

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES /NO	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES /NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES /NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Graham Middleton E-mail: cllr.graham.middleton@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Richard Blunt			
		Other Members consulted: N/A			
Lead Officer: Alexa Baker, Monitoring Officer E-mail: alexa.baker@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616270		Other Officers consulted: Chief Executive and Assistant Director - Regeneration, Housing and Place			
		Other Consultees: Chair of the Towns Board			
Financial Implications YES /NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES /NO	Statutory Implications YES /NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES /NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES /NO	Environmental Considerations YES /NO

Date of meeting: 10 August 2022

CHANGES TO THE LOCAL ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE TOWNS BOARD

Summary

This report seeks approval to amend the Local Assurance Framework to make the governance processes more streamlined and fit for purpose.

Recommendation

To amend the King's Lynn Town Deal Local Assurance Framework by replacing the diagram on page 10 with the diagram set out at Appendix 2.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the governance arrangements around the Towns Board are realistic and fit for purpose.

1 Background

- 1.1 A requirement of a Town Deal is to implement a Local Assurance process for the development and sign off of individual Business Cases for the Towns Deal projects, to finally be signed off by the Section 151 Officer and Town Deal Board Chair. This is a locally devised framework and therefore each town awarded a Towns Deal will have developed their own bespoke framework.
- 1.2 Cabinet approved King's Lynn's Towns Deal Local Assurance Framework (LAF) on 24 August 2021. The LAF is attached as Appendix 1. This LAF sets out the governance and decision-making structure in relation to the Towns Fund. Its purpose is to:

- Enable accountable decision-making
 - Ensure value for money
 - Provide for effective monitoring and evaluation
- 1.3 There is a diagram set out on page 10 of the LAF which shows the flow of the various stages of governance and decision making from submission of project confirmations to delivery. The stages largely deal with the decision making and governance around the development and submission of the business cases for each project.
- 1.4 The LAF was developed as a projection of how the governance and decision making would work, however given the concept of a 'Town Board' represented an entirely new way of working for the Council, this projection was not based on any relevant experience. Now that the Town Deal Programme Board has had experience of taking business cases through this governance framework, it has identified improvements that can be made to streamline the process without losing any of the governance oversight.
- 1.5 From engagement with external third parties who are also working on other town deals, the Programme Board has also received feedback that the King's Lynn's Local Assurance Framework is more extensive than what has been seen elsewhere. The Programme Board is therefore assured that there is scope to streamline the decision-making process without unduly impacting on governance and risk management. A selection of benchmarking from other Towns is attached at Appendix 3 for a point of reference.

2 Options Considered

- 2.1 The current LAF provides that draft business cases are submitted to the Council's Panels and Cabinet before the Town Board. As a result of necessity for the progression of the Guildhall business case, this was reversed so that the Town Board saw the draft business case before it was submitted to the Regeneration & Development Panel and then Cabinet.
- 2.2 It was identified that this was a far preferable order for decision making as the Town Board is ultimately responsible for the strategic direction of the projects, and therefore it was an advantage that they had been able to comment on and approve the draft business cases before it was submitted to the Council's bodies. This enabled the Council's bodies to take account of the Town Board's decision and meant that they were considering a more finalised version of the business case.
- 2.3 The Guildhall business case was a well-developed project and benefited from being finalised far in advance of the deadline submission date. The remaining three business cases are being developed at pace and will only be ready far closer to their respective submission dates.

2.4 The Programme Board has identified now that compliance with the LAF process as it stands will not be feasible for the remaining business cases given the time and resource constraints. It has therefore reviewed the LAF process to see what changes could be made to streamline the process so that it can be achieved in a shorter timescale. The Programme Board is mindful that it is a contradiction in terms to abandon governance when it becomes inconvenient to follow it, as it is on those matters that are pressurised and decisions are required to be taken quickly that it is even more important that robust governance is in place. The Programme Board therefore does not wish to remove any stages of the assurance framework, but seeks to re-order them to achieve a more streamlined process.

2.5 Options are therefore:

- a) Do not make any changes to the LAF – this will lead to two outcomes, firstly non-compliance with the LAF in order to get the remaining business cases submitted in time. This will demonstrate a failure to follow our own governance arrangements for the Towns Deal in spite of a robust process having still been followed. The alternative is to comply with the LAF and thereby submit the business cases late, which puts the whole funding under risk of being withdrawn;
- b) Make sweeping changes to remove whole sections of the governance framework, for example not submitting a full business case to the Towns Board or Panels/Cabinet, but a summary version. The Programme Board considers that this would unduly impact on governance and risk management;
- c) Re-order the governance framework to achieve a more streamlined process without removing any stages of governance assurance.

