

Meeting of the Cabinet – 25th April 2013

Report of the Director of Urban Environment

Dudley Market Place

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for matters associated with the delivery of the Dudley Market Place Public Realm Project

Background

2. The Dudley Area Development Framework (ADF) was adopted by the Council as supplementary planning guidance in December 2005. It presents a vision, development strategy and illustrative development framework to guide residents, businesses, developers, investors and Dudley Council in shaping the future of Dudley town centre over the next ten years and beyond.
3. The aspiration of the Council is to achieve comprehensive and sympathetic redevelopment of the eight opportunity areas and improvements to public and civic spaces as set out in the ADF which will act as a catalyst for regeneration of the town
4. Significant progress has been made on the delivery of the ADF by the Council in partnership with the regeneration company for the Borough, New Heritage Regeneration Ltd, and this includes:
 - Successful delivery of the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative
 - Completion of the first 2 phases of Dudley College's town centre campus redevelopment
 - Commencement of construction of the Castle Hill and Zoo project, and securing planning permission and ERDF funding for the £6m visitor arrival infrastructure
 - Significant interest from food retailers in provision of new stores in the Town Centre
5. The project is set in the heart of the Dudley Town Centre Conservation Area and has been developed to help redress the significant issues arising from the economic challenges that Dudley Town Centre, in common with other similar centres across the country, has suffered over the last few years. The Public Realm project alone will not be able to provide the transformational change that Town Centre needs, but in combination with the other priority projects listed in Paragraph 4 above it will make a significant contribution to addressing the

problems of a declining town centre, high levels of deprivation and a poor tourism offer.

6. In summary, the Project aims to:

- Deliver a high quality public realm scheme to the town centre which will focus on the Market Place and stretch from the junction of High Street to Bottom Church (St Edmunds) on Castle Street. It will include a newly designed and upgraded market; new and improved paving, lighting and street furniture, the reinstatement and bringing back into use of the historic fountain, relocation of the public toilets , repositioning of the Duncan Edwards statue and resetting of the Earl of Dudley statue.
- Introduce an Ambassador scheme to the Town Centre which will provide volunteers who, in addition to their knowledge of local history, will have the means through modern technology to provide information for events and attractions across the Borough, including transport timetables and parking facilities. Funding will also be used to support one full time manager post for this scheme.

7. In terms of what this will do to the Town Centre the following outcomes are expected as a result of the project

- an enhanced image of the Town Centre
- increased visitor numbers
- increased expenditure in the Town Centre
- increased civic pride
- increased investor confidence and employment opportunities
- support recent achievements and pave the way for long term investment

8. Recent research has also proven the economic benefits of well-designed buildings, spaces and places. Research undertaken by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has demonstrated how clear financial benefits can be calculated from investing in better quality street design by proving a direct linkage between property and rental values and the quality of the street environment. This is especially relevant in Dudley Town Centre given the history of depressed property values and yields acting to deter private sector investment

9. A cross-Directorate project team has been working closely on the preparation of the proposals in liaison with New Heritage Regeneration Ltd. Subsequent to the Council securing Outline Approval for ERDF funding in July 2011 a full bid was submitted in early January 2012. However, due to a decision of the Local Management Committee (LMC) in January to de-commit ERDF funds from the region the appraisal of the project was put on hold. Following a subsequent call for Outline Applications a revised bid was made under the current 2007-2013 West Midlands ERDF Programme. Outline approval for the proposals was received in January, with the full application being submitted in February and Final approval expected in April.

10. Key project milestones include:

- April 2013 - Outcome of ERDF application known
- June 2013 ERDF funding contract completed; Planning and other statutory consents secured and preparatory/enabling works start on site
- December 2013 - Design & Contract Procurement completed
- January 2014 - Main works start date
- December 2014 - completion on site

11. The proposals have been subject to an extensive consultation exercise. A first stage public consultation exercise took place in April 2011 where views were sought on the various elements of the proposals and on 3 different options for the layout of the Market place. 738 completed survey forms were returned and strong and positive support was demonstrated for the proposals. A second stage public consultation took place in November 2011, with views sought on matters of detailed design and the proposal to extend the improvements along Castle Street to the Earl of Dudley's statue, thereby creating a better link with Dudley Zoo and the Castle Hill development project. This consultation was accompanied by a trial demonstration of lighting of key buildings (including St Edmunds Church and the Castle) and sculptures in the Town Centre and again this was very well received. 309 responses were received to this consultation. In addition to the above, consultation has taken place with Members in the 3 Wards covering the Town Centre, with the Dudley Town Centre Partnership, and via workshops and presentations, with Dudley Market traders to ensure that their requirements are met. Engagement of the Market Traders is continuing through the design work currently underway.

12. Members will be aware of the Dudley Town Centre Partnership which has been in existence for a number of years, and which has acted as a very effective means of engaging Town Centre stakeholders in the delivery of the ADF. Following 2 unsuccessful bids for funding under the Government's Portas Pilot initiative, the Partnership agreed in 2012 to proceed without Government funding with its own Portas Pilot Project, and on the 17 December 2012 the Partnership formally adopted the role of a Town Team for Dudley Town Centre and charged a Project Team with the evolution and delivery of an Action Plan for the Town Centre. A renovated Market Place is key to this Action Plan, by encouraging confidence in the Town Centre and providing a high quality and flexible space for events and additional market trading activity

13. As part of the development of the proposals, the whole life costs of the refurbishment of the Market Place have been estimated based on an enhanced management and maintenance regime, and these will be considered as part of the Council's Revenue budget setting exercise.

14. It will be important that the new public space is actively and regularly used. The Town Team (formerly the Dudley Town Centre Regeneration Partnership) will be responsible for developing and implementing a programme of activities that will capitalise on the opportunities created by the new public space. Proposals to enhance the offer of the Market are in preparation and the new Town Centre Ambassadors will support the cluster of attractions based in the Town Centre and Castle Hill.

Finance

15. The total estimated cost of the project is £6.7m. Of this, there are £1.5m of Capital costs which are ineligible for ERDF grant and these relate to pre-grant award project development costs, demolition and re-siting of toilets, lighting and work relating to the market stalls.
16. The work is proposed to be funded as follows:

ERDF grant	£2.6m	
Council match funding for ERDF	£2.6m	Funded by capital receipts within the Area Development Framework.
Council costs for works ineligible for ERDF	£1.5m	£0.25m funded by Reserves and the remainder from capital receipts within the Area Development Framework
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Total	£6.7m	

17. A relatively small element of the total cost (£0.12m) relates to revenue costs of an Ambassador Manager and overheads. Half of this will need to be funded by the Council over two years from existing budgets.

Law

18. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to or incidental to, the discharge of its statutory function.
19. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

Equality Impact

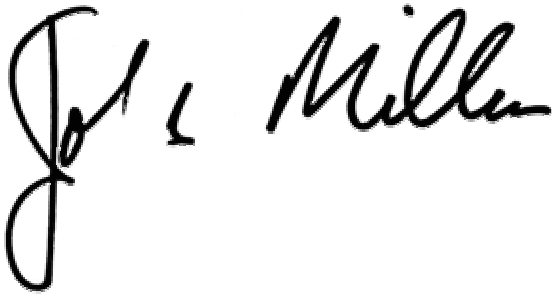
20. Delivery of this project would bring significant benefits to the Town Centre and would have a positive effect for residents, visitors, businesses, investors and developers. Benefits would be achieved for people of all ages, including children and young people, and groups in society. Particular attention is being paid to equality of access in the design of the project, with the engagement of Access in Dudley in the design process

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Note the positive support arising from the consultation exercises undertaken for the Dudley Market Place proposals

- Recommend that the Council include the expenditure of £6.7m on the Dudley Market Place project in the Capital Programme, subject to approval of ERDF grant.



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List of Background Papers

Paved with gold; the real value of good street design. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2007