

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

LEVELLING UP FUND1. Purpose of report

To seek approval for an allocation within the 2021/22 General Fund revenue budget for costs associated with developing a project bid for submission to the Levelling Up Fund.

2. Background

On 3 March 2021 HM Treasury along with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Transport published the Levelling-Up Fund (LUF) prospectus and a list of local authorities by priority category. The LUF was announced at the November 2020 Spending Review with £4bn available for England between now and 2024/25. In 2021/22 £600m is available through the fund and will focus on smaller transport projects, town centre and high street regeneration and support for maintaining and expanding the United Kingdom's cultural and heritage assets. Projects are expected to have a value of up to £20m.

The funding will be delivered through local authorities with the allocation determined through competition to ensure value for money. In the first year, bids which can demonstrate investment or begin delivery in the following financial year will be prioritised. Funding received is expected to be fully spent by 31 March 2024.

Capacity funding will be provided by the Government to those authorities deemed to be most in need of "levelling up". Authorities will be categorised as priority 1, 2 or 3. Whilst further guidance will be provided on what the capacity funding can be used for, it is expected that authorities will not be able to use the funding in time to support the first round of bids. It is therefore proposed that a sum of £20,000 to be allocated in the 2021/22 General Fund revenue budget for costs associated with developing a project bid for submission to this fund.

Regular progress reports concerning this bidding process will be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in due course.

3. Financial implications

There is presently no provision within the 2021/22 General Fund revenue budget for costs such as those outlined above. An allocation could be made from the Council's General Fund balance which is anticipated to be £4.174m at 31 March 2021.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that a supplementary revenue estimate of £20,000 be included in the 2021/22 General Fund revenue budget for costs associated with developing a bid to the Levelling Up Fund and met from the Council's General Fund balance.

Background papers

Nil