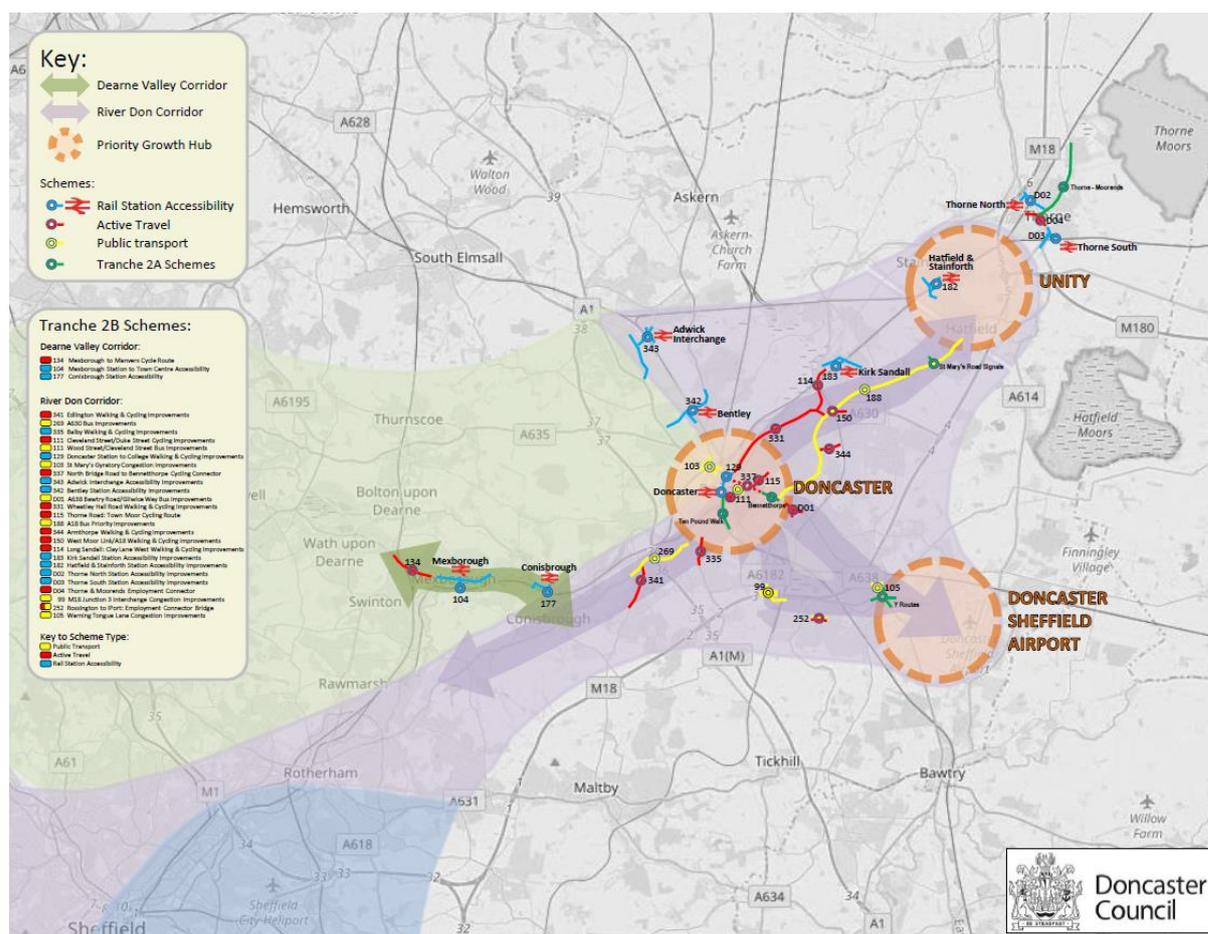
Scheme	Funding Scenario		
	(Low)	(Medium)	(High)
	Scheme Value	Scheme Value	Scheme Value
Doncaster West Employment Cycling Connector	£2.3m	£0	£0
A630 Bus Improvements	£4m	£0	£0
St Mary's Gyratory Congestion Improvements	£0	£1.2m	£0
Conisbrough Station Accessibility	£1.2m	£0	£0
Cleveland Street/Duke Street Cycling Improvements	£3m	£0	£0
Wood Street/Cleveland Street Bus Improvements	£1.5m	£0	£0
Edlington Walking & Cycling Improvements	£0.35m	£0	£0
Balby Walking & Cycling Improvements	£2.126m	£0	£0
Rossington to iPort: Employment Connector Bridge	£2.8m	£0	£0
Rossington to iPort: Employment Connector Bridge	£2.8m	£0	£0
M18 Junction 3 Interchange Congestion Improvements	£5.5m	£0	£0
Warning Tongue Lane Congestion Improvements	£0.288m	£0	£0
A18 Bus Priority Improvements	£1.8m	£0	£0
Kirk Sandall Station Accessibility Improvements	£1.693m	£0	£0
Hatfield & Stainforth Station Accessibility Improvements	£1m	£0	£0
Thorne North Station Accessibility Improvements	£0	£0.5m	£0
Thorne South Station Accessibility Improvements	£0	£0.5m	£0
Thorne Road: Town Moor Cycling Route	£1.7m	£0	£0
Armthorpe Walking & Cycling Improvements	£0.24m	£0	£0
Wheatley Hall Road Walking & Cycling Improvements	£0	£2.2m	£1.4m
West Moor Link/A18 Walking & Cycling Improvements	£2.6m	£0	£0
Doncaster Station to College Walking & Cycling Improvements	£0.5m	£0	£0
Bentley Station Accessibility Improvements	£0.8m	£0	£0
Adwick Interchange Accessibility Improvements	£1.3m	£0	£0
Long Sandall: Clay Lane West Walking & Cycling Improvements	£0	£0	£0.9m
Thorne & Moorends Employment Connector	£0.65m	£0	£0
A638 Bawtry Rd/Gliwice Way Bus Improvements	£0.2m	£0.2m	£2.3m
North Bridge Road to South Parade Cycling Connector	£1.9m	£0	£0

