

Greater Grimsby Board

Tuesday 1st November 2022

Virtual Meeting via Teams

2.00 p.m.

Agenda

1. Apologies and Introduction from the Chair (5 mins)

2. Declarations of Interest

3. Minutes

To receive the minutes of the Great Grimsby Project Board meeting held on 21st March 2022 (copy attached).

4. Strategic Update (10 mins)

To receive a strategic update, including reference to devolution, the Levelling Up Fund and investment zones (background papers attached).

5. Town Centre Update (45 mins)

To discuss progress in relation to town centre developments (background papers attached).

6. Skills Update (10 mins)

To receive an update on the above (background paper attached).

7. Any Other Business and Next Meeting Date



Greater Grimsby Board

Minutes of Virtual Meeting 21st March, 2022 at 2.30 p.m.

Attendance:

- Chair - David Ross (The David Ross Foundation)
- Darren Cunningham (Phillips66)
- Pat Doody (Greater Lincolnshire LEP)
- Julian Free (University of Lincoln)
- Professor Stephen Hardy (Hull University)
- Councillor Philip Jackson (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Lia Nici (MP for Greater Grimsby)
- Jason Pappriil (Engie)
- Martin Vickers (MP for Cleethorpes)
- Julie Walmsley (Community and Voluntary Sector)
- Rob Walsh (North East Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group)

Also in Attendance: –

- Richard Askham
- Damien Jaines-White (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Clive Tritton (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Liz Wade (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Dafydd Williams (ABP)
- Sharon Wroot (North East Lincolnshire Council)
- Paul Windley (North East Lincolnshire Council)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Lod Lamont, Lord Kerlake, David Talbot, Louise Brennan, Ruth Carver, Emma Toulson, Simon Bird, Susan Lea, Peter Campey and Neale Coleman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from any Board member in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Greater Grimsby Project Board meeting held on 28th September, 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Grimsby Town Centre Update

The Board received an update on progress with implementation of the Town's Fund projects within the Grimsby town centre.

Mr Jaines White summarised the principles and core areas set out in the now completed Grimsby Masterplan. He then outlined key milestones and progress with the six Towns Fund projects as follows:

- Activation and Community Enterprise Fund – now launched and the first application had been approved.
- St James Quarter – the new square was now in place, the development of St James House continued to be progressed and was due for completion in June 2023.
- Riverhead Square – due for completion in July 2023
- Public Realm and Connectivity – due for completion in August 2023
- Central Library – the new hub was due for completion in October 2024
- Garth Lane – this project for town housing was due for completion in early 2026.

The Board reported concerns about the viability of further housing in the town centre, the impact on local schools and the suitability of the land at Garth Lane. The Board stressed the importance of community engagement with this project in particular.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. Exploratorium Update

The Board received an update from Mr Askham on a proposed Exploratorium project.

Mr Askham explained that the project aimed to promote the off shore renewables industry through the provision of a box park Exploratorium in the town centre using government funding. While this was a temporary siting, he added that there was the potential through sponsorship to retain the Exploratorium, if successful. It was envisaged that the Exploratorium would form part of the school trip diary and it would form a visual trigger for the regeneration of the area.

The Board sought clarification on a number of points, including its location, funding and accessibility.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

6. Skills Action Plan Framework

The Board considered a report setting out the current position in the development of a North East Lincolnshire Skills Action Plan Framework, as agreed at the Board meeting of September 2021.

The Board commented that providing clarity and confidence over closing the skills gap was important to investors. Getting into schools was a key issue, noting that the focus needed to be on years 8 and 9.

The Chair commented that the support and drive on the skills agenda from this Board was not in question but he added that there was a need to start hosting events, such as skills conferences, to get employers and providers talking to each other.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Skills Action Plan Framework be noted.
2. That the process of engaging with external skills partners on the Skills Action Plan Framework be continued.
3. That, in line with the recommendations of the Greater Grimsby Task Force paper (see next item), the process of identifying a Task Force skills lead to initiate the delivery of the Skills Action Plan Framework supported by the Council's Strategic Skills Lead, once appointed, be commenced.
4. That, once identified, the Task Force Skills Lead be asked to convene a skills sub group and identify lead sub group members for each of the three core skills priorities as set out in section 3.0 of the report now submitted.
5. That the Task Force skills lead be asked to report back to future meetings of this Board on progress.

