

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	31 st March 2015
Report:	Executive Director of Economic Growth & Prosperity – Caroline Simpson
Subject/Title:	Congleton Public Realm Enhancement Scheme
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr David Topping, Service Commissioning

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Congleton is one of the key sustainable growth towns in Cheshire East and to reflect this importance a £1million investment has been allocated in the Council's capital programme to enhance the public realm in the town centre.
- 1.2 This project will boost the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre as a place to visit and do business and create a greater sense of local community pride.
- 1.3 The Council is committed to working with its local communities and this funding will support the delivery of the Public Realm Strategy developed by Congleton Town Council in 2011. The concept plans are shown in Annexes A and B, which reveals how this transformational project could look. The Council's £1million support will go a long way to delivering the strategy.
- 1.4 This commitment builds on the Council's other major planned investments to revitalise and regenerate Congleton, such as Congleton Link Road and M6 Junction 17 improvements.
- 1.5 The combined impact of these changes will ensure Congleton is a place where people will want to come and live and visit and businesses will want to create and bring in new local jobs. Creating this platform for the town will secure and sustain its future prosperity.
- 1.6 This paper seeks approval for the £1 million funding and the commencement of work to identify the optimum public realm scheme based on the concepts developed by the Town Council.

Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to

- Approve the prioritisation of the £1 million allocation to invest in public realm enhancements in Congleton Town Centre.
- Approve the first phase of work necessary to establish a preferred option for the public realm improvements (up to a maximum of £120k) and that, following consultation with Congleton Town Council and endorsement through the Council's Project Gateway process, this be reported back to a future Cabinet meeting for approval.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The concept plans for the enhancement works were originally developed and costed in 2011. Since that date increases in base materials, consultancy fees and associated expenses have occurred.

3.2 A high level review of the costs was undertaken in the January 2015 which assumed construction would be undertaken in the fourth quarter of 2015

3.3 It was agreed, in conjunction with Congleton Town Council, to develop detailed designs for both Bridge Street and Festival Square using three options i.e. low, medium and Strategy compliant for

- Material
- Signage
- Street Furniture
- Lighting
- Green Environment (planting)

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 Congleton East and West

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Cllrs David Topping, David Brown, Andrew Thwaite, Peter Mason, Gordon Baxendale and Roland Domleo

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 The scheme seeks to enhance the vitality of the town centre and increase retail footfall in line with the Council's vision to stimulate investment opportunities in Congleton. The enhancement scheme supports the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Ageing Well in Cheshire East Programme. Initiatives which improve accessibility have wider benefits including reduced isolation and social exclusion, and improved health and wellbeing.

6.2 The proposal in this report relates directly to three of the five key outcomes identified in the council five year plan

Outcome 1 Our local communities are strong and supportive

Outcome 2 Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy

Outcome 4 Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The scheme is included in the 2015/16 capital programme approved by Council on 26th February 2015 with a budget allocation of £1m. This allocation will be funded from the Council's own resources, and therefore can only be spent once such funding has been specifically identified and earmarked (e.g. via a capital receipt and/or prudential borrowing). By prioritising this scheme there is a greater certainty that project deadlines will be met. External funding will also be sought towards this project.

7.2 A revised and expanded high level business case will be submitted to the Technical Enabler Group and Executive Monitoring Board (Gate 1) in due course, detailing the outcome of the initial scoping works (up to £120k maximum). Following the selection of the preferred scheme, an expanded design stage and detailed business case will be prepared for Technical Enabler Group and Executive Monitoring Board (Gate 2) prior to submission to cabinet for approval.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Both the design services and the scheme works need to be procured in compliance with the Councils Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

8.2 The Consultation with local stakeholders must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the design and scope of the scheme.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 The approach to construction and delivery needs to be carefully managed in consultation with the local community, particularly businesses and residents who would be directly affected by the scheme. There will be operational utility works for at least 18 weeks through the area of the scheme - thus affecting the acceptability of further works to local traders and residents.

9.2 The intention is to determine the total costs and delivery plan through preliminary and detailed design stages. The cost options being considered at preliminary design stage will help determine whether the budget funding is sufficient to deliver both, or either, Bridge Street and Festival Square enhancements.

9.3 Initial site investigations will help determine the extent and level of contamination that is recognised and will be accommodated as part of the preliminary design stage.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 Congleton Town Council published their Congleton Town Centre Plan in March 2008 which outlined their preferred development strategy for the Town. This plan was then used to inform a Public Realm Strategy which was published in 2011. As part of the 2011 strategy conceptual designs were published which included enhancing the pedestrianised Bridge Street /Little Street area and creating a Shared Space at the intersection between Bridge St /High Street and Moody St / Market Street, referred to as Festival Square.

10.2 In December 2014 Cheshire East Council confirmed that in principle £1m was available for these enhancements and instructions to progress the scheme were issued.

10.3 Initial site investigations are needed to be undertaken which will include ground condition tests, external property surveys, drainage investigations and traffic surveys.

10.4 An indicative Programme for both preliminary design, detailed design, consultation stages and procurement is outlined in Annexe C.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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