

Item 6 (a)

5th September 2025



North East Area Partnership

Report by: Programme Manager, Neighbourhoods Regeneration and Sustainability

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The Neighbourhood Infrastructure Improvement Fund (NIIF) – Progress Update

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Area Partnership with a progress update in relation to the Neighbourhood Infrastructure Improvement Fund, including new estimates, summary of commitments and spend to date

Recommendations:

The Area Partnership is asked to note the contents of the report, review the content provided, confirm a decision on any estimates provided and identify any new proposals for NIIF to be costed before the next meeting.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood Infrastructure Improvement Fund provides an opportunity to implement participatory budgeting at scale with an approved budget set in 2021/22 of £23million. The budget assigned the decision making in relation to this fund to Area Partnerships, with £1million allocated to each ward. This report provides an update regarding the Area Partnership's position in relation to this.
- 1.2 This funding is capital expenditure and therefore can be carried forward to be spent in future financial years, though funding should ideally be fully committed by March 2027.

2. Management and Governance of the fund

- 2.1 In September 2024, the Director of Service Delivery, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability (NRS), provided a report outlining the challenges experienced in implementing the fund and dealing with the volume of requests to date. The report also advised that a new process was being devised to manage this.
- 2.2 In December 2024, a small team of staff were tasked with reviewing the current process for NIIF and the backlog of requests already received, as well as devising clear guidance and processes for its management going forward.
- 2.3 Guidance has now been created to assist community members and Area Partnership Chairs in identifying proposals for the use of the fund which meet the criteria and contain the required information to enable NRS to progress these.
- 2.4 The new process for management of NIIF proposals has now been implemented and a breakdown of current commitments and spend has been provided with this report.
- 2.5 Where possible, estimates for ideas proposed at the last round of Area Partnership meetings have also been provided. Where these are not yet available, a reason for this has been provided.

3. Criteria for the Fund

- 3.1 Criteria is outlined in the guidance previously provided, however, the following should be noted:
- 3.2 Because the £1 million is designated for capital expenditure, **it must be spent on Council infrastructure** - Physical things in Council ownership.
- 3.3 The fund **is not intended to be used for "business as usual"** council activities such as dealing with individual service requests related to basic maintenance or repair of existing assets – for example: individual broken

streetlights, blocked drains, potholes etc. These should be raised through the councils standard reporting processes.

- 3.4 The fund is not intended to be used for consultancy work, for example, the carrying out of community engagement work to find out what projects the community are interested in. It may, in circumstances where Council services require external assistance, be used for technical consultancy fees which are required to develop and deliver a capital project, such as architects or streetscape designers to help communities redesign civic spaces.
- 3.5 The fund **cannot be used to fund revenue costs**, such as future or ongoing costs related to maintenance, utilities, repair costs etc. Any revenue costs resulting from NIIF investment will need to be met from other sources. Area Partnerships are asked to consider this when reviewing suggestions for the use of NIIF.
- 3.6 **NIIF proposals should not be costed by external contactors or suppliers before being put forward.** All proposals need to be costed within GCC in line with procurement procedures.
- 3.7 Potential ideas for the use of NIIF will only be costed by NRS if these proposals have been discussed and approved at an Area Partnership meeting, then submitted through the process outlined in the attached guidance.

4. Key points to note

- 4.1 As outlined above, proposals for the use of NIIF can only be costed by NRS if these are discussed and approved at an Area Partnership meeting. NRS are unable to accept proposals submitted out with this process.
- 4.2 All proposals **MUST** be costed by NRS. Estimates should not be provided by external suppliers as part of the proposal process, and where this has happened, NRS will still provide an estimate using their own internal processes. This may be different from previous estimates provided by other contractors or suppliers. NIIF cannot be awarded directly to suppliers or contractors that have been engaged directly by Community Councils, local organisations or Area Partnership members, this instead needs to be done using the council's recognised routes.
- 4.3 Some proposals were received from the last meeting which lacked sufficient detail – this has meant that estimates are unable to be provided in some cases. Feedback from NRS officers highlighted that this was due to limited time being allocated to the discussion of NIIF requests during the meeting. In future, we ask that Area Partnerships allow enough time during meetings for the required level of detail to be provided. We also ask that where possible, a named contact is provided for requests so that officers can liaise with them if further information is required in the process of seeking estimates.

