

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	Not before 21 May 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3259
TITLE:	Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme – funded by WECA ‘Love Our High Streets’ & CIL funding	
WARD:	Twerton, Westmoreland, Weston, Southdown	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1: Bath Local Centres Scheme Summary (January 2022)		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 A £295k funding package to support the Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme has been secured from the West of England Combined Authority’s Investment Fund ‘Love our High Streets’ grant programme. A proposal put forward by B&NES Council through a Full Business Case (FBC) focused on the delivery of creative interventions that improve the street environment and promote increased animation of public spaces.
- 1.2 The scheme will support four district/local centres: Twerton High Street (local centre), Moorland Road (district centre), Weston High Street (local centre) and Mount Road (local centre).
- 1.3 This report requests agreement to accept the £295k grant funding award from WECA in line with the Bath Local Centres Full Business Case approved at WECA Committee on 8th April 2022 (link in the Background Papers section)
- 1.4 This Report summarises key items of the proposed spend, funding approval mechanisms and the key deliverables and outputs anticipated.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is asked to;

- 2.1 Delegate approval to the Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the S151 Officer, to accept the £295k Love our High Streets grant from WECA. These funds will be spent over a five-year period (2.5 years project delivery and 2.5 years maintenance, monitoring and evaluation) in line with the Full Business Case

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 B&NES Council recently secured £295k from WECA's 'Love our High Streets' grant programme for the Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme via a Full Business Case approved at WECA Committee on 8th April 2022.
- 3.2 The core objective of the Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme is to renew and improve the resilience of Local Centres through implementing projects that improve the street environment and support greater animation of public spaces. In addition the scheme aims to: sustain footfall and occupancy, support improved sustainability and health outcomes, promote accessibility and empower communities.
- 3.3 The scheme will support four district/local centres: Twerton High Street (local centre), Moorland Road (district centre), Weston High Street (local centre) and Mount Road (local centre).
- 3.4 The scheme will focus on delivering creative interventions and no hard landscaping changes are programmed. The effectiveness of creative interventions in animating spaces and driving footfall are well evidenced. Furthermore, the value of funding available necessitates this approach.
- 3.5 Interventions to be delivered across the four Local Centres include: greening, street furniture, cycle storage, public art, meanwhile uses in vacant shops, wayfinding and marketing (to support a renewed place identity) and events programmes.
- 3.6 The interventions have been proposed following community engagement in autumn/winter 2021 and they are therefore tailored to the needs of each local centre. The project inception phase will provide a key opportunity for people to share their views and contribute to the detailed design of the scheme.
- 3.7 The '15-minute city', or '20-minute neighbourhood' principle, where 'most of people's daily needs can be met within a short walk or cycle' (Town and Country Planning Association, 2022) has been considered when producing the scheme proposal and the scheme will support this vision. This approach responds to societal changes prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic and encourages a healthier, more sustainable way of living that is not so heavily reliant on the car.
- 3.8 The scheme proposal aligns with strategic policy at national, regional and local levels, e.g. the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy (DfLUHC & MHCLG), the Supporting our High Streets after Covid-19 report (Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee), the aims of the High Street Task Force (set up in 2019), the National Planning Policy framework, the West of England Recovery Plan, the West of England Climate Emergency Action Plan, the B&NES Local Plan and the B&NES Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 No land acquisitions are required to deliver the scheme as the proposed works are situated on Council owned land or within the extent of the highway and as such falls within the responsibility of the Local Highways Authority (Bath and North East Somerset Council) to maintain and/or improve.
- 4.2 Permits for minor streetworks (e.g. to put street furniture/planters in place) and events licenses will be required to implement some elements of the scheme. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) may be required, depending on the outcome of the project inception/detailed design phase. The requirement for permits and licenses will be fully assessed as part of the project inception/detailed design phase.
- 4.3 Terms and conditions of government funding including consideration of subsidy control, best value and competitive tendering etc, form part of the scope of work and will need to be followed throughout the course of the project.
- 4.4 Improvements to public space and events will need to consider equalities impacts and support sustainable development including modal shifts towards walking and cycling. Ongoing accessibility assessment will inform the detailed design stage.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The total budget for the scheme is £488k. The £295k WECA 'Love Our High Streets' Bath Local Centres funding package is supplemented by the remaining £13k WECA 'Love Our High Streets' Feasibility & Development funding (LOHS F&D) and £145k Community Infrastructure Levy allocations (CIL). An additional £35k of linked funding from the Vacant Unit Action Project is referenced in the FBC.
- 5.2 The scheme budget comprises capital funding of £79k and revenue funding of £409k following review of costs to ensure that they fit definitions of either capital or revenue funding.
- 5.3 The capital budget of £79k will be funded from the provisional capital programme items:
 - £44k WECA Love Our High Streets grant funding
 - £35k Community Infrastructure Levy funding
- 5.4 The revenue budget of £409k is funded by:
 - £264k WECA Love Our High Streets funding. This consists of the new allocation of £251k and the remaining £13k Feasibility & Development funding
 - £110k Community Infrastructure Levy funding
 - Linked funding of £35k from the Vacant Unit Action Project