7. Greater Grimsby Task Force Leads

The Board considered a report setting out next steps in terms of recruitment of Task Force leads for a Greater Grimsby task force.

The input of Board members on who could play the role of lead for each of the priority areas, was welcomed.

RESOLVED –

1. That the principles of the proposed Task Force as set out in section 5.0 of the report now submitted be agreed.
2. That the role of Task Force leads as set out in section 6.0 of the report now submitted be agreed.
3. That officers be requested to progress the recruitment of Task Force leads as set out in section 7.0 of the report now submitted.

8. Levelling Up White Paper and Position on Devolution

The Board received an update from Mr Walsh on the impact of the Levelling Up White Paper and progress with devolution discussions locally.

Mr Walsh noted that the expectation was that by 2030 every part of the country that wanted a devolution deal would be given the chance. Whilst Greater Lincolnshire was not included in the first tranche, this did not mean that its ambition was diminished. All three upper tier authorities continued to work on a potential deal and were engaging with

the district councils and the Greater Lincolnshire LEP. Businesses would need to be engaged as a first step. It was noted that there would be overlap with the work of this Board on matters such as the skills agenda.

Councillor Jackson commented on collaborative work being progressed with North Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council which demonstrated how keen the authorities were to work together. However, he felt that there was more work to do to ensure that district councils and MPs were fully engaged.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

There being no further business, the Chair declare the meeting closed at 3.58 p.m.

Board: Greater Grimsby Board

Date: 1st November 2022

Report Title: North East Lincolnshire Levelling Up Fund Update

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the three Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bids submitted by North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) in August.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i. note the paper and progress made

3.0 Background

Government launched the second round of LUF earlier this year, which is designed to invest in projects and infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, specifically regarding projects that support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage investment. Furthermore, LUF guidance advised that assessment would be based upon characteristics of places, deliverability, strategic fit with local and LUF priorities, and the economic case for each project. In addition, bids had to demonstrate spend within the 2022/23 financial year, how they would make a visible positive difference to local areas.

NELC was able to submit three LUF bids this round as outlined below.

- Great Grimsby Parliamentary Constituency bid
- Cleethorpes Parliamentary Constituency bid
- Transport bid

NELC was able to seek up to a maximum of £20 million for each bid provided it could demonstrate the requirements outlined above and local MP support. This report outlines the submissions made.

4.0 Bid Outline

Great Grimsby Bid – Freshney Place Leisure Scheme

NELC acquired Freshney Place Shopping Centre from Receivers acting on behalf of investors in the centre in July this year. This was undertaken to safeguard the centre, which is a critical element of the town centre's economic and community infrastructure, but also to ensure control of the centre to allow the redevelopment of the western end to provide a new market hall and leisure scheme, which would help diversify the predominantly retail offer within both Freshney Place and the wider town centre.

Consequently, a constituency bid of £20 million was submitted, seeking to substitute the Future High Streets funding (FHSF) previously secured for the reconfiguration works to Freshney Place and the Market Hall to bring leisure activities to the town centre. The FHSF leisure scheme is subject to a Project Adjustment Request which, if approved, will be amended to support the acquisition of Freshney Place instead. If successful, the LUF monies would de-risk the overall acquisition of Freshney Place and delivery of the leisure scheme.

Cleethorpes bid – Cleethorpes Masterplan Delivery – Market Place, Sea Road and Pier Gardens

NELC adopted the Cleethorpes Masterplan in March 2022, which was undertaken by Hemingway Design in conjunction with G L Hearn. The masterplan outlines the potential to develop Cleethorpes promenade (North, Central, and South) and town centre with a series of interventions aimed at enhancing its appeal to residents, businesses, and visitors.

