

# Report to Cabinet

**16 October 2024**

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| <b>Subject:</b>         | Levelling Up Partnership  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>  | Leader<br>Councillor Kerrie Carmichael  |
| <b>Director:</b>        | Executive Director - Place<br>Alan Lunt<br><br>Assistant Director – Spatial Planning and Growth<br>Tammy Stokes |
| <b>Key Decision:</b>    | No  |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | Levelling Up Partnership Programme Manager<br>Rebecca Jenkins<br>rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk                |

## **1 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the progress update on the delivery of the Levelling Up Partnership be received.
- 1.2 That approval be given to the updated Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board Membership and Terms of Reference as set out in paragraph 1.9.
- 1.3 That a further progress report on the Levelling Up Partnership be submitted to the Cabinet in 6 months.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 In September 2023, details of the Levelling Up Partnership (£20.4m) were formally announced by Government. This followed a set of Cabinet approvals in September to establish governance arrangements, approve the target geography as Wednesbury, and to agree the set of projects as follows:

- Friar Park Urban Village
- Wednesbury Community Safety Scheme
- Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements
- Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements
- Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion

2.2 Cabinet requested to receive a report on the performance of the Levelling Up Partnership Programme every 6 months. This report provides the second 6-monthly overview of performance.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

The formation of a Levelling Up Partnership and delivery of the interventions within the LUP will contribute to all objectives of the corporate plan.

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| Growing Up in Sandwell | Opportunities for children and young people will be strengthened through an extended offer at the Friar Park Millennium Centre, a significant number of new homes, and improved quality and safety of public spaces and greenspaces in Wednesbury.  |
| Living in Sandwell     | <p>The interventions within the LUP will strengthen the quality and safety of greenspaces and public spaces in Wednesbury. The interventions will enable a significant number of new quality homes.</p> <p>The interventions within the LUP will strengthen the deterrents for crime and ASB in Wednesbury.</p> |

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| Thriving Economy in Sandwell | The interventions within the LUP will enable a significant number of new homes to be delivered and will improve the quality of neighbourhoods through improvements and enhanced safety measures in green spaces and public spaces.   |
| Healthy in Sandwell          | <p>The interventions within the LUP will strengthen the quality and safety of greenspaces and public spaces in Wednesbury, encouraging physical activity.</p> <p>Reporting to the WLUP Board includes updates on Public Health programme delivery in Wednesbury due to the interaction with the levelling up outcomes.</p> |
| One Council One Team         | The delivery of the LUP requires cross-Council working including input from key enabling services including finance, legal and procurement.  |

## 1. Context and Key Issues

- 1.1 In March 2023, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that Sandwell was one of 20 places to be invited to form a Levelling Up Partnership (LUP).
- 1.2 Levelling Up Partnerships are targeted interventions designed to identify practical, tangible actions to support priority places to 'level up' and to help government develop a more holistic understanding of place. Sandwell and Hull were the first of 20 areas selected to form a Levelling Up Partnership.
- 1.3 In September, the details of the Levelling Up Partnership (£20.4m) were formally announced by Government. This followed a set of Cabinet approvals in September to establish governance arrangements, approve the target geography as Wednesbury, and to agree the set of projects below.
- Friar Park Urban Village
  - Wednesbury Community Safety Scheme
  - Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements
  - Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements
  - Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion

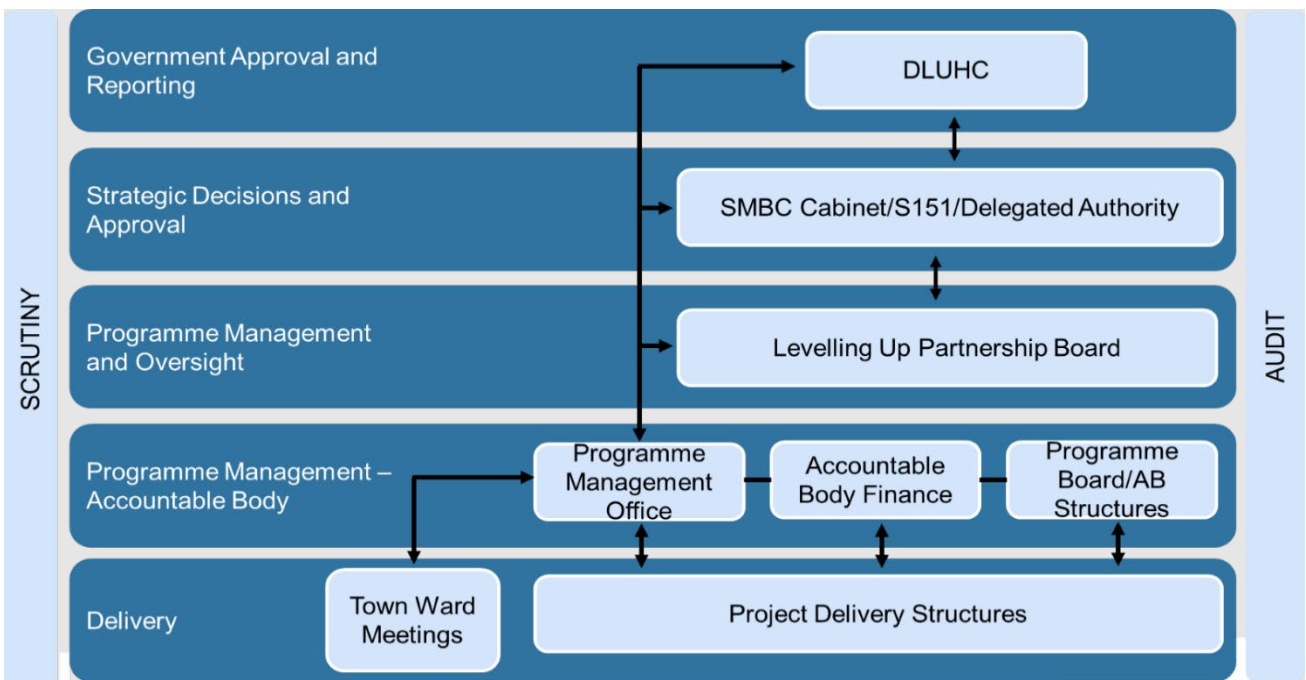
1.4 The full grant from MHCLG (formerly DLUHC) for £20.4m has been received by the Council.

1.5 The remainder of this report sets out a progress update on:

- Governance Arrangements and Reporting
- Project Delivery Progress
- LUP Programme Outcomes and Public Health Alignment
- Financial Summary
- Risk Management
- Communication and Engagement

### Governance Arrangements and Reporting

1.6 The governance model for the programme was agreed by Cabinet in September 2023. It is modelled on the Towns Fund governance model and is set out below:



1.7 The Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board has been established to oversee the programme. It brings together Councillors, MPs, representatives of the voluntary sector, the business community, faith group representatives, and partners. The Board meets every other month with sub-group, working group meetings, and site visits as required.

- 1.8 As set out in the Board Terms of Reference, an annual review of Membership was undertaken in August 2024 and this considered: Board Positions available and positions appointed to, Board meeting attendance, Board Vacancies, and any Terms of Reference updates required. Minor changes to Board Membership and the Board Terms of reference are proposed along with addressing points of clarity.
- 1.9 The changes recommended to Cabinet are set out below:
- i) That 2 changes to Board positions be made to reflect:
    - that Homes England did not take up a voting position, but that they are available as a non-voting advisor to the Board, as required.
    - that up to 2 young people's representatives would be allowed to provide peer support and encourage contributions.
  - ii) To update the Board Terms of Reference to provide clarity around the selection process for Board vacancies, to make provision for observers, provision for deputies, and to update Director Titles.
- 1.10 The proposed Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.11 Monthly monitoring conversations are in place with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 1.12 Internal governance consists of a LUP Project Group and progress reporting to the Council's Leadership Team. The LUP Project Group brings together project Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) for the LUP projects and key enabling services (procurement and finance) to review programme and project progress, issues, and risks. The project group have met monthly since the programme commencement.
- 1.13 Programme progress reports are made to Leadership Team on a quarterly basis and monthly by exception.