The table above shows the list of Doncaster schemes to be submitted to the DfT as part of a Combined Authority bid. The programme has been through the SCR assurance framework incorporating eligibility appraisal process to best align schemes that will meet strict funding parameters set by DfT.

An outline implementation plan has been developed, but more detailed delivery plans for each of the schemes are yet to be developed beyond a small number of schemes that have been earmarked for implementation within the first year of the programme. The TCF programme envisages work starting in March 2020 and being complete by the end of March 2023.

The total value of the funding bid over the four year programme within Doncaster is:

- Low - £40.247m
- Medium - £44.847m
- High - £49.447m



There is an expectation that local contributions will also be required, with a minimum of 15% at a whole programme level being in line with other DfT funding competitions. In Doncaster, the proposed level of local contribution is between £6 million and £7.4 million depending on the low, medium or high funding scenario. The project team have identified eligible match funding from a number of sources, including the Integrated Transport Block, the Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham Local Transport Pot, Section 106 and the Local Growth Fund. Doncaster will continue to seek opportunities around any funding sources to minimise the match funding corporate capital ask. The gap funding ask is currently estimated to be between £2.5 million and £3.8 million and would be required from the Council's Corporate Capital Programme over the 3-year programme, which, if successful would commence in 2020.

It is intended to retain the essence of the Project Board structure for the implementation of the works, supported by individual project teams/work packages that will be led by Officers within the South Yorkshire Local Authorities and/or SYLTE as appropriate.

Beyond the submission of the final SOBC, approval of individual schemes or smaller package of interventions will be undertaken using the SCR's agreed Assurance Framework. Funding for the TCF programme will come via the SCR Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA).

The majority of the individual schemes within the agreed package will be delivered by the South Yorkshire Local Authorities and SYPTE, using established procurement procedures. This mirrors the approach taken on other funding bids with the DfT and other Government departments and will be underpinned by back-to-back agreements between the MCA and the South Yorkshire Local Authorities.