An £18.5 million bid was submitted, for Cleethorpes incorporating schemes identified in the Cleethorpes' Masterplan as important strategic development locations, and deliverable within the LUF timescale. The bid includes development of the Market Place including improved connectivity with Sea Road, and redevelopment of Pier Gardens to incorporate new family themed leisure activities.

Transport Bid – Grimsby Transport Hub and Bus Electrification

A £20 million bid for the development of a transportation hub in Grimsby town centre incorporating provision for bus, and active travel infrastructure to support the wider regeneration of the town centre. In addition, provision has also been made to enable infrastructure for the electrification of buses around the area.

The bids were consulted upon with stakeholders and the wider public, which highlighted support for each one and consequently bid applications were submitted in August 2022.

There is no date for when the outcome of the bid process will be announced, but in the meantime NELC is preparing development of each project based upon both positive and negative outcomes for each bid.

5.0 Risks to Viability/Deliverability

There are two primary risks facing all three projects regarding viability and deliverability, regardless of whether their LUF bids are successful or not, as outlined below.

Political Climate

As outlined above, it's currently not known when the outcome of LUF bids will be announced, and current political uncertainty potentially lengthens the decision-making process (or could see LUF grants reduced or cancelled). Any significant delays in announcing decisions would have a significant impact on delivery, especially if delivery end dates were not revised accordingly (currently 31st March 2025). NELC continues to liaise with Government to gain any insight available on potential timescale.

Economic Climate

All three bids are major construction projects and current supply chain issues, inflation costs, and interest rate increases, represent significant risks, especially if the decision-making process is delayed, as outlined above. NELC continues to undertake cost analysis and is preparing delivery options should costs continue to rise, or it does not receive the allocation bid for.

6.0 Conclusion

NELC has submitted three LUF bids totalling £58.5 million, aimed at supporting the regeneration of Grimsby Town Centre, Cleethorpes, and transport infrastructure across North East Lincolnshire.

If successful, the bids would make a significant contribution towards regeneration of the area.

Board: Greater Grimsby Board

Date: 1st November 2022

Report Title: North East Lincolnshire Investment Zone Update

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the Investment Zone Expression of Interest submitted by North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) in October.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the paper and progress made.

3.0 Background

Government launched the Investment Zone initiative in September aiming to create zones within Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs), which are envisaged to offer a variety of tax, regulatory innovations and flexibilities, and planning simplifications, which would support economic growth.

NELC was one of 38 MCAs and UTLAs invited to hold early-stage discussions the Department of Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) to progress an Expression of Interest.

DLUHC guidance advised that the whole Local Authority area bid to become an Investment Zone, but that specific sites would be identified to benefit from incentives agreed with Government.

4.0 Expression of Interest Submission

NELC consulted with stakeholders to determine the most advantageous sites to propose for Investment Zone status within its boundaries and these are outlined below.

Pioneer Investment Zone

112-hectare zone containing major strategically important development land for high value energy production, specialist manufacturing, ports-linked logistics, and specialist training. The zone has Enterprise Zone and provisional Freeport status.

Immingham Investment Zone

100-hectare zone of strategically important portside development land, with major potential for high-value ports related activities, including the roll-out of new hydrogen technologies. 21 hectares of the site has Enterprise Zone status, and the full zone has provisional Freeport status.

South Humber Investment Zone

71-hectare zone of strategically important South Humber bank developable land, with major potential for high-value energy production, specialist manufacturing, and other commercial activities. Parts of the zone have Enterprise Zone status and/or provisional Freeport status.

Moody Lane Investment Zone

36-hectare zone of developable land capacity. The EZ site has been shortlisted by Rolls Royce as a potential location for new Nuclear Reactor production, which would occupy around a third of the site. The remainder could support new B1, B2 and B8 development, with known interest by RPM.

Grimsby Town Centre Investment Zone

7.1-hectare zone with opportunities for intensification of commercial activities (Freshney Place Shopping Centre/Leisure Site and St James House) and the formation of a new ultra-low-carbon town centre living offer.