2.6 Monitoring and evaluation is a significant part of the governance framework around the Town Deal, both internally through the Council's internal audit processes but also by Central Government who are assessing the delivery of these place-based funding initiatives. Accordingly, the Programme Board wishes to ensure that the LAF is fit for purpose and that every effort is undertaken to comply with it.

3 Policy Implications

3.1 There should be no policy implications arising from the re-ordering of the Local Assurance Framework.

3.2 It is likely that there will need to be further changes to the dates for meetings to cover council panel meeting and cabinet meetings. It may be necessary to introduce some special single agenda meetings in order to meet the requirements of the Local Assurance Framework, and challenging business case deadlines.

4 Financial Implications

There should be no financial implications to re-order the LAF as the same actions are being undertaken and resource applied, but just in a different order.

5 Personnel Implications

As above.

6 Environmental Considerations

None

7 Statutory Considerations

None

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

No impact.

9 Risk Management Implications

Risks for each project are set out in their respective business cases and updates are included within monthly project highlight reports and high-level updates. Prior to approval, each business case is subject to independent due diligence checks. The council has established a process to monitor the projects as the Accountable Body and has successfully provided Accountable Body status in previous regeneration activities. Once the final business cases are approved then the council as Accountable Body will be expected to monitor delivery of the expected outputs, outcomes, costs and milestones.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

Cllrs Middleton and Blunt are the Council appointed representatives on the Town Board.

11 Background Papers

None

**Appendix 1 – Local Assurance Framework for King’s Lynn approved by
Cabinet on 24 August 2021**

Appendix 2 – Proposed Local Assurance Framework

The diagram below presents a visual outline of the Local Assurance process:



Appendix 3 – Benchmarking information from other Towns Fund recipients

Information provided by Mott Macdonald:

Local authority	Local assurance framework comments
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	Oldham used a core team of people closely connected to each project to review the draft cases to produce a final draft. Several of these drafts were subjected to a Critical Friend Review from an appropriate body, generally an internal team within the Council, of people who had not worked on developing the project to that point. Following these reviews, the finalised business cases went to the town deal board.
Carlisle City Council	Carlisle used a small team from the Council's economic development team who reviewed the business cases before they went to the Town Deal Board. This is a very simplified process but was successful as the project specialists were involved in reviewing the business case drafts, so by the time the full drafts got to the final review, they were already finalised.
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Sandwell utilised a complex process including internal and external review boards.
Worcester City Council	Worcester used a similar process to Sandwell but without the external review boards, instead Worcester's process was all internal.
Hastings Borough Council	Hastings relied more heavily on external reviewers, with few internal reviews prior to the submission of the business cases to the Town Deal Board.
Mendip District Council	Glastonbury used a very simplified system whereby the business cases, once reviewed by the project leads, would be sent directly to the Town Deal Board.

As the above shows, there is a great deal of variety in local assurance processes and ultimately, the most appropriate structure is the one that meets the requirements of the Council.

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Name of policy/service/function	Local Assurance Framework setting out the local governance of the Towns Fund programme.				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?	Existing				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	A requirement of a Town Deal is to implement a local assurance process for the development and approval of individual business cases, to finally be signed off by the Section 151 Officer and Town Deal Board Chair prior to submission to Government. The Local Assurance Framework sets out the governance and decision-making structure of the King's Lynn Town Deal Board in relation to the Towns Fund.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Disability			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Gender			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Gender Re-assignment			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Marriage/civil partnership			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Pregnancy & maternity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Race			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Religion or belief			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Sexual orientation			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Other (eg low income)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	<p>The revised process is a reordering of existing steps to develop and approve business cases.</p> <p>The specific projects will have positive impacts upon people from one or more groups identified by the protected characteristics. Each business case has an individual equality impact assessment.</p>
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	The revised process is a reordering of existing steps to develop and approve business cases.
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No	The revised process is a reordering of existing steps to develop and approve business cases.
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</p> <p>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	No	Actions:
		Actions agreed by EWG member:
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>		
Assessment completed by:		
Name	Ged Greaves	
Job title	Corporate Performance Manager	
Date	29 July 2022	