The TCF programme will be subject to a programme of before and after monitoring and evaluation, in line with the Assurance Framework. This will demonstrate the extent to which TCF objectives were met, monitor performance of the individual elements of the programme and ensure that any potential issues post implementation are identified and addressed.

Once the programmed has been fully defined by DfT, local stakeholder consultation will be undertaken.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9. Two options have been considered:

Do something- Submit the funding bid with SCR to Dft and potentially benefit from substantial investment Doncaster's transport network

Do nothing- Failure to submit the funding bid will result in Doncaster not benefiting from potential investment.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

10. Submission of the funding bid provides an opportunity for transformational investment in Doncaster transport network. If successful, it will allow Doncaster to improve its network of sustainable travel infrastructure, enabling communities and residents to consider other options for travel, potentially improving their health and wellbeing.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

11.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>The Transforming Cities programme has the potential to provide improved sustainable transport access to employment for Doncaster residents.</p> <p>The health benefits to businesses of employees travelling actively to work includes reduced absenteeism and improved productivity.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p>	<p>Increasing and enhancing our transport network could lead to an increase in residents being active, which contributes to a healthy and vibrant Doncaster.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	<p>Active travel provides opportunities for residents to explore their local area, be active in the outdoors and stay healthy in mind as well as body, helping to boost mood and self-esteem.</p> <p>It helps maintain social interaction and improve community cohesion.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>Physical activity including active travel maintains and improves muscle strength and the ability to balance is crucial in reducing the risk of falling.</p>
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>We will work together to promote the assets that Doncaster has not only to residents but visitors too.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

12. The main risk is the Transforming Cities Phase 2 funding bid is not supported/ only partially supported by the Department for Transport; this could potentially lead to a reduced allocation for Doncaster.

If the funding bid is successful, there will be a significant increase in delivery and implications for staff resource. Once we have a secured programme with a quantified value, recruitment will need to be undertaken. However, the challenging delivery milestones requires the scheme implementation to start immediately, in advance of funding being secured. It will therefore require schemes to be developed in advance to enable the required level of information to be provided in support of the Full Business Case. The minimum level of advanced scheme development would be the year 1 schemes. Development of these projects will be undertaken at risk, until schemes are in a position to enter into a funding agreement. This is in line with the process for the delivery of the major projects through the LGF SCRIF programme.

As with all new infrastructure it will increase the call on the routine maintenance budgets and therefore the Council will need to ensure the sufficient revenue resources are in the place to maintain the asset for its lifetime.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NJV Date 5th September 2019]

13. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence to do anything that individuals may generally do.

Doncaster Borough Council is a constituent council of the Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Combined Authority. That Authority is committed to the bid to the DfT for the transport interventions described in this report and has statutory powers over transport funding because it is responsible (in accordance with its own constitution) for transport decisions made in the Sheffield City Region.

If the bid is successful the Council will be required to enter into legally binding agreements in its role as member of the Combined Authority with the DfT and also following agreement reached to enter into contractual arrangements with Sheffield City Region.

Although the terms of these agreements have not yet been received, it is likely that they will include certain provisions and detail to deal with match funding, public procurement, deadlines for delivery and State Aid. Failure to comply with such terms will lead to claw back of funding. Further specific and bespoke legal advice on these agreements will be required if the bid is successful & the project progresses.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials DR Date 25/09/19]

14. The report outlines a TCF programme of between £40.3m and £49.5m of investment in Doncaster. This is intended to be financed from between £34.3m and £42.1m of TCF grant, plus match funding contributions of between £6.0m and £7.4m from the Council. The programme is at a formative stage and these values will be confirmed depending on how the business case is received and the programme develops.