Europarc Investment Zone

128.5-hectare zone of development land capacity, extending the success of NEL's flagship business park which already supports c.2,000 jobs. Expansion land can support major development, focussed on food production and there is significant interest in new major cold store provision at the park. The zone itself is designated as a Food EZ and parts have provisional Freeport status.

Grimsby Port Investment Zone

92-hectare zone of developable land capable of supporting new commercial space and a new 1,400-seat theatre, alongside the expansion of portside land for new port activities.

Western Investment Zone

9.3-hectare zone of housing development land in Grimsby, with opportunity to deliver a major new housing growth. The site has benefited from Homes England funding for enabling works, with spine road, utilities and access works completed.

5.0 Risks to Viability/Deliverability

The primary risks facing the Investment Zone proposals regarding viability and deliverability are outlined below.

Political Climate

As outlined above, it's currently not known when the outcome of the Investment Zone process will be announced, and current political uncertainty potentially lengthens the decision-making process (or could see the Investment Zones reduced or cancelled). The rationale for creating Investment Zones is to create incentives to attract private sector investment. Any significant delays in announcing decisions would have an on investor decision-making (i.e., they might wish to wait until decisions are made), plus if NELC's bid was unsuccessful then investors might be tempted to invest in areas that had been successful. NELC continues to liaise with Government to gain any insight available on potential timescale.

Economic Climate

Because the exact nature of incentives has not yet been finalised, it is unclear whether the proposed incentives will be substantial enough to encourage investment within the Investment Zones. In addition, it is not known what financial impact there might be to NELC, depending on what incentives are agreed, e.g., business rate retention. NELC will liaise further with Government as the process progresses further.

6.0 Conclusion

NELC has an Investment Zone Expression of Interest aimed at ensuring significant employment and housing sites across the borough can benefit from tax and regulatory incentives that may accrue from them.

If successful, up to 556-hectares of land would benefit from Investment Zone status with the potential to support significant investment and job creation opportunities.

There is no date for when the outcome of this process will be announced.

Board: Greater Grimsby Board
Date: 1st November 2022
Report Title: Towns Fund Update

1.0 Introduction

This report sets out the progress made so far regarding the various Towns Fund projects as set out in the Grimsby Town Investment Plan (TIP) and approved by Government in 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the paper and progress made.

3.0 Background

The Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan (2020), which was subject to extensive public and stakeholder consultation provided the strategic direction for selecting the TIP projects. On 3rd March 2021, Government made an offer of £20.9 million and North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) with the approval of the board obtained approval to deliver seven projects within Grimsby Town Centre.

NELC developed business cases for all the projects, which were submitted to Government with approval of the board’s chairman.

The approved projects are outlined below.

		Option 1
1	Riverhead Square	£3.3m
2	Central Library (new facility/uses)	£4.2m
3	Garth Lane Housing Development/Alexandra Docks	£7.8m
4	St James House	£1.5m
5	Activation Funds	£0.85m
6	Public Realm Connectivity	£3.25m
	TOTAL Towns Fund Cost	£20.9m

4.0 Project Updates

Riverhead Square – New Public Square

Arup were appointed by NELC to design the new public square at Riverhead Square. Arup in conjunction with NELC and EQUANS have completed this task, which included public and stakeholder consultation that helped shape the work. EQUANS is currently determining the final materials to be used and will commence procurement of the main contractor in November with construction to commence in January 2023.

Central Library – Refurbishment of the Library Building and Development of a Green Hub

Discussions with partners regarding the Green Hub that would support North East Lincolnshire’s low carbon energy sector have been ongoing, which aim to create a hub providing a mixture of skills, innovation, and business support within the library. NELC is working with consultants, funded by the

Government's One Public Estate programme, to develop the prospective partnership into a business plan for the scheme by early 2023.

In the meantime, NELC and EQUANS are developing a programme of works needed to refurbish the building with an aim of commencing these in early 2023.

