



Mayor and Cabinet

Levelling Up Fund bid for Lewisham town centre

Date: 15 June 2022

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Lewisham Central

Contributors: Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships

Outline and recommendations

The Government are inviting bids to the Levelling Up Fund which could provide funding for projects which support town centres, heritage, regeneration and transport. It is proposed to submit a bid for improvements to Lewisham town centre. The recommendations are for Mayor and Cabinet:

- To note the ongoing engagement with residents, community organisations, businesses and partners and the emerging shared vision for Lewisham town centre.
- To approve the submission of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund, up to a maximum of £20million, for Lewisham town centre to include improvements to the street market, library, transport and public realm.
- To give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm, in consultation with the Executive Director for Corporate Resources, to approve the final bid to the Levelling Up Fund, in line with comments from Mayor and Cabinet.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Lewisham High Streets Headcount and Survey – November 2021

Lewisham Town Centre Partnership – 29 November 2021 and 7 June 2022

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the criteria for the Government's Levelling Up Fund and sets out a proposal for the submission of a bid to that fund which would focus on improvements to Lewisham town centre.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:

- 2.1. note the ongoing engagement with residents, community organisations, businesses and other partners and the emerging shared vision for Lewisham town centre.
- 2.2. approve the submission of a bid to the Levelling Up Fund, up to a maximum of £20million, for Lewisham town centre to include improvements to the street market, library, transport and public realm.
- 2.3. give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm, in consultation with the Executive Director for Corporate Resources, to approve the final bid to the Levelling Up Fund, in line with comments from Mayor and Cabinet.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. At the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2021, the Mayor outlined the Council's priorities to support the borough's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. "Future Lewisham: our borough's recovery" sets out four themes at the heart of the Council's response to the impact of the pandemic. One of the themes is to create "An economically sound future".
- 3.2. Our 2018-2022 Corporate Strategy priority "Building an inclusive local economy" includes the following commitments:
 - *More Living Wage employers*
 - *Support to access work and to progress*
 - *High quality work and reduced inequalities*
 - *A thriving local economy*
- 3.3. The Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan was adopted by the Council in 2014. It sets out nine objectives including ambitions for Lewisham to become a metropolitan town centre, increase commercial floorspace in the town centre, enhancing features such as the street market, supporting walking and cycling, improving safety and increasing leisure provision.
- 3.4. The Mayor of London, Greater London Authority (GLA), London boroughs and a range of other strategic partners have jointly agreed an Economic Recovery Framework for London. The framework contains five pillars of activity – Jobs, Business, Thriving Neighbourhoods, Connected City and Global London. Within each pillar are four key issues to focus collective efforts on, with building the green economy and narrowing social, economic and health inequalities as cross-cutting themes.
- 3.5. In March 2021 the Government set out its ambition to "Build Back Better" through the pillars of infrastructure, skills, innovation, "Levelling Up" across the UK, transition to net zero and a vision for a Global Britain. The Government considers Levelling Up to mean addressing inequalities between geographic areas, giving everyone the opportunity to flourish and raising living standards and wellbeing.

4. Background

- 4.1. In 2021 the Government announced a £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund to support town

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centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and maintaining cultural and heritage assets. In March 2022 the Government launched the next round of applications for this fund, with up to £3 billion in total available for local areas across the United Kingdom.