5.5 Programme funding provides revenue budget towards scheme delivery which includes project management, consultation, design and monitoring & evaluation for a period of 2.5 years.

5.6 Programme funding includes a maintenance budget which is available until five years from project start date after which it will be limited due to the scheme focus on revenue interventions. After five years, maintenance of capital elements of the scheme will be funded by the High Street Renewal annual maintenance revenue budget of £15k per annum.

5.7 Status of funding:

- (1) Delegated Approval is sought to fully accept the £295k grant and will be integrated into the Council's approved capital programme and revenue budget under the usual approval processes.
- (2) £95k of CIL funding is already formally allocated to this project via the Council's budget process and a further £50k is provisionally allocated for financial year 2023/24.
- (3) Approvals to expend the remaining LOHS F&D funding and the linked Vacant Unit Action Project funding are already in place.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment & Plan was submitted alongside the Full Business Case.

7.2 The project inception stage will consider equalities impacts as an integral part of the detailed/technical design process.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 B&NES Council has declared both a Climate and Ecological Emergency and is looking to provide leadership to enable carbon neutral B&NES by 2030 and enable greater citizen engagement. These are therefore key considerations for project development, procurement and delivery.

8.2 The scheme will support the Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods agenda and seek to respond to the Climate and Ecological emergencies through its focus on the '15-minute city' principle and by delivering additional green infrastructure and cycle infrastructure at each local centre.

8.3 The proposed interventions have been strongly influenced by the concept of 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods, which are ultimately about creating places in which the majority of people's daily needs can be met within the distance of a short walk or cycle. The identified 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods accommodate a combined c.51,000 people living in over 20,000 households. These geographies have informed the Economic and Social Value Impact

Assessment in terms of identifying and understanding the characteristics of the resident population who will be most impacted by the interventions' implementation and the provision of social infrastructure locally.