Garth Lane Housing Development/Alexandra Docks – Creation of a Waterfront Residential Scheme at Alexandra Docks

NELC is working with Homes England to progress the project, via the development of a Route Map document outlining future phased development of the wider Alexandra Dock area, which will support the undertaking of a soft market testing exercise. This exercise will form a viability plan, incorporating delivery plans, construction reports, procurement methods, and funding options to support the project. It is anticipated that enablement works will commence on this project in Spring 2023

St James House – Refurbishment of St James House and Creation of Business Accommodation

NELC is working with E-Factor, which is Grimsby's primary business support agency, to help them acquire St James House. Agreement has been reached to enable E-Factor's acquisition of the building and they have completed design and procurement preparation and will be aiming to commence asbestos removal in November with a planning application submitted at the same time with construction works to commence in early 2023.

Activation & Community Engagement Fund (ACE) – Grants to Support Development of Alternative Activities in the Town Centre

ACE launched in October 2021 and to date has approved £105,000 across 5 grants with one more in the pipeline. Feedback from prospective applicants has indicated that a lack of revenue funding has prohibited them from applying. Consequently, a joint promotional approach is planned imminently, alongside the launch of the Council's Shared Prosperity funding, which could provide revenue funding to community groups that are interested in utilising this funding.

Grants approved to date include refurbishment works to bring the vacant Co-op bank back into use for leisure use purposes, a former estate agents turned into a cultural and arts space, the addition of shuffleboards onto a local bar, and funds to bolster leisure activities on Alexandra Dock.

Public Realm Connectivity – Improvement of Walking, Cycling Routes, including Public Realm

NELC appointed LDA Design to lead the project design team. The team has developed a series of mini projects across the town centre, which will improve connectivity and public realm, including improvements to Alexandra Dock waterfront, Victoria Street South, Lord Street, and Frederick Ward Way.

The designs will be developed to RIBA 3 stage this year, including public and stakeholder consultation, with construction commencing in early 2023.

5.0 Conclusion

Progress has been made across all Towns Fund projects, which will make a significant contribution to Grimsby Town Centre's regeneration. Final design work is underway with all the schemes and substantive construction will commence in early 2023 which will enable completion within the Towns Fund timescale.

Given the quantity of works planned, NELC and EQUANS are working with stakeholders to ensure minimum disruption in the town centre. In addition, soft market testing is being undertaken to ensure procurement of works and materials will be achievable, plus all projects are being subjected to regular cost analysis regarding inflation, to support their delivery.

Board: Greater Grimsby Board

Date: 1st November 2022

Report Title: Freshney Place Acquisition & Leisure Scheme Update

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the North East Lincolnshire Council's (NELC) acquisition of Freshney Place Shopping Centre and the latest position regarding proposed leisure scheme at the western end of the centre.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board note the paper and progress made.

3.0 Background

As highlighted in the separate paper regarding Levelling Up Fund bids, NELC had previously secured Future High Street Funding (FHSF) of £17.3 million to redevelop the western part of Freshney Place Shopping Centre (including the existing Market Hall) to provide a new leisure offer and market.

The scheme was proposed to be a partnership between NELC and the owners of Freshney Place Shopping Centre, with a shared investment to supplement the FHSF grant (scheme was totalling c. £27 million).

However, in January 2022, following the impacts of the Covid pandemic, which had a severe impact on the retail asset sector, one of the principal lenders to the owners of Freshney Place Shopping Centre made the decision to appoint Fixed Charge Receivers with a brief to dispose of the asset.

Not only did this put at risk delivery of the proposed leisure scheme and the FHSF grant, but it also put at jeopardy North East Lincolnshire's largest shopping centre constituting approximately 60% of Grimsby Town Centre's retail offer. In addition, Freshney Place is a core component of Grimsby's economic and community infrastructure and critical to the success of the town centre. Its demise would not only have a significant economic impact on the town centre and wider area but would also undermine delivery of the masterplan and wider town centre investments planned or underway.