- 4.2. The deadline for submission of bids is 6th July. Bids can be for up to £20 million and can include up to three projects, although the projects should be aligned and make a coherent, consistent bid as a whole. The Government expects to announce successful bids this autumn and any funding awarded must be spent by 31st March 2025.
- 4.3. Applications to the fund are highly competitive with bids assessed against a number of criteria set by the Government:
 - Government's view of need in the area as identified in the Index of Priority Places. All Local Authority areas have been placed in one of three gradings reflecting the Government's assessment of whether a place has a high, medium or low need of Levelling Up. The Government has placed Lewisham in the middle category.
 - Strategic fit – endorsement from stakeholders, including the local MP, plus a case for investment aligned with the local and national context.
 - Value for money – clear estimations of the costs of the project with at least 10% match funding provided, with potential economic and social benefits monetised to provide a clear cost-benefit rationale for investment.
 - Deliverability – a robust delivery plan and risk assessment.
- 4.4. Despite the Government's assessment that Lewisham borough falls in to the middle category of need for Levelling Up, other evidence suggests that Lewisham continues to face inequalities which will require significant investment to address. Lewisham is the 28th most deprived borough out of 300 nationally in terms of income; the borough has the least number of jobs per working age resident of any borough in the country; one in five children in Lewisham Central ward are living in low income families, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents are significantly more likely to be unemployed than White residents.
- 4.5. In the previous round of the Levelling Up Fund an estimated three in 10 bids were successful nationally. Just four London boroughs received funding, reflecting 3% of the funding awarded in that round.

5. Feedback from engagement

- 5.1. Over the last 12 months, the Council has been engaging with local residents, community groups and businesses to understand what people enjoy about Lewisham town centre and what they would like to see change. This engagement has been through a number of different routes including:
 - Engagement sessions with young people, facilitated by Circle Collective
 - Engagement sessions with older people, facilitated by Lewisham Pensioners' Forum
 - On street survey of visitors to the town centre
 - High Street Business Survey and Headcount
 - Engagement with market traders
 - Resident consultation on improvements to the street market
 - The borough-wide Residents' Survey
 - Establishment of a new partnership for Lewisham town centre which includes the Council, community groups (e.g. Lewisham Pensioners' Forum, Lewisham Local), Migration Museum, Better Leisure, Twin Training, Lewisham College, Goldsmiths

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University, Landsec (owners of the Lewisham Shopping Centre), Get Living (Lewisham Gateway), Transport for London (TfL), Metropolitan Police and the Greater London Authority (GLA). Funding to establish the partnership came from a grant from the GLA's High Streets for All Challenge Fund.

- 5.2. Feedback from the engagement has shown that people find it easy to get to the town centre on public transport, although many people pass through (e.g. to change buses) without stopping in the town centre.
- 5.3. People feel that there is a good shopping offer in the town centre with the shops and market, but that some areas of the town centre could be made more attractive and feel safer. People also feel that there could be more to do in the evening and night time in the town centre, and more activities for young people.
- 5.4. People particularly like the cultural diversity which is evident in the town centre, including through shops or services which are focused on certain communities (e.g. food shops selling products from particular countries, or hair salons specialising in Afro-Caribbean hair). However, people feel more could be done to recognise and celebrate this heritage and ethnic diversity, and to ensure that future developments in the town centre do not erase this. Partners were also keen to have a shared vision for the future of the town centre which everyone could contribute towards.

6. Vision for Lewisham town centre

- 6.1. Based on the engagement so far, alongside an analysis of the available data and insight about the town centre, a vision for the future is starting to be developed. This vision will be refined through further engagement and involvement by a range of stakeholders and partners.
- 6.2. The emerging ambition is for Lewisham town centre to be restored as the heart of South East London. The town centre should play a major strategic shopping, leisure, cultural and business role that extends beyond the borough. The heritage and diversity of Lewisham should be championed and protected whether that be physical assets such as the historic clocktower, or whether it is cultural heritage such as Lewisham being home to one of the highest proportions of Black African and Caribbean residents in the country.
- 6.3. The town centre should be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport making it a destination of choice for local residents and visitors, with improved connections between the railway station, high street and south of the town centre. Specifically pedestrian routes from the railway station through to the high street and market need to be opened up and encourage more people to walk through to the heart of the town centre.
- 6.4. There should be a thriving retail offer which blends local independent traders with more familiar high street brands, building on the good range of shops which are already present in the town centre. The historic street market, which provides fresh produce and goods at affordable prices, will be made more attractive to visitors and improvements will be made to the environmental impact of the market.
- 6.5. The cultural and leisure offer in the town centre will be transformed to vastly expand the currently limited opportunities for eating, socialising, participation and learning – throughout the day and particularly in to the evening and night time. This will include new attractions such as a cinema, leisure facilities, education provision, more restaurants and evening markets.
- 6.6. The buildings and public realm within the town centre will be clean, attractive and welcoming, creating a safer environment for residents of all ages. There will be more greenery on the high street, more places to sit and the clocktower will be restored as the symbol of the town centre.