The TCF grant originates from the DfT but with the SCR acting as accountable body and is still subject to submission of the SCR business case. This report is seeking approval to enter into a funding agreement with the SCR for the Doncaster elements should the grant be awarded. Financial Procedure Rules require acceptance of a grant of this value to be taken by key decision, which would be

required once the grant award has been confirmed and the terms and conditions have been found acceptable to the Council. Similar funding agreements from the SCR suggest that the main risks for the Council will be in relation to claw back for failure to deliver the works, agreed outcomes and incurring spend in line with how SCR profile the grant. Administration and reporting requirements of SCR funding agreements have also proved to be time consuming, the cost of which cannot normally be recovered from the grant. The Council will need to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to administer the grant for its lifetime.

The report identifies a number of potential external sources of Match funding that could contribute up to c. £3.5m: -

- LTP Integrated Transport Block (LTP ITB)

Based on 2019/20 values the Council receives c. £1.8m of LTP ITB per year via the SCR. For indicative purposes, the Council usually invests c. £1.1m in a programme of small schemes for Safer Roads, Network Management, Cycling and Sustainable Choices. There will be scope to align some of this programme with TCF Phase 2. The Council usually reserves the remaining balance, c. £0.7m for use on major transport projects, such as West Moor Link. The overall value of money available for this programme is likely to be dependent on the demands of other major projects requiring resources.

- Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham Local Transport Capital Pot (LTCP).

The Council has £1.1m of the current allocation remaining with all of it committed to Quality Streets £0.4m and Urban Centre Masterplan Highway Improvements £0.7m. Use on these projects has been formally agreed with the SCR with completion by close of 2020/21. There may be some scope to align some of the latter with TCF Phase 2 projects if the outcomes fit but £0.3m is already being used as match for TCF Phase 1 projects. To date there is no indication that there will be any announcement of new LTCP.

- Section 106 (S106)

There is little or no eligible S106 money currently held that could be used for this purpose, so it is assumed that the majority of this is expected to come from contributions that have not yet been received or are intended to be built into future agreements. No indication has been given as to how much this might be. S106 contributions are dependent on trigger points for payment that depend on the speed at which the developments are built out. There is a risk that these trigger points will not have been hit by the time the money is required and a further risk that the trigger points may not be hit at all if the developers have difficulty progressing their developments (e.g. economic downturn, remaining in business, lack of sales, etc.). The Council may have to find other resources, such as borrowing, to cover the period between when the money is needed and actually received.

- Local Growth Fund (LGF).

The current round of LGF funding to 2020/21 is currently over-programmed so any match funding from this source is likely to be dependent on further announcements of new funding and a successful bid.

The Council will continue to explore additional sources of external match funding but is currently forecast to require between £2.5m and £3.8m from its own resources, depending on the overall value of the programme being confirmed. The availability of these resources is reliant on the disposal of assets but, if these are achieved at the expected value and time, then there will be a surplus of between

£0.1m to £3.4m in 2020/21 and c. £8.0m in 2021/22. The budget review of the capital programme for 2020/21 onwards is imminent and any commitment of resources to this programme will need to be considered as part of that process; i.e. in the context of any other new bids Council wide and the option to defer or remove existing schemes as new priorities dictate.

If there is a shortfall in match funding from these sources the Council could decide to borrow money. If this is the case the cost of repayment will need to be built into the revenue budget, e.g. at £3.8m this would be £0.14m per annum. The decision to borrow would need to be taken by Full Council but this could be achieved through the budget setting process.

The report identifies the need to commence development work in advance of securing the grant. The service needs to provide a more detailed breakdown of this work, along with the estimated cost and proposed funding strategy. It is assumed that some elements of this will be revenue in nature and could be met from existing budgets within Economy & Environment. It is also assumed that some elements will be capital in nature and can ultimately be recovered from the grant. Given the terms and conditions of the grant are not yet known, the Council may be required to provide contingent capital resources should any of these costs prove to be ineligible.

Furthermore, if the grant is not secured then there is a risk that this work would become abortive if the projects cannot proceed with other funding. Any abortive costs arising would need to be written out to revenue. They would not be eligible to be funded from the above capital resources and would become a pressure on the Council's revenue budget for which alternative resources would need to be identified.

The report also identifies the potential for increased call on revenue budgets for on-going maintenance costs of new assets. The service needs to provide a more detailed breakdown when costs are known and will need to establish the sufficiency of existing resources.