4.0 Freshney Place Acquisition

As highlighted above, the risk of Freshney Place Shopping Centre and therefore the wider town centre, declining was significant from an economic and community perspective. However, from NELC's perspective, the opportunity to acquire a strategic regeneration asset within the town centre and utilise it to support delivery of the masterplan objectives of the masterplan and wider regeneration projects was important. Consequently, NELC acquired Freshney Place Shopping Centre from the Receivers having received professional advice from Montagu Evans and Freeths Solicitors in August 2022.

Part of the support provided by Montagu Evans included a business plan outlining the actions required by NELC upon taking ownership of the centre, e.g., immediate repairs, incentives to attract occupation, etc, so that this could be built into funding required by NELC.

Since taking ownership of the centre, NELC has appointed external Asset Managers, Queensberry Real Estate who have experience of running similar centres across the UK, including Local Authority owned assets. In addition, Montagu Evans were appointed as Property Managers for the centre and will oversee the day-to-day operations including security, maintenance, etc. As with Queensberry,

Montagu Evans have experience of providing these services to shopping centres across the UK and again to Local Authority owned assets.

NELC's Cabinet has recently approved a new governance structure for the centre that will ensure it is operated at arm's length from the Council, but with appropriate oversight, including a Cabinet Sub-Committee dealing with strategic oversight including annual budget and performance monitoring, plus an Oversight group consisting of senior Council Officers that will approve decisions monthly, including performance monitoring.

5.0 Freshney Leisure Scheme

As outlined in the separate Levelling Up Fund Great Grimsby Board paper dated 1st November 2022, a Project Adjustment Request has been made to the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) to enable the existing grant to be used towards the Council's acquisition of the centre, as outlined above. Currently the Council is still awaiting the outcome of this request.

However, the acquisition of Freshney Place has enabled NELC to take overall control of the leisure scheme and progress it accordingly.

NELC is working Queensberry Real Estate as Development Managers on the leisure scheme, alongside a team of expert consultants as its delivery team.

As outlined above, it was anticipated that the project would cost £27 million, however, due to the current economic climate, this has increased to £30.9 million based on more detailed design and cost analysis.

Pending a decision on the request to move the FHSF grant and following discussions with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities, a Levelling Up Fund bid of £20 million was submitted to Government to support the leisure scheme development, with NELC funding the remaining amount. However, if the LUF bid were unsuccessful, or the FHSF adjustment request not approved then the Council has committed to delivering the scheme. The table below outlines the funding options that will enable the project to proceed.

	Option	Freshney Place (FP) Acquisition Requirements	Leisure Scheme Development Requirements
A	FHSF Adjustment and Levelling Up Fund bid successful.	FHSF plus prudential borrowing to acquire FP.	LUF plus prudential borrowing to fund the leisure scheme.
B	FHSF Adjustment approved but Levelling Up Fund bid unsuccessful	FHSF plus prudential borrowing to acquire FP.	No LUF – alternative funding required to develop the leisure scheme.
C	FHSF remains allocated to the Leisure scheme.	Alternative funding required to acquire FP.	FHSF and balance funded through prudential borrowing.

Currently, NELC and its delivery team is securing vacant possession of the units required for the redevelopment, which will be complete by March 2023. In addition, a planning application has been submitted for the scheme.

Procurement of the main contractor is due to commence in November 2022 and initial demolition works will commence in Spring 2023, with substantive works due to commence in Summer 2023.

6.0 Risks to Viability/Deliverability

The primary risks facing this project is the economic climate, as outlined below.

Economic Climate

The project is a major construction project and current supply chain issues, inflation costs, and interest rate increases, represent significant risks. However, NELC and its delivery team is undertaking continual cost analysis and preparing delivery options should costs continue to rise. However, a further risk is if the Levelling Up Fund decision-making process is delayed, as this will further delay the process and leave the Council at risk of cost further increasing.

7.0 Conclusion

NELC has acquired Freshney Place Shopping Centre to safeguard a critical component of Grimsby Town Centre's economic infrastructure and has set up appropriate management and governance arrangements. In addition, the acquisition allows NELC to progress the proposed leisure scheme which will contribute further to the town centre regeneration and supplement projects supported by the Towns Fund.

