

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (1) That the consolidation of the Town Deal into the Local Regeneration Fund (LRF) be noted and that the proposed changes outlined in the attached report prepared to accompany the decision, including implications on the governance structure, be acknowledged and supported.**
- (2) That it be acknowledged that the available balance of c.£4.5 million within LRF capital grant funding can be used for new project/projects in accordance with LRF funding criteria.**

2. Date of decision

3 July 2026

3. Reasons for decision

Due to changes resulting from three funds consolidated into new Local Regeneration Fund by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), it is stated that the governance structure is down to the local authority to decide what works best for them. All projects should provide value for money and unlock, and accelerate, benefits in the area.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

Not accepting the changes from MHCLG will result in funding being withdrawn.

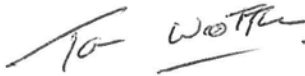
5. How decision is to be funded

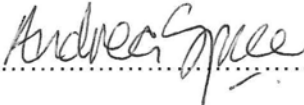
Funding comes via a grant from MHCLG.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

3 July 2026


Signed: 

Date: **3 July 2026**

Name of Decision Taker: **Cllr. Andrea Spice**
Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 3 July 2026

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 15 July 2026

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council: Report to the Mayor of Bedford Borough

Date of Report: 3 July 2026

Report by: Head of Regeneration and Property

Subject: THE LOCAL REGENERATION FUND

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on The Local Regeneration Fund, a consolidation of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funds (Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals and Simplification Pathfinders Pilot) and implications on governance.
- 1.2 As a result of the consolidation of funds, it is anticipated by MHCLG that there will be a reduction in the administrative burden in local authorities and that freedom and flexibility will be maximised.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mayor/Portfolio Holder is asked to consider and, if satisfied, to:

- (1) Note the consolidation of the Town Deal into the Local Regeneration Fund (LRF) and to acknowledge and support the proposed changes, including implications on the governance structure, outlined in the report.**
- (2) Acknowledge that the available balance of c.£4.5 million within LRF capital grant funding can be used for new project/projects in accordance with LRF funding criteria.**

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Due to changes resulting from three funds consolidated into new Local Regeneration Fund by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), more freedom and flexibility has been handed to the local authority to adapt schemes to local needs allowing the Council to focus on getting 'spades in the ground'.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 A local Town Deal Board was established in January 2020, comprising a range of stakeholders, as towns were required to develop a well-evidenced Town Investment Plan, which set out a clear understanding of the area, focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges.
- 4.2 The Board comprised of members of the local community that had a stake in the three objectives outlined by central government. This includes businesses, local leaders and community representatives.
- 4.3 The Board was the vehicle through which the vision and strategy for the Town Deal were defined and its purpose was to oversee the development and delivery of the Town Deal for Bedford.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 In September 2019, central government invited 101 towns across the UK to bid for up to £25 million as part of a Towns Fund scheme, Bedford was one of the locations selected to produce a town investment plan and bid for funding.
- 5.2 The objective of the Towns Fund is to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through urban regeneration, planning and land use, regeneration, skills and enterprise infrastructure and connectivity.
- 5.3 To deliver the Town Investment Plan, a Town Deal Board needed to be established, through which the vision and strategy was to be defined. The Board produced the Town Investment Plan which informed the Town Deal and the amount of funding secured.
- 5.4 A Town Deal was offered to Bedford in 2021 to a value of £22.6 million. Funding for seven projects was secured and delivery of these projects started in 2022.
- 5.5 Of the seven projects in the programme, two are complete (Health Science and Digital Skills Centre at Bedford College and Midland Road Regeneration – Public Realm), two are very nearly completed/require minor works (St Paul’s Public Realm Improvement project and Pedestrian & Cycling Infrastructure schemes including Dame Alice Street) and one is in progress (Transporting Bedford 2030 Greyfriars).
- 5.6 There are two projects which the Board have approved but have not yet started – Midland Road Shopfront Enhancements and Bedford Station Quarter.

- 5.7 External factors and viability issues have prevented delivery, including identified risks associated with the original projects (e.g. major legal complexities due to the huge mix of title ownership in the Midland Road area and Value for Money issues with the Station Quarter due to it being an area of significant change with unknown EWR timeframes).
- 5.8 Plans are, therefore, being developed to use the funding originally allocated to these projects for a new project/projects. The current value of funding available is approx. £4.5 million (after allowing for all committed contractual costs associated with projects in progress) and this is, therefore, available for alternative town centre project/projects that is consistent with the LRF funding criteria, including a specific requirement that all grant funding must be spent by March 2028.
- 5.9 The Council was informed by MHCLG in September 2025 that there were to be changes to the Town Deal scheme as it becomes amalgamated into the Local Regeneration Fund. The letter from MHCLG is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 5.10 Key points:
- (a) MHCLG will allocate funding to the Local Authority as part of the Local Regeneration Fund.
 - (b) All MHCLG funding is to be spent by end of March 2028.
 - (c) The Local Authority does not need approval from the Secretary of State to make changes to its local programme. All decisions on project changes will be taken at Local Authority level.
 - (d) MHCLG expects that projects already underway will be completed, for the benefit of local residents. In cases where projects are no longer viable, MHCLG expects that the Local Authority will use the funding available to invest in the area that originally stood to benefit.
- 5.11 MHCLG have stated that the governance structure is down to the local authority to decide what works best for them. All projects should provide Value for Money and unlock, and accelerate, benefits in the area.
- 5.12 MHCLG strongly encourages local authorities to consult with key stakeholders, including MPs in their local areas on any proposed changes.
- 5.13 Delivery will be against the Government's Missions of Kickstart Economic Growth, Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower, Take Back Our Streets, Break Down Barriers to Opportunity and Build an NHS Fit for the Future.
- 5.14 The Town Deal Board was provided with further information on the implications and changes at their last Board meeting on 12 March 2025 in addition to the content of an e-mail sent to members of the Board in October 2025.