In all the above cases, any additional revenue or capital resources required must be agreed with the Section 151 Officer prior to committing expenditure.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials CR Date 05/09/2019]

15. There are no HR implications specific to the recommendations in the report, however, any emerging matters that impact on the workforce will require HR engagement at the appropriate time.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 06/09/19]

16. There are no anticipated technology implications in relation to this report.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials CT Date 05/09/19]

17. Public Health supports the recommendation to submit the funding bid with SCR to DfT and benefit from substantial investment in Doncaster's transport network. Walking and cycling are good for our physical and mental health and the investment will enable Doncaster Council to make improvements to the active travel network as well as ensuring that bus and rail networks are fit for purpose, encouraging people to rely less on cars. This will then have a positive effect on air quality and congestion.

Switching more journeys to active travel will improve health, quality of life and the environment, and local productivity, while at the same time reducing costs to the public purse. We need to create environments that incorporate physical activity as a normal part of everyday life and the Transforming Cities Fund enables Doncaster Council to put in the place the necessary infrastructure to support this

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KP Date 04/092019]

18. Decision makers must consider the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty at s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic

An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Due Regard Statement has been prepared and appended to support this report.

CONSULTATION

19. The Transforming Cities Phase 2 programme has been developed with approval from Cabinet members.

Once the programme has been fully defined by the DfT, local stakeholder consultation will be undertaken.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

20. N/A

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EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DONCASTER METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Due Regard Statement

Transforming Cities Phase 2

How to show due regard to the equality duty in how we develop our work and in our decision making.

Due Regard Statement

A **Due Regard Statement** (DRS) is the tool for capturing the evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been shown when the council plans and delivers its functions. A Due Regard Statement must be completed for all programmes, projects and changes to service delivery.

- A DRS should be initiated at the beginning of the programme, project or change to inform project planning
- The DRS runs adjacent to the programme, project or change and is reviewed and completed at the relevant points
- Any reports produced need to reference "Due Regard" in the main body of the report and the DRS should be attached as an appendix
- The DRS cannot be fully completed until the programme, project or change is delivered.

1	<p>Name of the 'policy' and briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes. This will help to determine how relevant the 'policy' is to equality.</p>	<p>Transforming Cities Fund- Phase 2</p> <p>The programme consists of active travel and sustainable transport interventions.</p> <p>The expected benefits are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of journeys by walking and cycling • Improve air quality • Improve accessibility to employment • Improved safety/ perception of safety for active travel • Improved bus journeys times
2	<p>Service area responsible for completing this statement.</p>	<p>Economy & Environment</p>
3	<p>Summary of the information considered across the protected groups.</p> <p>Service users/residents</p> <p>Doncaster Workforce</p>	<p>Whilst it is considered that the schemes will not have specific impact on a particular group, 2011 Census data has been analysed to identify key groups within the scheme area at ward level. Traffic surveys have also been studied to consider the current users of the roads.</p> <p>Age (children \ OAP) There are schools located with the vicinity of the scheme but it is not anticipated that there will be any direct impact other than improved access to the school. Similarly, a number of residential or care homes are located in the surrounding area but it is not anticipated that there will be any direct impact other than improved access.</p> <p>Mobility Groups Works will consider DDA requirements</p>

		<p>Non Car Users The schemes will provide direct benefits to non car users. As result of the reduced congestion and improved air quality, it is likely that safety will be improved along the surrounding roads for all mode users.</p> <p>During construction the appointed contractor will be expected to adhere to their equality plan with appropriate code of conduct and non-discrimination of any user group.</p>
4	Summary of the consultation/engagement activities	Local residents will be notified of the works in advance of the project commencement.
5	Real Consideration: Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used	The schemes will be designed to improve journey quality, safety and accessibility along strategic corridors with the Borough, which has potential to benefit all user groups.
6	Decision Making	Decision making will be undertaken through the Transforming Cities Programme Group
7	Monitoring and Review	As with all schemes, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council aims to identify any significant changes during and after construction through monitoring processes. In particular, care will be taken to monitor and mitigate any health or equality impacts after the scheme has been constructed.
8	Sign off and approval for publication	



