


LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	Cabinet 12 September 2023	
Report Title	Levelling Up Fund Programme: Chingford Mount & Highams Park	
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing & Regeneration)	
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Wards affected	Endlebury, Hale End and Highams Park South, Hatch Lane and Highams Park North, Larkwood, Valley	
Public Access	OPEN	
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Child-Friendly Chingford Bid Overview Appendix 2 – Equalities Analysis Screening	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In its Spring Budget presented in March 2023, the Government announced that Waltham Forest will receive £8.43m investment for its bid to the Levelling Up Fund bid for a programme of investment in Chingford Mount and Highams Park.
- 1.2 The announcement brings the total investment in Waltham Forest from the second round of the Levelling Up Fund to £39m, the highest amount of funding for projects in any single London borough.
- 1.3 The Council was previously awarded £17.2m for its Walthamstow: Culture for All bid and TfL received £13.9m to invest in delivering capacity and step free access enhancements to Leyton underground station, working in partnership with the Council. The award of this funding was presented in a report to Cabinet in March 2023.
- 1.4 The funding for Chingford Mount and Highams Park will be delivered under the Government's Capital Regeneration Funding programme as an addition to the main Levelling Up Fund.

- 1.5 The Council's bid builds on engagement through the Child-Friendly City and Safer Streets pilots that have looked to establish cross-generational priorities for investment to make the neighbourhood safer, more accessible and inclusive.
- 1.6 The Council will invest the funding in a series of public realm improvements to Chingford Mount and Highams Park town centres, as well as enhancements to several of the neighbourhood's parks, play spaces and sports grounds. The intention is that these improvements are co-created with local communities to provide benefits across generations, including improving community participation, cohesion and boosting the local economy.
- 1.7 This report provides Cabinet with an update on the successful bid, an overview of the delivery programme, governance and administration of the grant with the Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 note the successful outcome of the Council's Levelling Up Fund bid for Chingford Mount and Highams Park, which will be delivered through the Government's Capital Regeneration Projects programme;
 - 2.1.2 note and endorse the overview of the programme for taking forward delivery of the Levelling Up funded projects; and
 - 2.1.3 note the progress with the governance and administration processes established with the Government and within the Council to oversee delivery of this programme.

3. PROPOSALS

The Government's Levelling Up Fund

- 3.1 The Government established its flagship £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund (LUF) in 2021 as a nationwide funding pot for local authorities, including Mayoral Combined Authorities, to bid for capital funding for significant enhancements to Town Centres, Transport and Cultural projects in their local communities. To date there have been two rounds of funding allocating £3.8bn to projects around the UK.
- 3.2 In August 2022 the Council submitted second round LUF bids for projects in each of the three Parliamentary constituencies in Waltham Forest. The Council also worked closely with Transport for London (TfL) on the Greater London Authority's (GLA) sole bid which was required to be transport-based and focused on investment in two underground stations: Leyton and Colindale (in Barnet).
- 3.3 In January 2023 the Government announced that 111 bids had been successful in the second round across the UK, including the Council's "Walthamstow Culture for All" bid and TfL/GLA's bid for investment in the underground stations, resulting in nearly £31m investment in

projects in Waltham Forest. Cabinet approved a report in March 2023 related to these funding bids.

- 3.4 In March 2023 in its Spring Budget, the Government announced the Council would receive a further £8.43m for its Child-Friendly Chingford bid, covering investment in Chingford Mount and Highams Park town centres as well as several parks and sports grounds in the area. The funding will be delivered under the Government's Capital Regeneration Projects programme and brings the total Levelling Up investment in Waltham Forest to £39m, the highest for any London borough from round two of the fund.

"Child-Friendly Chingford" Bid

- 3.5 The Council's Child-Friendly Chingford bid requested £8.43m capital investment in public realm enhancements to Chingford Mount and Highams Park town centres and improvements to park, play and sports facilities across the area.
- 3.6 The bid builds on a programme of engagement in the area, including through the GLA-funded Child-Friendly City and Council-led Safer Streets pilots in Chingford Mount, the Chingford Mount Area Framework, and work led by Highams Park Planning Group to establish the Neighbourhood Plan for Highams Park.
- 3.7 The intention is that the investment will improve the attractiveness, connectivity, useability and safety of the two town centres throughout the day and evening, increasing footfall and dwell time, providing a boost to local businesses and the economy.
- 3.8 In Chingford Mount, investment in the public realm will focus on Albert Crescent and the streets forming the crossroads at the heart of the town centre, enhancing planting, rain gardens, surfacing, signage, CCTV and public art.
- 3.9 In Highams Park, investment will be targeted at introducing a connection between Aldriche Way Estate and Celebration Avenue, a key missing link in the town centre, as well as improved crossing at Larkshall Road and a focal point for community events and small business in Highams Park station car park.
- 3.10 Alongside this, funding will be invested in Memorial Park, Chase Lane Park, Rolls Park Sports Ground and Chingford Rugby Club. This investment will enhance play and sports facilities including new play equipment, MUGA, skateboard and tennis provision; improving accessibility for users and connectivity between the green spaces; supporting increased sports and leisure participation and resultant health outcomes; as well as the refurbishment of a pavilion in Memorial Park to create a new community café offer and accessible toilets, boosting community cohesion.
- 3.11 The scope for much of the programme has developed through engagement undertaken by the Council and local community organisations over several years, with further targeted engagement

planned through the Autumn and as the projects are taken forward through the design and planning stages.

- 3.12 Appendix 1 provides further detail on the projects that form the bid. The headline funding and programme profiles are continuing to be reviewed with Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) programme leads to reflect any changes since the bid was submitted in August 2022.
- 3.13 The Government requires that all its funding is spent by March 2025, which is a key programme driver. The Government is continuing to review its timescales for delivery across the levelling up fund programme reflecting the period between the submission of bids, announcement of successful funding and the subsequent contractual processes.
- 3.14 The Council's bid includes a c.£1.9m match-funding commitment for the Council which includes investment in 2022-2025 into flood mitigation works across the area's parks and open spaces and reinstatement of a pavilion in Rolls Park.
- 3.15 The programme of improvements represents an initial injection of investment in Chingford Mount and Highams Park, with the Council continuing to work with local communities and stakeholders to identify opportunities to enhance the area's town centres, community facilities and open spaces, including utilising assets in its ownership.

Governance

- 3.16 The Government has established a standardised governance, administration and monitoring process for the Levelling Up Fund and Capital Regeneration programme of projects across the UK.
- 3.17 The Council has successfully completed a subsidy control review with DLUHC in line with the Government's published Levelling Up Funding Subsidy Scheme and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding declaring that it will deliver the projects set out in its Chingford bid.
- 3.18 The Council has held its inception meeting with DLUHC programme leads, establishing the formal governance with the Government. A process of preparing quarterly monitoring returns to Government is also underway which will release grant funding payments, which are expected to be twice yearly in January and July based on actual expenditure.
- 3.19 The Council has established internal governance processes for major capital programmes, as set out in the Council's Capital Strategy (presented to Cabinet in February 2023). Additional governance is being put in place to oversee the programme of works in Chingford Mount and Highams Park, as part of the development of a wider investment strategy for the area, with regular reporting to the Council's Capital Strategy & Asset Management Group, Strategic Leadership Team, Portfolio Lead Members and Cabinet as required.
- 3.20 As part of this, an advisory group has been established with councillors from the wards covered by the investment programme. An on-site visit

was held with ward councillors in May 2023 with a follow-up meeting in July, as part of a regular programme of meetings that will be held with ward councillors as the programme develops through the engagement, design and delivery stages.

4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Council considered whether to prioritise the investment projects in the Child-Friendly Chingford bid for submission to the Levelling Up Fund. This involved assessing the projects against the Council's corporate priorities, the Government's funding criteria, public support and need, and deliverability within the timescales for utilising the funding.
- 4.2 Council and community-led engagement, as well as continued analysis of key performance indicators, over several years has identified the desire and need for improvements to and investment in Chingford Mount and Highams Park town centres and the area's parks and open spaces.
- 4.3 The Child-Friendly Chingford bid provided the opportunity to draw this all together into a coherent and comprehensive submission, centred on co-creation and cross-generational benefits, including improvements to community cohesion, community safety, participation and health, as well as town centre competitiveness and local economic growth.
- 4.4 The Council now can inject significant investment into the two town centres' public realm, parks, play and sports facilities, as well as the connections between each of these spaces, enhancing their appearance, use, perception and safety through the day and evening.
- 4.5 The Council will continue to explore opportunities to secure funding for projects that did not secure Levelling Up Funding in Round 2, including through the envisaged third and final round of LUF. This includes opportunities to fund further investment in the south of Waltham Forest alongside the funding secured with TfL for Leyton underground station.

5. COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

- 5.1 The Council's Levelling Up Funded proposals strongly align with its wider corporate strategies, including approach to 15-Minute Neighbourhoods, the Climate Action Plan, Local Plan and its supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan, as well as the Council's Capital Strategy, Destinations Business Plan and strategy for Community Safety.
- 5.2 The 15-Minute Neighbourhood strategy and Climate Action Plan focus on area-based improvements to public realm, with associated benefits for active travel, health and wellbeing, air quality and community cohesion.
- 5.3 The 15-Minute Neighbourhood strategy also aligns with the Council's Destinations Business Plan and work on Community Safety to highlight the importance of a range of community, sports, leisure and cultural infrastructure to the vitality of the borough's town centres and

neighbourhoods and their performance as safe, welcoming and accessible places to visit, live and work.

- 5.4 The Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) identify priority areas for investment including north Waltham Forest's town centres, parks and open spaces. The programme of projects will be embedded in the Council's Capital Strategy from this financial year.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Council continues to undertake a range of public consultation including through its Let's Talk platform and My Neighbourhood engagement, development of its Local Plan and Chingford Mount Area Framework, as well as Child-Friendly and Safer Streets pilots in Chingford Mount.
- 6.2 The Council also works closely with local community groups, including Highams Park Planning Group, to establish the Highams Park Plan which was adopted in 2020 and provides the basis for the investment proposals in the neighbourhood.
- 6.3 Engagement is continuing through the establishment of the ward councillor advisory group and both programme-wide and project specific engagement as the scoping and design for projects develops through the Autumn ahead of phased delivery to 2025.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

- 7.1.1 The Council has been awarded £8.43m Levelling Up (Capital Regeneration Project) grant funding for projects in Chingford Mount and Highams Park with an additional match-funding commitment of £1.92m.
- 7.1.2 The Government's parameters for match-funding incorporates expenditure on identified committed capital projects between 2022-2025, including flood mitigation works within the neighbourhood's parks and the reinstatement of a pavilion in Rolls Park.
- 7.1.3 The LUF grant includes provision for attributable expenditure identified in the bid during the 2022/23 financial year. All LUF must be utilised by March 2025 (match-funding can be profiled into 2025/26 financial year) and so appropriate governance arrangements are being established to ensure the management of delivery, funding and reporting.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 The decisions in this report are being undertaken under Section (1) of the Localism Act 2011, the power to do anything that individuals may generally do (the general power of competence). The Council also has the power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything, which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.

- 7.2.2 The Council has completed the subsidy control review process with Government and Memorandum of Understanding which forms the funding award contract with Government.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

- 7.3.1 An Equalities Assessment of the Levelling Up Fund programmes is included at Appendix 2.
- 7.3.2 The Equality Assessment screener was carried out and determined that there are no negative impacts on equality groups have been identified because of programme of projects.

7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

- 7.4.1 The investment in Chingford Mount and Highams Park forms part of the Council's approach to tackling the Climate Emergency, promoting 15-minute neighbourhoods and healthy streets. The investment will deliver enhancements to public realm, parks and green spaces across the area, as part of work to address the Climate Emergency and mitigate against forecast extreme weather events, as well as helping realise objectives to promote active travel, improved air quality and health outcomes.
- 7.4.2 At the more detailed level, opportunities to include additional tree and landscape planting, including rain gardens and increasing shade cover, sustainable urban drainage and permeable paving, as well as introduction of LED lighting, will all form part of the detailed design development.

7.5 Council Infrastructure

- 7.5.1 Delivery of the programme of projects contained within the bids requires cross-Council collaboration led through the Area Regeneration Delivery team. Resource for the projects is established in existing team structures, supplemented by project management costs included in the successful bid proposals. Strategic Leadership Team has approved the request for additional programme and financial management resource to support project delivery, governance and reporting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None