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- 6.7. The town centre economy will grow and diversify, bringing more jobs and opportunities closer to where people live. As well as the opportunities in retail, hospitality and leisure, there will also be growth in the creative and cultural sectors. This reflects the town centre's history of drapers and textiles, and links with the Creative Enterprise Zone in Deptford and New Cross whose impact will be expanded to include Lewisham town centre.

7. Levelling Up Fund bid for Lewisham town centre

- 7.1. To deliver this vision, significant investment will be required in the town centre. Some of this will come from current or expected developments, such as the Lewisham Gateway development currently being built which will include a new cinema and restaurants. The Levelling Up Fund presents an opportunity to seek public investment in the town centre, reinvigorating some of the anchors of the high street in order to deliver the improvements that residents, visitors and businesses are seeking.

- 7.2. The proposed bid to the Levelling Up Fund would include three projects:

- *Revitalisation of the street market*
- *A new Cultural and Business Hub in Lewisham Library, and*
- *A re-imagined and connected High Street*

- 7.3. The deadline for submission of bids to the Levelling Up Fund is 6th July. Therefore there will not be a further opportunity for Mayor and Cabinet to approve the final bid. As such, Mayor and Cabinet are being asked to approve the overall vision and outline of the proposed bid, with delegated authority being given to the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm to approve the final bid submission.

Lewisham street market

- 7.4. The street market plays a vital role to the Lewisham's local economy, providing jobs and supporting a loyal customer base, with the market being particularly well-used by lower income residents and older people. Despite the market's current success, it is in need of investment. A number of issues threaten its long-term future such as an out-dated appearance, food waste around market stalls and a lack of night time economy.

- 7.5. The proposal focuses on rejuvenating the market with improved stalls, better waste management infrastructure, improvements to the pavement and railings, new lighting and electricity, and installation of a canopy along the high street.

- 7.6. The investment in infrastructure will be paired with initiatives that complement the market's offer and expand the diversity of groups who use the market, without losing or alienating existing customers, including an evening market, "pop up" trading opportunities and space to support food and drink, cultural and seasonal events.

- 7.7. These changes would attract more visitors to the market and town centre, extend hours of economic activity in the town centre into the evening and night time, enhance local pride, improve the environmental impact of the market and improve safety.

Cultural and Business Hub

- 7.8. The current Lewisham Library located at the end of the high street is an important community asset. However, it is in poor condition, has limited accessibility and the space is underutilised. At the same time, there is a lack of flexible and accessible business spaces in the area, with demand significantly outstripping the capacity. There is also a limited cultural offer in the town centre to attract and retain visitors.

- 7.9. One of the key challenges for the library is to adapt to changing needs and expectations of service users. There is a potential for the library to become the magnet that offers culture, business support, local history and a food/drink offer.

- 7.10. The project focuses on the renovation of the building to create a centrally-located multi-

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purpose culture and business hub, which can include:

- *More accessible space for library services*
- *Publicly available workspace*
- *Flexible community and cultural space which could be used to host events, performances and exhibitions*
- *A food and drink offer such as café, bar, restaurant and/or event catering.*

7.11. The new hub could be used to support a variety of services including business advice and support services (e.g. BIPC Local, Ready to Supply, business growth programmes etc), a rich cultural programme; activities for children and young people, including the potential to link with the new Family Hubs, and employment support and training.

Reimagined and connected High Street

7.12. There are a wide range of issues facing Lewisham High Street. These include the high volume of buses and vehicles that has a significant impact on the safety and attractiveness of the environment; difficult navigation between the key points (train station, market, shopping centre, high street); limited greenery; and limited cycling infrastructure. The public realm around the high street is not pedestrian friendly and doesn't create a positive experience, which means people are less inclined to spend time or shop there.