Doncaster Council

Report

15 October 2019

To: The Chair and Members of Cabinet

To Review the Council Tax Long-term Empty Homes Premium

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Jane Nightingale Cabinet Member	All	Yes/No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced powers for local authorities to charge an additional premium of 50% Council Tax on properties that had been empty for more than 2 years, i.e. 150% charge. Since April 2013, Doncaster Council has charged 150% Council Tax for these properties.
2. From 1 April 2019, local authorities were given powers to increase the long-term empty premium as follows:
 - From April 2019: the premium could be increased to **100%** for properties empty and unfurnished for over **2** years, i.e. 200% Council Tax charge;
 - From April 2020: the premium can be increased to **200%** for properties empty and unfurnished for over **5** years, i.e. 300% Council Tax charge;
 - From April 2021: the premium can be increased to **300%** for properties empty and unfurnished for over **10** years, i.e. 400% Council Tax charge.
3. In August 2019, **599** properties in Doncaster were subject to the long-term empty premium having been empty for more than 2 years. Of the 599 properties, 231 had been empty for more than 5 years and 99 properties had been empty for more than 10 years. Most of these empty properties are in Council Tax Band A.
4. This report sets out proposals for Doncaster Council to increase the Council Tax long-term empty premium from 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021 in line with the new powers introduced in April 2019. Aimed at encouraging owners to bring empty properties back into use and generating savings to balance the Council budget.

EXEMPT REPORT

5. The report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Cabinet is asked to approve the proposals to increase the Council Tax long-term empty premium as follows:
 - **From 1 April 2020:** to increase the premium to **100%** for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than **2 years**;
 - **From 1 April 2020:** to increase the premium to **200%** for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than **5 years**;
 - **From 1 April 2021:** to increase the premium to **300%** for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 10 years.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

7. In August 2019, **599** properties in Doncaster were subject to a Council Tax long-term empty premium after being empty and unfurnished for more than 2 years. Persons liable for Council Tax on these properties will have to pay additional Council Tax if the properties remain empty on 1 April 2020. The proposals will also impact on further/different taxpayers who have properties that have been left empty and unfurnished for more than 2 years when the changes are implemented from 1 April 2020 and going forward from this date.
8. The proposals are designed to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use in which case normal Council Tax charges will apply. It is therefore anticipated that the proposals will impact positively on the citizens of Doncaster generally as more homes are made available across the borough and some of the issues associated with long-term empty properties such as vandalism and nuisance are reduced.

BACKGROUND

9. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced new powers for local authorities to set an 'empty homes premium' for long-term empty properties. Properties that had been unoccupied and unfurnished for over two years could be charged up to 150% of the normal Council Tax liability. In January 2013, Members approved an empty homes premium of 50% for properties meeting the criteria and the Council Tax charged for these properties has been 150% since 1 April 2013.
10. The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 gave local authorities powers to increase the empty homes premium as follows:
 - From 1 April 2019 - 100% premium for properties empty 2 years or more;
 - From 1 April 2020 - 200% premium for properties empty 5 years or more;
 - From 1 April 2021 - 300% premium for properties empty 10 years or more.

These are maximum levels of premium and local authorities are free to set lower premium levels.