Board: Greater Grimsby Board

Date: 1st November 2022

Report Title: Skills Action Plan Development

1.0 Introduction

This report sets out the steps taken so far towards the development of a Skills Strategy and Action Plan based on the findings set out in the Skills Framework, as agreed at the Board meeting on 21 March 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i. note the paper and progress made
- ii. agree the next steps of the Skills Strategy and Action Plan development
- iii. receive a copy of the draft strategy and action plan in due course

3.0 Background

The Board previously received and agreed the findings of the Skills Framework (Framework), including the development of a Skills Action Plan. Key to taking this forward was the appointment of a Strategic Skills Lead (Skills Lead) and this process has been undertaken with the postholder having started on 4th July 2022. The Skills Lead has been using the Framework as a springboard to develop a Skills Strategy and Action Plan in collaboration with key partners.

4.0 Engaging Partners

The Skills Lead has so far directly engaged with a broad range of key partners (Development & Growth Board covering the key sectors, Employability Forum, Sector representatives, providers and careers leaders) to understand their thoughts and opinions on the information in the Framework and how the Council might best collaborate with a variety of partners to bring about significant change.

The input has been extremely positive, particularly from sectors with high demand for a skilled workforce who are keen to collaborate in order to make a lasting impact.

5.0 Emerging Themes

5.1 There are some key emerging themes from the liaisons with partners.

i. **Communications** – there is excellent work already being undertaken across NEL but this is often not known about and encouraging employers and providers to work collaboratively to create a joined-up approach will be key. Key sectors need support to challenge existing stereotypes surrounding their industries.

ii. **Aspirations** – The approach must be holistic to overcome barriers and to build pride in place, a feeling of belonging and a sense of ability and opportunity to achieve in NEL.

iii. **Careers Support** – In order to have the greatest impact, the approach must be joined-up; from schools, through FE and into adulthood. Up to date sector advice will be key in ensuring that clear career pathways are visible and accessible within the local area.

iv. **Collaboration** – For NEL to succeed in narrowing the skills gaps, all partners need to collaborate. Being able to broker, foster and facilitate positive and proactive working relationships between sectors, providers and community organisations is seen as being key to success.

v. **Funding** – The rules governing the delivery of the adult education budget (AEB) mean that it is often underspent whilst other organisations, working with those furthest from the labour market, need to bid for short term pots of funding.

6.0 Key Priorities

The Economic Strategy identifies seven priority sectors in NEL (Ports and Logistics, Renewable energy, Chemical processing, Construction, Food processing and manufacturing, Health and Care and Visitor Economy, Service and Retail). Some of these sectors, such as Health and Care, have national skills challenges, however Renewable Energy, for example, has very specific skills challenges for North East Lincolnshire which are not a priority in other areas. The Skills Strategy and Action Plan, therefore, must focus on the specific growth sectors across North East Lincolnshire if we are to retain and retrain local people for these future skilled jobs.

6.1 The priorities outlined in the Framework, along with the engagement work with partners, has determined a number of initial priorities as follows:

- i. Increasing the number of Adult Learners in Education
- ii. Narrowing the gap, between NEL and the national average, of those with no qualifications
- ii. Narrowing the gap, between NEL and the national average, of those without a Level 3 qualification
- iii. Increasing progression rates to Higher Education

7.0 Devolution

The key priorities identified above will form part of our Devolution ask, as part of Greater Lincolnshire. This would include an ask for full devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) which would enable flexibility to meet the demands of local sectors and business.

8.0 Conclusion

In order to make significant inroads into narrowing the skills gap, it is imperative that the Council set out clear priorities that are created in collaboration with its partners and the wider community. These priorities then must be clearly communicated, and actioned collaboratively, to have the biggest impact.

A draft version of the Skills Strategy and Action Plan is being completed and will go out for consultation with partners from November 2022. The Strategy and Action Plan will also be circulated to the Greater Grimsby Board for comment and ultimately, support.

