

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Appointment of Hereford Towns Fund website and engagement portal (Simple Design Works) following completion of the procurement process
Date of decision:	6 October 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Economy and Place
Authority for delegated decision:	Chief Executive Scheme of Delegation to Officers Appendix 1 – SA45 - Economy Development
Wards:	Aylestone Hill, Belmont Rural, Bobblestock, Central, College Dinedor Hill, Eign Hill, Greyfriars, Hinton and Hunderton, Holmer, Kings Acre, Newton Farm, Red Hill, Saxon Gate, Tupsley, Widemarsh, Whitecross.
Consultation:	<p>A Towns Fund Board has been formed to guide the implementation of the project, including private sector representation (sectoral and geographic representatives from across the city following government guidance on suggested representation). The Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills represents the council on the Towns Fund Board.</p> <p>The Towns Fund Board have led the development of the specification to seek support for the development of a Hereford Town Fund website to communicate with the Hereford community during the production of the Town Investment Plan.</p>
Decision made:	Following the outcome of the procurement quotation process undertaken in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules to appoint Simple Design Works (£2,200) to design and host a complete Hereford Towns Fund website and engagement portal.
Reasons for decision:	<p>In late 2019 Hereford was included within the government's "Towns Fund" Programme. Through the Towns Fund, Government is working with places to address growth constraints and to ensure the country can chart a course of recovery from the impact of Covid-19. The overarching aim of the Towns Fund is to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture.</p> <p>Each town in the programme is required to submit a "Town Investment Plan" (TIP) which sets out the vision and strategy for the town and includes a selection of projects that will deliver the vision. There are two phases in the process, with a decision gateway at the end of each. First, towns will develop TIPs, which will be assessed by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to inform a Heads of Terms offer (given the submission is of sufficient quality). Towns will then develop agreed projects and business cases in detail, and government will assess that information before releasing funding for implementation. This second element of the process is not currently part of the Rose Regeneration commission.</p> <p>The Hereford Towns Fund Board is a public / private organisation set up to drive the production of the TIP. Its formation was a condition of inclusion on the programme and its membership has been determined on the basis of government guidance. The Board, via Herefordshire Council as the accountable body, wish to appoint a consultant that has experience in delivering similar masterplan and visioning documents, engaging with local communities and preparing a strong evidence base.</p> <p>There was no application process for selection within the Towns Fund programme and Hereford's inclusion was a government, rather than local, decision. There was no engagement with the council about the process prior to the announcement of the selected towns and launch of the programme, and neither was there any ability to lobby</p>

	<p>for the inclusion of other towns within Herefordshire.</p> <p>The Towns Fund Board are required to undertake significant community engagement to provide an evidence base for the Town Investment Plan. The Towns Fund Board identified the creation of a Hereford Towns Fund website as an important communication tool for the Board to use in engaging with the Hereford community. The website will enable the Board to provide information about the Towns Fund process and potential, advertise opportunities for local people and business to get involved, provide a direct “portal” function so that people can submit their ideas for the Town Investment Plan, and detail the Board members, the Board processes and governance.</p> <p>The procurement procedure was a restricted tender process which was issued to three potential suppliers. Two responses were received back and assessed by the towns Fund Board. Simple Design Works were appointed due to their previous experience, their ability to produce the website within the required time frame and because they were the lowest quote received.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks / finance / legal / equality considerations:</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>The council has received a Section 31 payment of £162,000 in order to ensure sufficient organisational capacity is available to engage with key stakeholders and develop proposals.</p> <p>The published Towns Fund guidance states that the capacity funding is intended to help fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility studies • Drafting plans • Writing business cases • Identifying of potential private investors • Engaging and negotiating with investors <p>Developing and implementing a stakeholder engagement plan</p> <p>The appointment of Simple Design Works at £2,200 would bring the total amount of budget either spent or committed to date to just under £60,000.</p> <p>The remaining £100,000 of funding will be used to support the communication of the Towns Fund to local communities and stakeholders and to produce detailed Business Cases once the Town Investment Plan has agreed Heads of Terms with government.</p> <p>Risks</p> <p>The funds are only available for a limited activity to support the development of the Town Investment Plan and Towns Fund Board in the production of the plan. The project needs to be implemented urgently seeking to ensure the submission deadline of 29th January 2021 is met.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>The council could have decided not to participate in the Towns Fund Programme. This would have led the council to lose the opportunity to secure up to £25m of government financial assistance.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Richard Ball
Director for Economy & Place

Date: 6 October 2020