- 5.15 The Town Deal Board Members considered the role of the board in the future. They said that it was agreed from the beginning and throughout that the board should continue to represent the town's major stakeholders long after the funds are spent and be ready to bid as experts for further opportunities.
- 5.16 Taking into account the 'Local Regeneration Fund: technical guidance', going forward, the proposed governance for Local Regeneration Fund in Bedford is stakeholder and MP engagement and sign off in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules and Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Executive Functions). All projects will need to show value for money and a contribution to the Local Outcomes Framework and local growth outputs from MHCLG.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 There are no alternatives to consider as this is an update report.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues

The Council will need to comply with the terms set out in the Memorandum of Understanding from MHCLG.

7.2 Policy Issues

The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and the Economic Prosperity Plan 2023-2028 outline key priorities areas focusing on business and place. This scheme contributes positively to both of these priorities. The scheme is also named in the Town Centre Vision & Capital Delivery Programme to help deliver a "town centre that people are proud to live in and excited to visit."

7.3 Resource Issues

There are no additional resource implications in making this decision, rather the redirection of grant funding to an alternative grant compliant project(s).

7.4 Risks

There are no risk implications in making this decision.

7.5 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from the Mayor/Portfolio Holder supporting the changes.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing the report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's Statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. A relevance test for equality has been completed. The test determined that the activity has no relevance to Bedford Borough Council's statutory equality duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. An equality analysis is not needed.

7.7 Impact on Families

There is no impact on families arising from the Mayor/Portfolio Holder supporting the changes.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

There are no community safety and resilience implications for a community, or part of a community, arising from the Mayor in supporting the changes.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

There are no impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents arising from the Mayor/Portfolio Holder in supporting the changes.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services
Executive Director of Resources
Service Director (Governance)

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable for this report.

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	Justine Ives, Manager for Town Deal Ext: 44254 Email: Justine.Ives@bedford.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	n/a
Previous Relevant Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	A: MHCLG letter – 2 September 2025: Funding Simplification



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Alex Norris MP

*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To: Local Authority Chief Executives

2nd September 2025

Dear Chief Executives,

Funding Simplification: Levelling Up Fund, Towns Deals and Simplification Pathfinders Pilot

I am writing to you with exciting news on changes to the MHCLG Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals and Simplification Pathfinders Pilot that will reduce the administrative burden on local authorities and maximise your freedom and flexibility.

We have listened to your feedback on wanting less bureaucratic micromanagement, and more local control and I am delighted to inform you that we are consolidating the MHCLG Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals and Simplification Pathfinders Pilot Fund together into a single funding pot. This reform will increase your flexibility to adapt schemes to local needs allowing you to focus on getting spades in the ground. Where previous governments made unfunded promises to places they couldn't keep, we will fulfil those promises.

In consolidating this funding please be assured that we will continue to honour the funding awarded via the constituent funds. This new fund will be called the **Local Regeneration Fund**.

As set out in the Devolution White Paper released in December 2024, this Government was elected on a manifesto that promised a partnership approach with local authorities, resetting the relationship between central and local government and supporting local leaders to drive growth. This consolidation takes another step towards that goal.

The decision to bring together these three funds into one will reduce the burden on local authorities in a number of ways:

1. Significantly reduced reporting requirements more aligned to our Government Missions: reduction of indicators down from 150 to 45 to be reported at a portfolio level, so that we are looking at the place and not the individual projects.
2. Reducing the Project Adjustment Request process, giving greater powers and flexibility to local authorities to move funding between schemes, overcome barriers to progress caused by changing conditions as projects have developed and maximising the benefits of this investment in communities.
3. Simplified and combined CDEL payments at set intervals providing greater certainty for local authorities to plan.
4. A single user-friendly digital platform to reduce the administrative efforts of Local Authorities.


We want this new flexibility to enhance delivery. It is our firm expectation that projects already underway will be completed, for the benefit of local residents. In the small number of cases where projects are no longer viable, our consolidation means that money can still be used to deliver change. We expect that councils will rescope their plans and use the funding available for a new project in the area that originally stood to benefit, so local residents can feel the improvements to their everyday lives that they have been promised within the timeline of the fund.

The simplification detailed in this letter relates to local authorities in receipt of the aforementioned MHCLG funds. It does not include other Levelling Up Fund schemes previously announced due to their different delivery mechanisms e.g. non-local authority applicants in Northern Ireland or Major Culture projects announced in February this year, nor any funding provided by other government departments e.g. Department for Transport led Levelling Up Fund. For these projects the existing procedures will still apply.

My officials will contact the lead contacts in your organisation shortly with technical guidance on the new fund's operation and answer any queries they may have. We previously informed you that the next monitoring round would be commissioned for October. However, to give you time to consider how this news may impact your projects, we have decided to cancel this reporting round. The first monitoring reporting round will therefore be in April 2026.

I look forward to your support in ensuring that through new ways of working together between central and local government, on funds like these, we can deliver impact and growth for the people and communities we serve.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Alex Norris MP.

ALEX NORRIS MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth