

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	20th July 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3260
TITLE:	Bath City Centre High Street Renewal	
WARD:	Kingsmead Ward – Bath City centre	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Love Milsom Street Event 2019 Evaluation Report Appendix 2: Bath City Centre Love our High Streets Summary Scheme Proposal (July 2021)		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 A £1.235m funding package to support Bath High Street Renewal has been secured from the West of England Investment Fund's 'Love our High Street' grant programme. A proposal put forward by B&NES Council via a Full Business Case focused on the northern part of Bath City centre, combining targeted public realm interventions with support for events, animation and culture on the streets and in public spaces focused on the Milsom Quarter and Kingsmead Square, together with other city centre wide interventions relating to outdoor trading. The project will support the Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods agenda and seek to respond to the Climate and Ecological emergencies and the transition towards greener, less car dominated and accessible, people friendly High Streets.
- 1.2 This report requests agreement to accept the £1.235m funding from WECA in line with the Full Business Case approved by WECA on 25th June 2021. This report summarises the proposed project scope and includes economic and social impact analysis and a summary of pilot activities and engagement which has informed the project scope. The Report summarises key items of proposed spend, funding approval mechanisms and key deliverables and outputs anticipated.
- 1.3 In addition, B&NES's proposal to access the WECA Recovery grant fund to support a 'vacant unit action project' (phase 2) capital project, to bring animation, temporary arts and commercial uses to vacant shop premises focused in Bath, with satellite projects in Keynsham and Midsomer Norton was also supported by WECA on 25th June 2021. This project is now subject to delegated approval of a

business case, by WECA's Chief executive in consultation constituent council's chief executives. This report also seeks confirmation to proceed with the second phase of this project, following delegated approval.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Delegate approval to the Director of Place Management, in consultation with the s151 officer, to accept the £1,235K Love our High Streets grant from WECA to be spent over a five year period in line with the Full Business Case and concept design approved. This will allow full approval of confirmed capital of £1,102k for Bath City Centre High Street Renewal and provides £240K for revenue budget support as outlined in section 5 of this report.
- 2.2 Delegate approval to the Director of Place Management, in consultation with the s151 officer, to accept £255k from the WECA Recovery grant offered to deliver phase 2 capital works to bring vacant shops back into active use for cultural and commercial and arts initiatives as part of the 'vacant unit action project'. The split between this programme and Commercial Estate Refurbishment and revenue budget support to be confirmed.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 B&NES Council secured £1.235m Love our High Streets grant funding for Bath City centre from WECA via a Full Business Case, approved by WECA on 25th June 2021. The rationale for the focus on Bath City centre, including Milsom Street, was the decline in footfall and vacancy rates higher than city centre south. This followed investment by SouthGate of £2.5m to support public realm, animation and events in the south of the city centre, the proposal is to undertake similar activity focused around the northern part of the city centre centring on the Milsom Quarter, with additional investment also directed towards Kingsmead Square and city-wide through an outdoor trading project.
- 3.2 To support the development of the Full Business Case, initial funding of £115k was released by WECA, this funding was used to fund officer time and the delivery and development of various pilot activities, projects and consultation activities which have informed this bid. Alongside the production of the Full Business Case, other key outputs have included:
 - a) Pilot initiatives such as the design, delivery and implementation of the Love Milsom Street Event in September 2019, which closed the street to vehicles, diverted buses and invited local businesses and artists to join us to create a street party on World Car Free weekend. Work also included follow up evaluation and engagement with businesses and traders. In 2020 event was awarded the Best UK Campaign Award for sustainable transport activities as part of the European Mobility week. See **Appendix 1** for Event Evaluation Report.
 - b) Co-funded projects with Bath Business Improvement District including City Centre SMART footfall data project launched in 2019 and technical scoping

work for a Bath Light Festival (realised at Christmas 2020 through the delivery of the Bath BID's Christmas Lights Trail).

- c) Co-funded project with B&NES Events Team Sept-Dec 2020 to deliver shop window animations and artistic interventions working with local creatives, including set and costume designers who had been unable to undertake their normal work during the pandemic. This project has been recognised as a national best practice case study by the Local Government Association.
- d) Officer time to design and project manage the delivery of the city centre public realm improvements to Union Street and Kingsmead Square developed through public consultation and engagement with local businesses, landlords and Bath BID.
- e) Officer time to design and deliver High Street interventions such as parklets on Milsom Street and support for pavement licences to support outdoor seating for food and beverage businesses,
- f) Production of a design guide and design support for businesses to support the successful roll out of pavement licences, following COV-19 legislation changes.
- g) Technical and design support for the COV-19 vehicle access restrictions delivered in Bath City centre.

