

CABINET

Morecambe Area Action Plan – improving Morecambe’s main streets Cabinet 23 April 2013

Report of Head of Regeneration and Planning

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To propose improvements to streets and spaces in Morecambe’s established centre as per the draft area action plan and to report on the now deliverable first phase of works.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member	
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision	22 nd March 2013			
This report is public.				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR HANSON

That Cabinet approve the first improvement project to Morecambe’s main streets, specifically a section of Victoria Street and immediate connections (option 1), and that the presentation of the Capital Programme be updated accordingly.

Introduction

- 1.1 Work to prepare the Morecambe Area Action Plan (MAAP) is the context for this report. This was approved by Council for consultation in September 2012, (Minute 66) and fits to the Corporate Plan priorities 2012-2015 for ‘Economic Growth’ and the adopted Core Strategy for the district (2008). The Draft Plan identifies improvements required to sustain and grow Morecambe’s “established centre” – that covers the area bounded by the seafront, Queen Street, Northumberland Street and Central Drive. This report is about implementing these elements.
- 1.2 It is now widely accepted that to thrive into the future any town centre of whatever size must offer a sociable and enjoyable experience. This report is about helping Morecambe’s centre towards this goal.
- 1.3 There are two elements to the report:
 - Outline area-wide proposal for phased improvements within the established centre to inform the new Regeneration Delivery Plan
 - Detailed design for a substantial first phase element focusing on the

north part of Euston Road and upper Market and Victoria streets.

- 1.4 The council's General Fund Capital Programme for 2013/14 makes budget provision for the first phase via the budget allocations for THI2, Poulton Pedestrian Routes and the MAAP (streets). The release of the MAAP funds is subject to a report to Cabinet on the detailed design – contained now in this report.
- 1.5 The relevant preceding cabinet authorisations are -
 - Authority for THI2, minute 66 Cabinet 7 October 2008
 - Capital support to the THI2, minute 52 Cabinet October 2010
 - Instruction to work up outline proposals for streets and spaces in the centre and specifically Euston Road (and New Town Square) minute 49 Cabinet October 2011.

- 2.0 Outline area wide proposal for main streets and spaces within Morecambe's established centre to inform the new Regeneration Delivery Plan**
- 2.1 The Draft Area Action Plan is much about getting the conditions for private investment right, recognising that the public sector financial context is a deteriorating one. Section 4 of the MAAP covers what actions are required to implement the plan by the council, other public and private organisations and the community. It recognises that the city council, along with the County Council has to take the lead in regenerating central Morecambe but that much of this is about facilitating others. Therefore main roles for the city council are to manage development through the planning system, to deploy council land assets to best assist regeneration, and, with Lancashire County Council, improvements in the public realm to make better places for trading and for people to spend time in. This report primarily concerns the latter but all closely relate and all require effective partnership working to bring about the right changes. Improvements to public realm will increasingly depend on the public sector securing private financial inputs and council officers will detail this aspect further in the Regeneration Delivery Plan.
- 2.2 The outline area wide proposal is for a package of changes deliverable over time to improve the functionality and appearance of streets and spaces within the established centre for the benefit of pedestrians. These include changes both to the physical streetscene and in traffic management.
- 2.3 As stated in para 1.1 of this report the Draft MAAP provides the strategic context for the proposed changes. The Draft MAAP identifies the improvements needed within the established centre and explains how these should fit to what is proposed wider for central Morecambe as the defined plan area. The area-wide proposal draws and elaborates on what is contained in this.
- 2.4 In essence the aim is to make streets and spaces here much more pleasant and inviting to walk through and spend time in so that people are encouraged to move around more, stay longer and thereby spend more. A particular aspect is to draw more visitors back from the seafront. The aim is to increase footfall on the key streets including Victoria, Queen and Pedder streets. In turn increased footfall will strengthen and give more vitality to the centre.
- 2.5 There are multiple elements to the proposal and at this stage all bar one of these is in outline only. The plan in Appendix 1 describes further. At this time

no decision is sought on the outline elements but which are context for the first improvement project proposed for implementation as per section 3.0 below

- 2.6 The elements as outlined are to inform the Regeneration Delivery Plan now being prepared and as directed via the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This plan will pick up on many other elements within the Draft MAAP and for other parts.
- 2.7 The Head of Regeneration and Planning will report to Cabinet on this Plan in due course. Decisions as then made by Cabinet shall direct the priorities and pace by which the elements outlined are worked up and brought forward for implementation as opportunities present and available funding permits.

