1.0 Summary and Conclusions

The Barrow-in-Furness Town Investment Plan is intended to provide a confident vision for the future of Barrow-in-Furness and the role partners, the community and government support in achieving this.

Shaped by incredibly strong partnership commitment and pace, the Barrow-in-Furness Town Investment Plan is ready to be submitted for consideration by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 31 July 2020, placing Barrow among the very first in the Country to move forward.

The Investment Plan itself makes the case for investment in 7 key projects which combined and aligned to wider opportunities have the potential to catalyse the transformation of the town and the ability of residents and businesses to see real benefit.

While offering a focus on individual schemes the plan also seeks to present a long term ambition and strategy for the continued and inclusive growth within Barrow.

It should be noted that although the guidance is clear that up to £25m of funding may be sought, it also says that for exceptional proposals this can be exceeded. The current ask for this Town Deal is £29.4m with a further £500,000 requested for programme support.

While in excess of £25m, the Town Deal Board considered that given the cohesiveness of the projects, the level of development undertaken and their combined impact this deal is exceptional. The single largest proposal; the Barrow Learning Quarter would see delivery of a new University Campus and Skills Hub in Barrow; this would increase access to Higher Education, help the town grow its role as a centre of excellence in manufacturing and clean growth; diversify opportunities; bolster the vibrancy of the town centre and enhance the perception of the town.

The recommendations within this report were discussed at the meeting of the Executive Committee on July 27th.
2.0 Recommendation

Recommendation to Full Council:

1) It approves the submission of the Barrow-in-Furness Town Investment Plan to MHCLG.
2) Subject to the agreement of heads of terms the Council provide up to £100,000 to support the development of full business cases required to access delivery funding, this funding would be reimbursed with the receipt of funding to deliver individual projects.
3) Barrow Borough Council takes the role of accountable body for Barrow-in-Furness Town Investment Plan.
4) It is noted that £162,019 of grant funding has been fully committed on consultancy services, business case development and community engagement, and has been supplemented by the Major Projects Reserve to the value of £12,660.

3.0 Background and Proposals

Background to the Proposals

Government policy is increasingly focused on securing the levelling-up of the UK economy with policy recognising that raising productivity and economic growth in the towns and cities of the north can help increase opportunities but also support a strengthening of the UK economy.

In September 2019 it was confirmed that Barrow-in-Furness was among the 101 towns that would be invited to put forward Town Deal proposals valued at up to £25m to deliver economic growth in the town.

The case for this investment would need to be articulated through an evidenced Town Investment Plan. Development of this plan must be overseen by a Town Deal Board with Barrow Borough Council acting as accountable body for funding received. The Government require that the Town Deal Board comprises a mix of the public and private sector, the third sector and MP. The role of the Town Deal Board was discussed at the November 2019 meeting of the Executive.

The development of the Town Deal would come forward in two phases with the first phase focused on the submission of the Town Investment Plan containing a set of project proposals and then the agreement of heads of terms. Following this there would be a requirement to develop Full Business Cases through which delivery funding would be confirmed.

The Town Investment Plan is being considered at the meeting of the Town Deal Board on 24 July 2020 and this report is seeking confirmation that as accountable body Barrow Borough Council agree that the Town Investment Plan can be submitted to Government.
Developing the Town Investment Plan

The Town Deal Board have promoted an ambitious approach to preparation of the Town Investment Plan, at the first meeting of the Town Deal Board it was agreed to create a:

- Plan Development Group, responsible for overseeing plan development
- Communications and Engagement Group, responsible for preparing and implementing communications activity

They also agreed that external consultancy support should be procured.

Supported by those structures, early in the process the Board was able to confirm a vision for the town:

To build on our economic strengths, rich industrial heritage, natural beauty and sense of community to develop a town that is economically dynamic and diverse, sitting at the forefront of innovation and green growth, viewed as a great place to live, study, work and visit and home to a healthy population that can deliver a prosperous, inclusive and fair future

This in turn supported the creation of aligned objectives for the Town Investment Plan:

- To put residents at the centre of public service delivery;
- To build on our strengths to help Barrow become a centre of excellence and innovation for advanced manufacturing and clean growth;
- To create a resilient local economy through greater diversification, enhanced competitiveness and providing a wider range of quality employment opportunities;
- To grow the working age population by creating an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and visit;
- To equip people with the skills and confidence to achieve their potential to take full advantage of opportunities;
- To strengthen progression pathways through a dynamic and integrated approach to school, further and higher education;
- To reduce deprivation and improve the physical and mental health and well-being of our community;
- To be a digitally connected and physically accessible town supporting walking, cycling and public transport;
- To deliver a more diverse and attractive housing offer while ensuring the continued renewal of our existing stock; and
- To achieve a vibrant town centre, leisure and service offer supporting the role of Barrow as a regional centre while enhancing our rich built and cultural heritage.