- 4.4 Where requests are received with insufficient detail, NRS will engage with the Communities Team so they can liaise with Area Partnerships to seek additional information, however, due to the volume of requests this may result in estimates not being provided in time for the next meeting. Area Partnerships are therefore encouraged to only submit requests where sufficient information is included.

5. Requests for CCTV

- 5.1 There have been a number of challenges in relation to the volume of requests for CCTV (both static and redeployable) as part of the NIIF funding. The installation of CCTV is complex both in terms of its physical delivery and the processes that require to be followed before CCTV can be installed in an area.
- 5.2 This involves site surveys, community engagement, assessments and orders, which can take time and resource as well as signalling challenges in some areas.
Costs provided for current requests are based on estimates and may change subject to site surveys and technical requirements. Final approval of install of CCTV cameras will be subject to a number of key principles such as Privacy Impact (Community Engagement), justification of site and proportionality of the issues identified.
This will ensure the most appropriate solution is identified for each site.
- 5.3 Delays on installs can be subject to various factors including equipment availability and technical solutions being suitable for each location.
Many of the current requests involve holes requiring to be drilled into our existing infrastructure (to get power) which can make the structural warranty null and void and therefore, the team have been looking at alternative solutions, which can be complex and more time consuming.
- 5.4 The structural condition of many of our assets is aging and we need to make sure that adding CCTV does not adversely affect this. The team are exploring innovative solutions using SMART nodes, or solar panels for charging to avoid the requirement for holes, as well as alternative types of redeployable CCTV. An update on this will be provided as soon as possible.
- 5.5 The NRS Lighting team are currently preparing a Lighting Strategy paper (which will include reference to attachments to lighting columns) which will be taken to Committee early in the New Year but it is important that any attachments (including CCTV) do not affect either structural or electrical compliance.
- 5.6 The maintenance of all CCTV installations approved via NIIF are required to be met from AP budgets moving forward - please find approximate details of the ongoing revenue costs:-
- 5.7 A camera move would be subject to a suitable location and pole. If a pole replacement is required there is a cost via Lightning of approx. £2k. Camera

and battery replacement could cost around £0.5k approx. We have built in approx. £1k for camera battery and misc. parts into the costs currently. However, there is the cost of camera movement as noted above.

6. NIIF Enquiries and Updates

- 6.1 The new process ensures that full updates are provided at each Area Partnership meeting on spend and progress. This should negate the need for enquiries out with the meeting cycle to seek information on progress of either work underway or estimates.
- 6.2 The NIIF team are unable to provide estimates between Area Partnership meetings. The volume of requests received requires a significant time commitment to provide estimates and it is vital that these are provided using the established meeting structure to ensure decisions on estimates are recorded appropriately. Once an estimate has been provided and approved, NRS officers will be happy to meet with relevant parties to provide updates or gain further information on projects to be progressed.
- 6.3 It is recognised that more general enquiries about the NIIF funding or the process related to this may require a response between meetings. The NIIF mailbox has been active since the last round of meetings and can be used for general enquiries about NIIF. We would encourage Area Partnership members to continue to utilise this rather than contacting NRS officers directly as this ensures all information relevant to NIIF requests is collated by the dedicated team.

7. Progress to Date

- 7.1 The tables at the end of this report provide the following information:
- **Table 1: Proposals previously submitted for estimate.** Where an estimate has been provided, we ask that Area Partnerships confirm whether they approve the estimate for the work to be programmed and also approve a percentage amount over the original estimate to allow for changes in costs. Where an estimate has not been provided, reasons for this are outlined.
 - **Table 2: Proposals Requiring more information:** Where an estimate is still being progressed, a reason for this will be outlined clearly. If this relates to a lack of clear information being provided to allow costing, we ask that Area Partnerships review this and provide the required information to allow this to be considered before the next scheduled meeting.
 - **Table 3: Summary of Committed and Actual Spend to date:** This includes an update on any works currently underway and a breakdown of committed NIIF and actual spend to date. Area partnerships should consider this when making decisions on any new estimates or proposals to ensure they have sufficient budget remaining to progress any new work