- 1.14 Cabinet requested to receive 6-monthly progress updates. The first progress update was received in March 2024 (reporting programme delivery as at end January 2024). This report is the second 6-monthly programme update to Cabinet (reporting programme delivery as at end July 2024).
- 1.15 All LUP projects have received a capital appraisal and have been approved through the Council's internal assurance arrangements, subject to recommendations. The fulfilment of the recommendations is due to be reviewed in Autumn 2024.
- 1.16 Project Changes: Cabinet's approval to the LUP Programme Governance arrangements included a scheme of delegation which sets out the approval process for project changes. This covers change of outputs, outcomes, and milestones. All changes are recorded in a programme change log which includes information around the current status of changes, the approval route required, impact of changes, and action taken. All project changes are reported to LUP Project Group and WLUP Board for oversight.

## **Project Delivery Update**

- 1.17 Key programme achievements since the March report to Cabinet are:
- Approval of Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan
  - Public realm works commenced in Wednesbury Town Centre
  - Installation of new and upgraded CCTV cameras in Wednesbury Town Centre and Friar Park
  - Installation of first phase of nuisance bike measures in Friar Park
  - Procurement process commenced for Delivery Partner for Friar Park Urban Village land remediation.
  - Main work completed at Wyntor Lane Open Space
- 1.18 A summary of project delivery as at end July 2024 is provided below. Further detail is contained in Appendix 2.

| <b>Project and Phase</b>                            | <b>Progress Commentary</b>   | <b>Milestone rating</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan - <i>Delivery</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masterplan approved July 2024</li> <li>• Public launch due September 2024</li> </ul>  | Green- Delivery in line with plan   |
| Community Safety - <i>Delivery</i>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCTV in place</li> <li>• First two deployable cameras installed.</li> <li>• Phase 1 nuisance bike work completed.</li> <li>• Business engagement commenced and ongoing.</li> <li>• Soft market testing of radio link scheme underway</li> </ul>   | Green - Delivery in line with plan  |
| Public Realm – <i>Delivery</i>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional project activity agreed and building facade improvement scheme in development.</li> <li>• Public Realm started on site in August 2024</li> <li>• Wednesbury Councillors briefed and engagement with businesses has taken place and will be ongoing.</li> </ul>   | Green - Delivery in line with plan  |
| Friar Park Urban Village – <i>Procurement</i>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft development agreement prepared.</li> <li>• EA Pre-application submitted.</li> <li>• Ecological surveys underway</li> <li>• Planning Consultants in place</li> <li>• Invitation to Tender for development partner launched in July.</li> <li>• Capital appraisal process concluded.</li> <li>• Revisions to Joint Venture Agreement underway</li> <li>• Risk around timescales. Escalated to programme risk register.</li> </ul> | <p>Red- Slippage in delivery impacting on completion date.</p> <p>Dates for start and end on site remain target but ambitious.</p>                          |
| Millennium Centre – <i>Detailed Design</i>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design agreed and approved.</li> <li>• Contractor for pre-construction works (detailed designs and surveys) in place.</li> <li>• Preparations for public information video underway</li> <li>• Awaiting detailed construction programme to confirm timescales.</li> <li>• Agreement to revised lease arrangements expected in September.</li> </ul>   | <p>Red – Slippage in delivery impacting on completion date.</p> <p>Slippage is due to delay in contractor appointment, preparing revised building lease</p> |

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|   |  | arrangements and detailed construction programme  |
| <p>Greenspaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wyntor - <i>Delivery</i></li> <li>Lakeside – <i>Delivery</i></li> <li>Balls Hill – <i>Due on-site August</i></li> <li>Hydes Rd - <i>Design</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work completed at Wyntor Lane Open Space and in final stages at Lakeside and Norbury Open Space</li> <li>Awaiting start on site at Balls Hill</li> <li>Surveys undertaken for Hydes Road Playing Fields, initial designs produced, and consultation closed in August.</li> <li>WLUP Board reviewing Hydes Rd proposals in August.</li> <li>Risk around costs – controls in place to review project budget following procurement phase.</li> </ul> | <p>Amber – Slippage in delivery</p> <p>Slippage is due to delays in consultation process for Hydes Road</p> |

## LUP Programme Outcomes and Public Health Alignment

1.18 The LUP programme will deliver on the Government’s Levelling Up outcomes of:

- **Boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards** through increasing skills and attainment levels and enabling new housing.
- **Spreading opportunity and improving public services** through tackling crime and ASB hotspots and increasing skills and attainment levels and enabling new housing delivery
- **Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging** through improving perceptions of safety and the quality of built environment and green spaces
- **Empowering local leaders and communities** through creating long term plans to revitalise Wednesbury Town Centre

1.19 To monitor the impact of the LUP programme, a set of outcome measures has been identified together with individual project outputs and outcomes. These are set out in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

1.20 In line with the Council’s Social Value policy, additional community benefits are being sought through the LUP programme’s procurement processes. Social value achieved to date includes a works experience placement, improvements to fencing at a community venue, a community clean up event, and career talks. Social value achievements are included in reporting to the WLUP Board.