Supported by engagement activity and a technical appraisal process these were the basis for defining a short list of projects for which funding would be sought through the Town Investment Plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Funding Sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrow Learning Quarter – Creation of new university campus and skills hub for Barrow</td>
<td>£13.4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Wellbeing Hubs and Earnse Bay Outdoor Centre - Establishment of a network of community resilience hubs and a new outdoor skills and recreation facility on Walney.</td>
<td>£4.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure - A transformative programme of walking and cycling infrastructure improvements within Barrow.</td>
<td>£4.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Renewal Programme - A new housing market renewal programme focused on key areas of need.</td>
<td>£4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Enterprise Support - Developing a supportive business environment for Barrow to boost Barrow’s enterprise overall,</td>
<td>£1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Development – Culture and Tourism - A programme of activity to promote the town together with a programme of events and activities</td>
<td>£1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina Village - The site would deliver high-quality housing alongside leisure, retail and cultural development.</td>
<td>£1m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A profile of each of these schemes is provided within the Town Investment Plan and are intended to really drive positive change within Barrow, enhancing access to opportunity while also supporting economic growth and the perception of Barrow as the place to live work to visit.

These proposals also seek to lever, synergise and complement other funding streams and projects like the Future High Street Fund, private sector investment programmes; the All Electric Bus proposal, Low Carbon Barrow ERDF and Growth Fund applications and Marina Village.

For each of the Town Deal projects it was considered essential for them to be robustly developed and supported by clear evidence around the benefits they can achieve in deliverability and match funding. To achieve this each project has had a Strategic Outline Business Case prepared.

**Accelerated Towns Fund**

Within the Government response to COVID-19 Barrow has been provisionally allocated an additional £750,000 of funding to be spent in 2020/21. This funding will be used for a number of complementary investments including acquisition of key sites to support the development of Marina Village, revitalise and repurpose key spaces in the town to support Place Development and aligned initiatives such as Future High Streets, and enhance Barrow’s outdoor activity offer aligned to Place Development and Community Wellbeing Hubs and Earnse Bay Outdoor Centre. These investments will support Covid-19 recovery and provide a platform for Towns Deal investment.
Next Steps and Moving Forward

The submission of the Town Investment Plan, whilst a significant milestone, does not signify the end of this process.

The immediate focus will turn to addressing due diligence surrounding the deal while pushing for early agreement of our heads of terms. The July submission places Barrow in the first wave of submissions and from here it is hoped that funding and projects can be realised as early as possible. This is important, especially as the town continues to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

The heads of terms will be the mechanism through which the Government will signify which projects it would wish to see further developed and it is intended that the Executive Committee will consider these.

Following heads of terms, it will be necessary to prepare and submit Full Business Cases for each of the short listed projects. To ensure effective ownership and use of resources, to date different organisation have led the development of projects, with Barrow Borough Council leading on Housing Market Renewal, Place Development, Marina Village and Business Support. Likewise the University of Cumbria will lead development of the Barrow Learning Quarter and Cumbria County Council on Community Resilience Hubs and Earnse Bay and Cycling and Walking Infrastructure.

To resource the next stage of development it is intended to retain this approach which the organisation leading specific projects would resource front funding development activity to be reimbursed once the schemes are contracted and Town Deal Funding can be accessed. To ensure the Council is ready to do this it is recommended that £100,000 of the Council’s financial reserves be allocated to enable critical progress to be maintained. This funding would be eligible for repayment once project funding is in place.

Mindful that in acting as accountable body, Barrow Borough Council must be able to manage an effective process. Recognising this, within the deal £500,000 has been sought to support this accountable body role while working effectively with partners.

4.0 Engagement

The #BrilliantBarrow campaign has been a primary platform to engage community and business voices in the development of the Town Investment Plan.

In supporting communication and engagement work the Town Deal Board agreed to the formation of a Communications and Engagement Group. This Task and Finish Group was established to support the work of the Town Deal Board, responsible for preparing and implementing communications activity. The Group developed a Town Deal Stakeholder Engagement Plan which was implemented in three stages. Covid-19 changed the engagement planning dramatically as traditional forms of engagement were inappropriate due to lockdown and social distancing measures, with a shift to a more targeted and predominantly digital approach:
1. Phase 1 Engagement: awareness raising activity through social media which encouraged initial views to be shared through the #MyTowns government portal. A total of 140 unique posts were provided. This was complemented social media analysis on activity related to Barrow and by c.25 one-to-one consultations with strategic and delivery partners.