3.0 First improvement project – ‘connecting Victoria Street’

- 3.1 This concerns a project element deliverable in calendar year 2014 to improve the street environment at the upper end of Victoria Street and immediate connections to this - including part of Euston Road and upper Market Street.
- 3.2 This area is presently a dysfunctional and quite utilitarian street environment that has not benefitted from investment for years other than in routine maintenance. The aim is to make a high quality pedestrian friendly environment, a better place to spend time in and a much better setting for trading.
- 3.3 The main element is streetworks to create a shared space between the Arndale, the Post Office and former M&S buildings in which the movement of pedestrians takes priority to that of vehicles. This area might be described as ‘Royalty Place’, in reference to the location of the former Royalty Theatre.
- 3.4 Linking to this is new surfacing for the seaward end of pedestrianised Euston Road through to Marine Road Central and also certain improvements further down Victoria Street. The project as a whole includes for new seating, information and signage and also LED street lighting. The detailed design plan in Appendix 2 refers.
- 3.5 The delivery planned includes for an artist commission to provide an art input into the use of materials and detailing to help animate and enliven and create a sense of place and local identity presently missing.
- 3.6 This project has been long in preparation and is made possible via combining:
 - funding through the public realm element of the second Townscape Heritage Initiative for Morecambe “A View for Eric’ programmed for 2013/14.
 - planning contribution secured to date
 - city council capital funding for MAAP delivery
- 3.7 External funding comes with certain conditions and the scope of any project has to be devised to fit without loss to its coherence and the value or benefit it will bring. Officers have considered the ways to deploy this funding to best advantage and achieve best value. The main considerations are discussed further below.
- 3.8 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) contribution through the THI is the maximum that it can contribute at 20% of the overall THI allocation and therefore represents a significant contribution. HLF funding is for uplift from a standard

highways approach to a level that is more fitting to a regeneration scheme in a historic environment. To example this funding can contribute to uplift to natural stone - but not to street furniture which is ineligible.

- 3.9 The THI funding is restricted to very specific areas and cannot be spent outside these or on aspects the Heritage Lottery Fund consider ineligible. The area of the first project, and specifically 'Royalty Place', has been the intended focus of public realm investment since preparation of the funding bids to the HLF.
- 3.10 The planning contribution seeks to improve connections between Victoria Street and the Central Drive Retail Park. This will be achieved through the upgrading of the public realm in this area and improved signage.
- 3.11 The MAAP public realm monies were originally identified towards works along Euston Road and to New Town Square. As there is no other financing to support works to New Town Square at this time it is not proposed to proceed with this element at this stage and to focus these monies on Euston Road. Utilising the council's contribution in this flexible manner means as beneficial an improvement as possible is achievable without dependency on delivery of subsequent phases for this benefit. Any balances in funding after the first project should be held towards the next project and that, subject to what additional external funding is secured, may well be New Town Square or onto Marine Road Central.
- 3.12 Further flexibility in how the city monies can be spent is essential to balance against the specific objectives of the other funding sources and also to take opportunities to achieve economies of scale on some items e.g. signage and interpretation and the relocation of CCTV units or BT telephone kiosks by delivering what is required for the first project as part of a wider package within the area.
- 3.13 Accordingly, authorisation is now sought to extend the scope of the council's funding to cover for related elements of improvement to streets and spaces within the area described in section 1.1 of this report provided that this work is consistent with the Draft MAAP and relates to works otherwise as part of the first improvement project 'connecting Victoria Street'.
- 3.14 As a final point, in-house staff resources would be used to prepare and implement projects such as this. This makes best use of local knowledge and expertise gained over years of partnership working.