1.21 To reflect the interaction of the levelling up programme with Public Health programmes, updates are provided to the WLUP Board at each meeting to develop a shared understanding of the public health areas of focus. Key points to note include that a town-based programme is currently being piloted in Friar Park called 'Get set.Go!', and that Friar Park has been identified as a priority ward in a WorkWell programme which has recently been awarded funding via a joint public health / NHS bid. A Public Health Strategy for the Borough is currently in development, and this will cover key issues in Wednesbury as well as Sandwell's other Towns.

### **Financial Summary**

- 1.22 At end July 2024, £520,000 capital and £178,000 revenue has been spent. All projects are forecasting spend within the LUP budget.
- 1.23 The full LUP grant of £20.05m capital and £0.35m revenue has been received by the Council.
- 1.24 Agreement is in place with MHCLG (formerly DLUHC) for the Council to manage the grant within the Council's overall capital programme to enable spend beyond the March 2025 grant deadline. Any project spend beyond March 2025 will be considered and authorised by the Council as the Accountable Body.

### **Risk Management**

- 1.25 A programme level risk register is in place, and this is reviewed monthly by the LUP Project Group. Project level red risks have been identified and are reported to the LUP Project Group and the WLUP Board. The programme risk register is provided at Appendix 5.
- 1.26 At project level, a risk register is in place for each project, and this will be maintained throughout the project lifecycle.

1.27 There is 1 programme red risk as follows:

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| <p>Risk Title and Description</p> | <p><b>Delivery of Friar Park Urban Village Project – Time and Cost</b><br/> Risk relates to delays in delivery of the project related to obtaining EA licenses and/or delays to developer partner procurement process and/or planning permissions and/or project cost increases</p>  |
| <p>Controls</p>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Early engagement with EA has been undertaken and consultants (technical experts) procured to support the engagement process.</li> <li>– Legal review of proposed approach has been undertaken.</li> <li>– Full risk assessment conducted.</li> <li>– Arrangements in place to manage spend within capital programme to enable delivery in 2025/2026 and being kept under review through project changes.</li> <li>– Ongoing joint work with WMCA through Joint Venture Agreement</li> <li>– Revised cost estimates received.</li> <li>– Capital appraisals review underway and due for completion in August.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Risk expected to reduce</p>    | <p>When EA permitting process concluded, delivery partner procured, planning permission granted and finalisation of capital appraisal.</p>   |

## Communication and Engagement

1.28 A programme level communication and engagement strategy was agreed by the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership (WLUP) Board in February 2024, and individual project communication and engagement plans received.

1.29 The WLUP Board have established a Communication and Engagement Sub-Group to provide regular input to communication and engagement activities across the programme.

1.30 Programme updates are provided to Wednesbury Elected Members through the Town Lead's participation as a WLUP Board Member and through updates at each of the quarterly Wednesbury Members' meetings.

1.31 Since the March update report to Cabinet, key communication and engagement activity across the programme has included:

- Consultation on Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan, nuisance bike measures, and Hydes Road Playing Fields
- Engagement with businesses in Wednesbury Town Centre around Masterplan and implementation of Public Realm scheme implementation
- Engagement with Wednesbury Elected Members around Masterplan and Public Realm scheme implementation.
- Programme updates in Sandwell Herald
- LUP information stall at Wednesbury Carnival to raise awareness.

1.23 Over the next quarter, communication and engagement activity includes:

- Launch of Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan
- Launch of CCTV scheme
- Launch of first phase of greenspaces projects
- Public Information video launched for Friar Park Millennium Centre

## **2 Alternative Options**

2.1 This report provides an overview of progress of the Levelling Up Partnership Programme. It was requested by Cabinet to provide assurance on delivery progress. Alternative options would be for Cabinet to receive progress reporting through the Council's performance management framework rather than a bespoke report.