- 8.4 The materials and specification of potential public realm interventions will be reviewed to ensure that they are durable and enhance biodiversity. Where possible manufacture processes that use 100% renewable energy will be sought and sustainable delivery patterns prioritised, for example installation in condensed periods to avoid the need to travel. The construction and embodied carbon of the interventions will be discussed with makers and manufacturers at the briefing stage to ensure this is minimised. Where appropriate, interventions will be designed to ensure they can be reused, moved and refreshed to avoid waste.
- 8.5 The proposals are unlikely to result in any net increase in surface water run off as the public realm surface is not programmed to change. Species selection for planters and green infrastructure will be considered to catch rainwater and maximise improvements to air quality (indeed this is something that was requested by local stakeholders as part of Engagement Phase 1). There will be an overall increase in street greening and biodiversity delivered through the scheme in all 4 locations.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There is an option to decline the grant and not progress the Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme, or to re-scope parts of the projects. However, our high streets are in urgent need of support and releasing funding now will allow benefits for businesses and the community to be realised as soon as possible.
- 9.2 Other options included project locations, scope and the value of funding allocated:
- (1) Policy CP12 of the Placemaking Plan was used to set out the 'long-list' of locations which could be included in the bid. Policy CP12 indicates that there is 1 district centre in Bath & North East Somerset and 21 local centres in Bath. The project scope focuses on Bath as the largest urban centre in the district
 - (2) Bath Local Centres that could not realistically be classified as 'high streets' due to small scale/limited number of retail outlets and services were removed from the selection
 - (3) A 'Local Centres Vitality Checklist' was prepared to consider which local centres should be prioritised for initial funding. The checklist was used to identify local centres most in need of intervention
 - (4) Officers worked with elected members and undertook community engagement to gather qualitative information about the High Streets and opportunities for improvement. Once the four local centres had been determined, Officers gathered local intelligence from stakeholders such as community organisations and businesses. Well attended engagement events followed where views were sought from the public about the types of interventions that could make the greatest impact to their Local Centre
 - (5) The level of funding allocated to each local centre is dependent on:

- a) 'Need' identified as part of the checklist review
 - b) Feedback received from public engagement events
 - c) Status as a district/local centre
 - d) Size of the centre
 - e) Character of the broader locality in which the district/local centre sits
- (6) If the interventions were allocated across more local centres there would likely be a reduced impact and the objectives less measurable or impactful.

9.3 Work to demonstrate the economic and social value benefits of the Love Our High Streets Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme was prepared by Turley Economics as part of the Full Business Case. This analysis anticipates the proposals will result in a significant economic uplift, including:

- (1) Supporting 22 gross FTE jobs.
- (2) Generating 19 total net additional FTE jobs for WECA residents.
- (3) Contributing a total net additional £2.6 million GVA in the WECA area over the duration of the interventions
- (4) Promoting local economic resilience, with vibrancy potentially supporting permanently increased levels of footfall and expenditure at local businesses, growing the Local Centres' employment capacity
- (5) Generating gross social value of £100,000 over 2.5 years through supporting people returning to work.
- (6) Generating gross social value of £160,000 over 2.5 years through supporting volunteering opportunities.
- (7) Summing the above figures gives total gross social value of £260,000 over 2.5 years
- (8) Generating social value through creating healthy streets, promoting wellbeing and supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing local health inequalities, including through public realm animation and enhancements, with measures including:
 - a) Facilitating active travel, promoting human and economic health.
 - b) Clean and safe streets, tackling anti-social behaviour.
 - c) Community and public art, cultivating local civic pride and attracting visitors.
 - d) Urban greening, improving mental and physical health.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The development of the project scope has been informed by engagement with local residents, businesses, community groups and stakeholders which took place in Autumn/Winter 2021.

- 10.2 Further engagement with key stakeholders will be undertaken as part of the project inception / detailed design phase of the scheme, due to take place in summer 2022.
- 10.3 The submission of the Bath Local Centres Full Business Case was approved by the Senior Leadership Group (SLG), the Director Regeneration & Housing, the Director for Sustainable Communities, the S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Resources.
- 10.4 The report has been agreed by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Contact person	<p>Simon Martin, Director Regeneration & Housing</p> <p>Cleo Newcombe-Jones, Regeneration Manager</p> <p>Hazel Thorp, High Street Renewal Officer</p>
Background papers	<p>B&NES Core Strategy & Placemaking Plan</p> <p>https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-planning-policy-and-guidance</p> <p>WECA Committee Decision to approve grant funding for the Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme, 8th April 2022:</p> <p>https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=349</p> <p>West of England Investment Fund Programme Report which includes a link to the Full Business Case and accompanying documents:</p> <p>https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4578/Investment Fund.pdf</p>
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