4.0 Details of Consultation

- 4.1 Officers first raised the idea of a shared space in this location as part of consultations in 2008 on the THI proposal and the idea was well received.
- 4.2 More recently consultations and community engagement work as part of preparing the Morecambe Area Action Plan have covered the principles and concepts of what is now proposed.
- 4.3 Officers have liaised closely with the highway authority in preparing the proposal to date and such liaison will continue. Similarly officers have discussed the proposal with the Town Team.
- 4.4 Subject to council authority to proceed officers will meet highways requirements to consult / inform local stakeholders and the immediate community.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Option 1	Note the area-wide proposal and, approve the design proposal for a first improvement project “connecting Victoria Street” and that the scope of expenditure includes for related elements of improvement to streets and spaces across the wider area, as per Appendices 1 and 2.
Advantages	<p>The area-wide outline proposal is carefully considered to elaborate and detail on that identified in the Draft MAAP (November 2012) and the first improvement project is an early opportunity to deliver an important element of the Draft Morecambe Area Action Plan. Further, it is a good example of partnership working the respective local authorities – the city and county councils and the Town Council. The proposal both supports and will facilitate the work of the Town Team and gives the team much opportunity to inform detailed design work and dovetail its work to fit to help achieve Town Team objectives.</p> <p>The scope of works should transform a key area that is very tired in appearance and has not seen any significant investment since Euston Road was pedestrianised in the early 1970s. It will significantly improve the setting for trading and conditions for pedestrian movement and safety.</p> <p>Officers consider the proposal to be optimal in technical and regeneration terms and should achieve best value and fit to the requirements attached by external funding organisations. Other considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highway authority functional requirements ▪ Aesthetic and amenity considerations ▪ Other use considerations e.g potentials for street markets ▪ Eligibility of works for TH12 funding (basic standard highway works are ineligible) <p>How highway maintenance expenditures by the county council can best dovetail</p>
Disadvantages	None
Risks	The intervention proposed will improve the setting for trading and will help mitigate the risks identified for option 2.

Option 2	Do not proceed as per option 1
Advantages	None
Disadvantages	Not consistent with the Draft MAAP. Fails to take advantage of available external funding to deliver well planned regenerative improvements. Prejudices the council's ability to deliver related

	elements of the Draft MAAP and dismantles officers' preparations for this. Fails to time works to best help facilitate and benefit the Town Team's initiatives on Victoria Street and can only impair what this initiative can achieve.
Risks	Failure to position the established centre better risks adverse consequences to trading and the health and vitality of the centre. This gives continuing risk that Morecambe's established centre (as now likely for many others across the country) spirals downwards. In turn this gives consequential risks of reducing business rate incomes and that in the fullness of time the public sector will have to deal with the escalating multiple problems of a failing town centre.

6.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 6.1 Option 1 is preferred as option 2 does not assist Morecambe's regeneration and fails to utilise available external funding.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The report sets out how the council might move forward and deliver much needed improvements to public realm within Morecambe's established centre. It is about opportunity to deliver in ways and to time frames that minimises financing implications for the city council, takes maximum advantage of external funding available and thereby offers best value expenditure for both the city and county councils.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The proposal contributes variously to achieving on the corporate priorities as contained in the 2012-15 Corporate Plan - Economic Growth, Health and Wellbeing, Clean Green and Safe Places and Community Leadership. It contributes in particular to that for Economic Growth in helping to sustain the attraction of commercial centres and so support trading and jobs.

The proposal is consistent with the Lancaster District Core Strategy and in particular Policy ER2 and the Central Morecambe Regeneration Priority Area.

It is to implement key actions in the Draft Morecambe Area Action Plan.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The proposal will have no adverse impacts. The first improvement project will make traffic conditions much safer for pedestrians. Making streets and spaces more attractive places to spend time in will assist towards other community safety objectives.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The General Fund Capital Programme 2013/14 includes for a total of £610k in funding towards improvements to streets and spaces within the established town centre of Morecambe. The capital budgets are currently split as follows:

- Morecambe Area Action Plan. £100 k of city council monies identified for expenditure in 2013/14 and a further £100k in 2014/15
- Morecambe THI2 A View for Eric. £250k with £185k HLF funding and £65k city council
- Poulton Pedestrian Route. £160k identified for expenditure in 2013/14

All of the above budgets were included in the capital programme approved by Council on 27 February, and specified as projects that can progress subject to a Cabinet report.

The first improvement project (Option 1) would be financed from the whole of the monies identified above in order to best utilise the available THI funding, and the presentation of the capital programme would be updated accordingly. Any balance of funding remaining should be from council sources and would be available for any further project phases, subject to further cabinet reports.

The proposal in its financial provisions is consistent with the council's contract commitment with HLF. It should be noted that the budgets associated with Morecambe THI2: A view for Eric and the budgets associated with Poulton Pedestrian Route are part of the match funding for THI2 and are therefore available for commitment as per the council's associated contract with the HLF.

Option 1 requires that officers could commit to expenditure from now onwards, including working up contract specifications and committing to contracts. It further requires that officers can source and pre-negotiate material supplies in good time for contractor procurements. Reasonable internal fees would also be chargeable to the capital schemes, subject to accounting rules. Financial Services would administer arrangements for this, ensuring that charging is reasonable and fits to any requirements of the external funding.

Option 1 raises no additional financial implications.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

Project implementation is provided for as part of work in-house to prepare and deliver the MAAP.

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

The proposal is to enhance public realm.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s1521 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add at this stage. Any comments regarding the appendices will be fed into the Cabinet meeting.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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