7.13. The key objective of this project is to create an enhanced public realm that supports positive experiences when visiting the town centre and increases the safety of residents, visitors and businesses. The planned interventions are:

- *Improvement of access routes to and from High Street (wayfinding and signage, redesign of junctions and pedestrian crossings, pavement improvements)*
- *Development of mobility hubs to encourage people to use cycling, walking and electric cars*
- *Improvements to cycling infrastructure and new cycling lanes (subject to TfL approval)*
- *Public realm enhancements and greenery*
- *Safety features such as improved lighting and CCTV.*

8. Financial implications

8.1. The proposed bid has the potential to secure significant funding to deliver major transformational schemes in Lewisham town centre. However, the proposals in the bid are entirely dependent on securing external funding and will not be able to be delivered from the Council's own budgets. Therefore if the bid is unsuccessful, the projects are unlikely to be able to be advanced in their current form.

8.2. There is a requirement for a minimum of 10% match funding to be provided for the proposals set out in the bid. To ensure a robust case for investment by the Government, a figure of 15-20% match funding is preferable.

8.3. Each of the projects will put forward proposals for match funding. This may come from existing Council budgets (for example, funding allocated to the refurbishment of Lewisham Library is included in the Council's capital programme for 2022/23) or external funding allocations (for example, funding from TfL for transport projects). In other cases funding will need to be identified to be used as match for the bid. This could include Section 106 funding or Community Infrastructure Levy.

8.4. The submission of this bid does not presuppose that there will be a call on additional general fund resources. As stated above, each project will put forward proposals for match funding within existing and external funding allocations.

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9. Legal implications

- 9.1. This report asks for approval to apply for external funding up to a value of £20 million, which includes match funding of up to 20% (potentially up to £4 million) based on the criteria set out in this report.
- 9.2. Under the Council's Constitution approval of any application for external funding which exceeds £1 million and/or requires match funding from the Council in excess of £250,000, then the decision is reserved to Members. The report also recommends to delegate approval of the final form of the bid to the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm.
- 9.3. In taking this decision, the Council's public sector equality duty must be taken into account. It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.4. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 9.5. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality and understanding the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 9.6. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found on the EHRC website.
- 9.7. The EHRC has issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty. The 'Essential' guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1. The proposed Levelling Up Fund bid would aim to have an overall positive equalities impact. Economic growth will enable the creation of more jobs within the town centre which could help address some of the existing inequalities in the local labour market. Changes to the street market could allow opportunities for new traders which can be targeted at groups who are currently under-represented in the profile of existing traders (e.g. Black residents, women, young people). The proposed cultural and business hub would increase access to cultural activities and business opportunities for local

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residents, and again could be targeted to promote or attract people with a variety of protected equalities characteristics.

11. Climate change and environmental implications

- 11.1. The proposed projects in the Levelling Up Fund bid would have a positive environmental effect through, for example, improving the recycling rates of the street market and reducing food and other waste, and reducing the environmental impact of the library building by improving insulation and updating machinery and plant.

12. Crime and disorder implications

- 12.1. Improvements to the public realm on the High Street would be intended to reduce crime and improve actual and perceived safety. Improved economic prosperity for local residents would be expected to have a positive impact on reducing crime and disorder.

13. Health and wellbeing implications

- 13.1. Improved economic prosperity for local residents would be expected to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

14. Background papers

- 14.1. [Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan Adoption](#) – 26 February 2014
14.2. [Lewisham High Street Headcount and Survey](#) – November 2021

15. Glossary

Term	Definition
Levelling Up	This is a term used by the Government to describe policies which aim to improve standards of living and to increase economic potential in different areas of the country
Levelling Up Fund (LUF)	A fund launched by the Government which is seeking bids to improve transport, town centres and culture in the UK
Public Realm	The space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces (definition from the London Plan).

16. Report author(s) and contact

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17. Appendices

- 17.1. None

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