11. The Government's main intention behind allowing local authorities to set premium charges for long-term empty properties is to incentivise owners to bring empty properties back into use in which case normal Council Tax charges apply.
12. The empty homes premium does not apply to empty properties that are exempt from Council Tax charges. Under prescribed legislation, **no** Council Tax is payable for empty properties that meet the following criteria:
 - Left unoccupied by someone who has gone to live in a residential care home;
 - Unoccupied because someone has moved to receive or provide personal care;
 - Left empty because the taxpayer has died and grant of probate letters or letters of administration have not been granted. Once probate/letters of administration are granted, the exemption continues for a further 6 months unless the property is reoccupied, let, sold or transferred.
13. The proposals are consistent with other Councils that have increased their long-term empty premium to 100% from 1 April 2019, and have approved further increases to 200% and 300% for 2020 and 2021 in line with the new powers.
14. In August 2019, **599** properties in Doncaster were subject to the long-term empty premium. Of the 599 properties, 231 had been empty for more than 5 years and 99 properties had been empty for more than 10 years. Most of these empty properties are in Council Tax Band A.
15. A high level analysis of the properties subject to the empty homes premium has been carried out, at this time only 16 properties were being marketed for sale. A further 11 had recently been sold 'subject to contract'. Working in partnership with St Leger Homes Asset Management Team, the Council will undertake further work prior to April 2020 to establish the main reasons that properties have been left empty for so long, and to offer appropriate advice and support to property owners to bring the properties back into use wherever possible.
16. An Empty Homes Policy Framework has been developed by St Leger Homes Asset Management Team. The framework sets out an approach to help bring privately owned empty properties back into use and as a result help to provide more affordable homes in the Borough. It sets out a range of initiatives and approaches that can be adopted to help tackle private sector empty properties. The Council's Revenues Team will work with the Asset Management Team going forward by sharing data about long-term empty properties as the law allows, and signposting property owners to information, advice and support available within the framework to support them to bring the properties back into use and so avoid paying premium Council Tax charges. This is consistent with the aims and intentions of the framework which was considered by Executive Board on 1 October 2019.

17. The changes to the empty premium will be clearly communicated to taxpayers potentially affected well in advance of April 2020. Targeted advice and support to the property owners will continue as set out above giving them every opportunity to engage with the Council and St Leger Homes Asset Management Team to bring the properties back into use wherever possible.
18. Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act gives local authorities discretionary powers to reduce or remit Council Tax charges where the taxpayer can demonstrate financial hardship and remitting/reducing the charge is in the interests of local Council Tax payers. Section 13A relief will be considered in individual exceptional cases where the taxpayer is unable to allow the property to be occupied through no fault of their own and/or due to circumstances beyond their control, and paying the increase in the premium would cause them financial hardship.
19. The potential additional revenue from Council Tax receipts has been calculated based on the current long-term empty properties in Doncaster. If the number of empty properties and the periods of non occupation within those properties were to remain constant, it is estimated that the following additional debt would be raised by increasing the long-term empty premium from 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021:

Year	Description	Additional debt raised
2020/21	An extra 50% premium on empties between 2 and 5 years	£233k
	An extra 150% premium on empties > 5 years	£422k
	Total potential additional revenue 2020/2021	£656k
2021/22	An extra 50% premium on empties between 2 and 5 years	£233k
	An extra 150% premium on empties between 5 and 10 years	£241k
	An extra 250% premium on all empties >10 years	£303k
	Total potential additional revenue 2021/2022	£777k

20. Actual additional revenue is likely to be lower than the above estimates as property owners are more likely to bring the properties back into use to avoid paying higher Council Tax. When the empty premium was introduced in April 2013, 861 properties had been empty for more than 2 years and were subject to the premium. In 2014, the number had reduced to 713 and a year later to 607. Since the introduction of the long-term empty premium in 2013, the collection rate for properties subject to the premium averages around 82% compared to the overall in-year collection rate of 95%.
21. Taking account of the previous reduction in the number of long-term empty properties in 2014 and 2015 and the current collection rate of 82%, additional income from Council Tax receipts from the proposals to increase the premium is estimated at **£468k** in 2020/2021 and **£514k** in 2021/2022.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

22. Three options have been considered:

Option 1: Do Nothing

Local authorities are not obliged to charge a Council Tax premium for long-term empty properties or set the premium in line with the maximum rates allowed. The Council could decide to retain the existing premium of 50% for all properties that have been empty for more than two years. However, this would be less of an incentive for owners to bring the properties back into use. This option would also be a missed opportunity to generate additional revenue from Council Tax receipts from owners who choose not to bring the properties back into use. This option is not recommended.

