

Report to Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board

18 April 2024

Subject:	Levelling Up Partnership Programme Overview
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of progress of the Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) programme including project delivery progress, financial position and risk management

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the WLUP Board note the information contained in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 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).



3.2 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. It is a programme within the Government’s overall Levelling Up agenda which includes the Towns Fund Programme (£67.5m investment in Sandwell), the Levelling Up Fund (£58m investment in Sandwell), and Long Term Plan for Towns (£20m for Smethwick).

3.3 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 (Masterplan and Public Realm)
- Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements
- Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion

3.4 At the meeting held in February 2024, the WLUP Board received information on LUP Programme Outcomes and Project Outputs. The Board also received information about public health programmes contributing to levelling up outcomes in Wednesbury.

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

- LUP Project Delivery Update
- Risk Management
- Financial Summary
- Public Health programmes contributing to levelling up



3.6 An update on Communication and Engagement is provided as a separate agenda item.

Project Delivery Update

3.7 Across the LUP Programme, achievements since the last report have been:

- Preparation of draft masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre
- Conclusion of Public Realm consultation and final designs
- Orders placed for Wyntor and Lakeside Open Spaces
- CCTV installation and testing commenced
- Business engagement commenced
- 'Ask Angela' safety scheme in Wednesbury Town Centre launched

3.8 A summary of project delivery progress as at end March 2024 is provided below. Further detail is contained in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Project and Phase	Progress Commentary	Milestone rating
Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan - <i>Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market assessment of Wednesbury Town Centre completed • Draft masterplan compiled and input from WLUP Board working group • Preparations being made for public consultation to launch in May • Slippage with timescales for approval but no impact on spend deadline 	Amber - Slippage in delivery
Community Safety - <i>Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV installation and testing commenced • Consultation with residents near nuisance bike measures • Business engagement commenced 	Green - Delivery in line with plan
Public Realm – <i>Final Designs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Consultation concluded • Public realm costings received • Site improvement options developed • Capital appraisal process underway 	Green – Delivery in line with plan



Friar Park Urban Village - Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft development agreement prepared • Preparations for Invitation to Tender • Capital appraisal process underway • Risk around timescales. Escalated to programme risk register 	Amber – Slippage in delivery
Millennium Centre – Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design agreed and approved by Millennium Centre Board • Capital appraisal process underway • Issue around timescales 	Red – delivery expected to exceed March 2025
Greenspaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyntor, Lakeside, Balls Hill – Procurement and Delivery • Hydes Rd - Design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orders placed for Wyntor and Norbury. • Awaiting start date for Wyntor and Norbury • In procurement for Balls Hill • Surveys underway for Hydes Road • Draft designs being prepared for Hydes Road • Risk around costs – controls in place to review project budget following procurement phase 	Amber – Slippage in delivery

3.9 Updates in relation to Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and Public Realm, and Greenspaces projects are incorporated in the WLUP Board agenda on 18 April 2024.

3.10 Verbal updates in relation to other LUP projects (Friar Park Urban Village, Community Safety, and Millennium Centre) will be provided during the meeting under this agenda item.

Risk Management

3.11 A programme level risk register and individual project risk registers are in place as part of risk management arrangements. Project red risks are reported through the project delivery summary in Appendix 1. The programme risk register is provided at Appendix 3.

There is 1 programme red risk as follows:



Risk Title and Description	Delivery of Friar Park Urban Village Project 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
Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early engagement with EA has been undertaken and consultants (technical experts) procured to support the engagement process - Legal review of proposed approach has been undertaken - Full risk assessment conducted - Arrangements in place to manage spend within capital programme to enable delivery in 2025/2026 - Capital appraisal review underway
Risk expected to reduce	When EA permitting process concluded, delivery partner procured, and planning permission granted

- 3.12 Since the last report to WLUP Board:
- 3 Risks have reduced
 - 7 Risks have remained the same
 - 0 Risks have increased

Financial Summary

- 3.13 £152,000 capital and £90,000 revenue has been spent to date. All projects are forecasting spend within the budget.
- 3.14 The initial grant received by the Council from DLUHC is for £15.05m capital and £0.3m revenue with a spend deadline of March 2025. A further grant of £5m capital and £0.05m revenue is due to be received in financial year 2024-2025.
- 3.15 Agreement is in place with 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.

Public Health Programmes

3.16 Public Health programmes that contribute to levelling up include a focus on:

- Life expectancy: healthy aging app and anticipatory care
- Infant mortality: healthy pregnancy
- Obesity: reception age and year 6 obesity
- Economic wellbeing – Worklessness: preventing and tackling economic inactivity and Sandwell Language network
- Mental wellbeing of children: Wellbeing in vulnerable groups and wellbeing in children with SEND

3.17 An update was provided to the WLUP Board in February 2024 and a discussion held to gather ideas for a Wellness Programme in Wednesbury.

3.18 Appendix 4 sets out further details including a delivery summary for March 2024. Key points to note include:

- Wellness programme linked to the obesity theme: programme being drafted. Plans to consult with partners around and appetite to sign up to a community pledge ahead of programme of activity in May – June 2024
- Levelling Up Strategy integrating public health and regeneration due September - October 2024

4. Appendices

1. Summary of Levelling Up Partnership Project Delivery March 2024
2. Levelling Up Partnership Milestone Report March 2024
3. Levelling Up Partnership Programme Risk Register March 2024
4. Public Health Programmes Overview March 2024

5. Background papers



Background to Levelling Up Partnership - Report to Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board 18 December 2023

[Sandwell Council Cabinet Report – Levelling Up Partnership 13 September 2023](#)