### 3 Implications

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| <b>Resources:</b>            | <p>The LUP presents a £20.4m opportunity for Sandwell with a challenging delivery time constraint.</p> <p>All LUP projects have undergone a capital appraisal as part of the Council's assurance process and have been approved subject to recommendations. Fulfilment of the capital appraisal recommendations will be reviewed during Autumn 2024.</p> <p>The Council has received the full LUP grant of £20.4m. The first determination letter (allocation of £15m capital and £250K revenue) set out that spend must be made by March 2025 which presents a significant challenge for the council to deliver at pace. Agreement is in place with MHCLG to manage the allocation within the Council's overall capital programme. Spend beyond March 2025 is being signed off by finance on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>All LUP projects are forecasting to deliver within budget.</p> |
| <b>Legal and Governance:</b> | <p>The Council is the lead delivery organisation for all LUP projects.</p> <p>Delivery of the projects is being overseen by the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board. An internal LUP Project Group is in place as a mechanism for ensuring the council is fulfilling its role as Accountable Body and for resolving issues. Spend is monitored through the Council's Corporate Asset Management Board. A LUP programme manager has been appointed to oversee the programme.</p>   |

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|                         | <p>Legal agreements/MoUs may be required to deliver specific projects and will follow standard council process.</p> <p>Legal advice has been commissioned for the Friar Park Urban Village project.</p> <p>All LUP projects have undergone a subsidy control screening, and this will be kept under review in the event of scheme changes. Subsidy advice has been used to inform the remediation strategy for the Friar Park Urban Village project.</p> <p>The Levelling up Partnership is being managed as a programme. The Wednesbury Levelling up Partnership Board is in place to oversee the programme.</p> |
| <p><b>Risk:</b></p>     | <p>A programme level risk register is in place, and this is reviewed monthly by the LUP Project Group. Project level red risks have been identified and are reported to the LUP Project Group.</p> <p>Project level risk registers are in place and will be maintained throughout the project lifecycle. The project risk registers were reviewed as part of the capital appraisal for each project.</p> <p>Red risks are reported to Leadership Team as part of quarterly reporting (and monthly by exception).</p>  |
| <p><b>Equality:</b></p> | <p>Through the project development process, consideration is being given to the impact on and improvements that can be made for residents with protected characteristics. Equality Impact screenings and EqIAs will be conducted, as appropriate. Equality implications are included in reporting to the WLUP Board.</p>  |

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| <p><b>Health and Wellbeing:</b></p> | <p>The underpinning objective of the LUP is to ‘level up’ and reduce inequalities. The proposed interventions focus on tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way and compliment public health programmes.</p>   |
| <p><b>Social Value:</b></p>         | <p>The proposed interventions will be delivered in accordance with the Council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and will deliver social value in line with the council’s requirements.</p> <p>Social Value achievements to date have included:<br/>A works experience placement with nuisance bike installer, improvements to fencing at a community venue, a community clean up event, and career talks.</p> <p>The WLUP Board is exploring conducting a community group mapping activity.</p> <p>Social value is included in reporting to the WLUP Board.</p> |
| <p><b>Climate Change:</b></p>       | <p>The LUP interventions include a range of improvements to the quality of green spaces and public spaces in Wednesbury, contributing to biodiversity.</p> <p>Proposals will also enable the delivery of a significant number of new homes and a range of construction work. Options for energy efficiency measures and reducing carbon through the construction process are being considered as part of the detailed design phase and procurement.</p>   |
| <p><b>Corporate Parenting:</b></p>  | <p>The voice of the child is incorporated within the LUP governance arrangements through the inclusion of a young people’s representative on the WLUP Board. Where consultation is being undertaken as part of the LUP Programme, young people’s views and opinions will be sought.</p>   |

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|  | The intervention focusing on the extension of the Friar Park Millennium Centre has included consideration of youth opportunities. |
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#### **4. Appendices**

1. WLUP Board Terms of Reference September 2024
2. Summary of LUP Project Delivery
3. LUP Project Outputs and Outcomes
4. LUP Programme Outcome diagram
5. Levelling Up Partnership Programme Risk Register

#### **5. Background Papers**

[Agenda, Reports and Minutes of Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board](#)

[Levelling Up Partnership Report to Cabinet March 2024](#)

[Levelling Up Scope and Interventions](#)

[Levelling Up Partnership Programme Communications and Engagement Strategy](#)