Option 2: Set the empty homes premium at a level lower than the maximum permitted

The Council could decide to charge a lower percentage premium than the regulations allow. However, as option 1, depending on the level set, this would be less of an incentive for owners to bring the properties back into use. This option would also generate less additional revenue from Council Tax receipts from owners who choose not to bring the properties back into use at a time of extreme budget pressures. This option would also be out of line with the majority of authorities across the country. This option is not recommended.

Option 3: Increase the empty homes premiums in line with the maximum permitted

This option would provide the most incentive for taxpayers affected to bring the properties back into use and generate the maximum additional revenue to the Council from owners who choose to leave their properties empty. This option is also consistent with other authorities.

23. **Option 3** is the recommended option as this would provide the greatest incentive for taxpayers affected to bring the properties back into use and generate the maximum additional revenue to the Council. This option is also in line with other authorities.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

24. These are detailed in the table below:-

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	Council Tax is a key element of the Council's budget
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	<p>which impacts on all priorities.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	<p>Increasing the long-term empty premium is also designed to incentivise owners to bring properties back into use making more homes available and reducing the issues associated with long-term empty properties such as vandalism and nuisance.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

25. With these proposals there is a risk of non collection of the increased premium charges. This risk will be managed by continued robust collection processes where appropriate and working with property owners who want to bring their properties back into use and so avoid the premium.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SRF Date 12/8/19]

26. The legal basis for this decision is set out in the body of the report. The decision taken is consistent with the provisions set out in the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [AT 14/08/19]

27. The estimated increase in Council Tax receipts will be included in the budget setting proposals presented to Council in March 2020. The total estimated increase in receipts has been adjusted to reflect the expected reduction in the relevant properties based on prior events and also for the expected levels of collection.

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) IMPLICATIONS [KM 12/08/2019]

28. There are no specific HR implications associated with the preferred approach as it is anticipated that the administration of the additional premium charges will be managed within existing resources.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 09/08/19]

29. There are no direct technology implications in relation to this decision. The Northgate Business Rates system has the functionality to apply the Council Tax long-term empty premium charges.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KH Date 9.8.19]

30. Secure and appropriate housing important for good health and a healthy community helps residents to thrive, be independent and contribute to society. Access to decent housing is critically important in terms of health and wellbeing, as is living a neighbourhood that is attractive, feels safe and fosters a sense of community. Empty properties could have a number of health impacts on a community including the health and safety risks presented the property itself and the effects on the viability and quality of the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhoods with high concentrations of empty homes tend to have lower house prices and poorer households (Empty Homes, 2018) and therefore those living in deprived neighbourhoods and experiencing income inequalities may be disproportionately affected. Most of the properties likely to be affected by this initiative are Council Tax Band A so it could be expected that those who could most benefit from the proposals are those on lower incomes.

In addition to the potential for regeneration, making more housing available locally will have a positive impact on Doncaster residents. In addition to bringing properties back into use, we recommend that any initiatives consider opportunities to improve the quality and accessibility of the homes where possible. This would help improve the overall housing offer in Doncaster and help meet the needs of our growing population of older people and people with disabilities and long-term conditions.

Work is planned in the lead up to the changes in 2020 to ensure appropriate advice and support is given to the taxpayer and there are exceptions to the scheme in some circumstances, for example if the homeowner has moved into residential care. Discretion should be used (Ref: Section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act) where undertaking any action could cause financial hardship or further difficulty, especially if the taxpayer is vulnerable. It is key

that the main aim is to bring empty properties back into use, rather than to generate additional income and that work is undertaken to support this are proactive and effective.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: MB Date 09/08/2019]

31. An initial equality impact assessment has been undertaken confirming there are no equality implications associated with this report. There is not any change to the services delivered and the introduction of the premium is universal and therefore does not impact adversely on those with protected characteristics.

CONSULTATION

32. There are no requirements for local authorities to undertake consultation before increasing the Council Tax long-term empty premium. Discussions on the proposals have taken place with the Mayor and Executive Board.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

33. There are no background papers to this report.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

None.

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