2. Phase 2 Engagement: launch of the #BrilliantBarrow campaign and website encouraging the community to ‘have your say’. To date, over 230 individual posts have been shared.

3. Phase 3 Engagement: development of project stakeholder engagement plans and implementation through a mixed method approach including surveys and focus group activity. In total, 592 responses to the seven surveys have been secured to date, in addition to qualitative feedback shared via meeting notes and correspondence.

The consultation feedback has supported the iterative development of the Town Investment Plan and associated Strategic Outline Business Cases for each shortlisted project. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, supportive, constructive and informative to guide the process of strategy development.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan to accompany the launch of Barrow’s finalised Town Investment Plan has been developed which articulates our commitment to ongoing dialogue and will ensure implementation of our Plan is responsive to stakeholder needs.

5.0 Alternative Options

Defer Submission of the Town Investment Plan

An alternative option is to delay submission of the Town Investment Plan to later windows in October 2020 or January 2021 in order to further develop proposals. Whilst, it would provide more time to develop and consult on proposals, it would create delay and loss of Barrow’s advantageous position in the first wave of submissions.

6.0 Contribution to Council Plan Priorities

This project primarily supports all 3 priorities of the Barrow Council Plan. The programme of investment and the outcome these can create have the potential to be far reaching and transformative to Barrow.

These can help people better access jobs and opportunities; support local businesses and social enterprises to grow, support a local carbon and growing economy and deliver stronger and more vibrant local communities.

7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

The £100,000 identified to develop the selected SOBC to Full Business Case is not budgeted and will be drawn from the Council’s financial reserves.
The reimbursement of the £100,000 will be covered by the heads of terms agreed with MHCLG. However, there is a risk that projects cannot progress to a satisfactory Final Business Case and some of that sum is not reimbursed.

No Town Deal project expenditure will be incurred before the grant is secured.

The £162,019 of grant funding to reach this stage of the business case has been fully committed on consultancy services and community engagement, and has been supplemented by the Major Projects Reserve £12,660:

- Consultancy services £134,679
- Walking and Cycling Strategy £10,000
- Cumbria CVS community engagement £30,000, a specialist procurement

It will be necessary to address internal capacity to ensure that the accountable body responsibilities can be fulfilled.

The Section 151 Officer has agreed that the Accelerated Towns Fund proposals fit within the Town Fund Intervention Framework and can be submitted to government by 14 August 2020.

Legal Equality and Diversity

There are no legal issues to raise as part of this report.

If the Plan is successful then agreements will be required to delivery on the investment plan which will be subject of further legal consideration.

Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? No – The Town Investment Plan seeks to ensure Barrow is an inclusive and prosperous town. Moving forward it is anticipated that the Impact Analysis will support individual projects.

Risk

Whilst Option (a) is the recommended way forward, there remain a number of risks that will need to be addressed. These are summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Risk Description</th>
<th>Likelihood (1-5)</th>
<th>Impact (1-5)</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Proposed Mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Support</td>
<td>The Government may not wish to support the proposals set out within the Town Investment Plan.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>In developing proposals there has been ongoing engagement with MHCLG. The due diligence process following the submission of the Investment Plan will provide an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to provide further information or clarification. Should the proposal be rejected there will be a further opportunity to resubmit in either October or January.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding limits</td>
<td>There is a risk that Government are unwilling to provide more than £25m as part of the deal.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guidance is clear that more than £25m can be sought for exceptional proposals. MHCLG have been advised that our ask will exceed £25m and that we consider an exceptional case can be made. Should Government refuse to support this approach, the use of business cases will make it possible to scale back proposals to meet parameters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcing the accountable body function.</td>
<td>There is a risk that the Government will not provide resources to support the Council in delivering its accountable body role.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Within the Town Investment Plan there is a request for resources to support operation of the Town Deal board. Should this not be submitted there will be a requirement for the Council to work with Town Investment Plan board members to establish an effective approach to resourcing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Covid 19 | The full impact of COVID-19 on the market place and supply chain is yet to be understood. Suppliers may cease trading, pushing up the cost of services. | 2 | 4 | 8 | Work on the ground is unlikely to start until 2021. Appropriate risk assessment and method statements will be prepared to ensure project.
Social distancing may create challenges in undertaking surveys and site visits. Activities can progress within social distancing restrictions.

| Scheme Development Costs | Should a scheme fail to be contracted despite forming part of the heads of terms, the scheme development costs invested may not be clawed back by the Council. | 2 | 2 | 4 | The next stage of business case development would not commence until the project is included within heads of terms for the deal. For each project, development costs have been factored into the programme. |

**Contact Officers**

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**Appendices Attached to this Report**

**Appendix 1 - Barrow-in-Furness Town Investment Plan**