3.3 In addition, officer time funded by this project has also secured an additional £500k from the WECA Recovery Fund, to support pilot activities, meanwhile uses, pop-up shops and art installations in vacant shops focused on Bath City Centre, with satellite activities in Keynsham and Midsomer Norton. An initial £245k has been released with a further £255k now due to be released and has been delegated to WECA Chief Executive for approval. This budget is split £255k capital funding and £245k revenue funding.

Bath City Centre Love our High Streets Project Scope

3.4 The overall aim of this WECA funded project is to improve the experience for residents and visitors at two key gateways into Bath City Centre Milsom Street and Kingsmead Square. Whilst both areas have benefitted from public realm enhancement in the form of hard works, in both cases this was 20 years ago and there is an now opportunity to refresh the areas with new street furniture, heritage repairs, planting/greening, support for café culture with outside tables and chairs, and other interventions to rebalance the spaces in favour of pedestrians and active travel as well as providing a programme of animations and events. An outdoor trading strategy and electricity infrastructure investment will also support visual enhancements across the city centre and allow a move away from a dependency on polluting and noisy generators.

3.5 The Love our High Street scheme will support the Council's adopted Placemaking Plan in particular policy D.10 Public Realm, and the Council's adopted Public Realm and Movement Strategy, in particular the aspirations to:

- a) Rebalance the movement hierarchy giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and improving accessibility; and

- b) Reanimate the city centre through an imaginative and pioneering programme of public art events and activities (including street trading).

3.6 In addition, street furniture and lighting interventions will follow the Pattern Book street furniture palette. Considerations of ecological and climate emergencies will also be made when sourcing products and specifying planting and materials and there is an increased emphasis on greening and supporting active travel. The delivery of the project links with the Council's Clean Air Zone and Liveable Neighbourhoods initiatives which seek to improve air quality and quality of life, prioritising accessible and people friendly spaces which are less vehicle dominated.

3.7 The project also supports the delivery of key aspirations in the adopted Bath Transport Delivery Plan including promoting sustainable mobility, safeguarding and enhancing the unique historic environment and improving quality of life in the city.

3.8 In terms of the emerging One Shared Vision, the proposals respond strongly to three of the emerging themes: Supporting the delivery of a 15 minute neighbourhood where High Streets need to support local residents community needs and leisure and recreation functions as well as providing retail and food and beverage offers; Nurturing transition to heritage for the future the proposals support areas in transition where there have been higher vacancy rates and through the proposed planting, active travel and low carbon aspects of the scheme supports the environmental aspects of the vision.

3.9 Key elements of the scheme proposal are summarised below:

Project 1: Milsom Quarter Animation and Activation Project

3.10 The Milsom Quarter project will include the following elements, subject to detailed design and delivery working with key stakeholders:

- a) Reconfigured and replacement of existing street furniture in the palette set out in the Council's Pattern Book;
- b) Parklets, cycle parking and movable infrastructure to facilitate outdoor café seating areas and pavement licences.
- c) Heritage repairs to hard works such as sets and threshold treatments to indicate people have priority over vehicles;
- d) Seasonal street dressing and lighting interventions;
- e) A five year programme of public art, events and performance.

3.11 This workstream will be completed by works to animate, and bring back into creative and repair, restore and refurbish re-use vacant shops and buildings. The scheme forms part of an improvement Strategy for the Milsom Quarter area, and a Masterplan is in development to help determine the longer-term opportunities for this area responding to the decline in demand anticipated for retail space.

Project 2: Kingsmead Square Animation and Activation Project

3.12 The Kingsmead Square project will build on an existing programme of improvements to the square which have been implemented or are funded. It will include the following elements, subject to detailed design working with key stakeholders:

- a) Surface treatment to reinforce pedestrian priorities;
- b) Overhead street dressing and lighting including infrastructure;
- c) Green wall with planting and bench at the end of Kingsmead Street;
- d) Feature bench and tree improvements on Avon Street, to replace a street tree that is in a poor condition.

Project 3: City-wide projects

3.13 The city-wide projects will include an outdoor trading strategy to deliver improvements to the street trading offer and aesthetic and enhanced infrastructure to be used for events, street trading and markets (ground-based electricity points) to avoid the need for polluting generators to be used. The improvements to electrical infrastructure will facilitate support for electric charging and low carbon events infrastructure;

3.14 To deliver these projects the funding will also support officer capacity to undertake project management, design, delivery, monitoring and bidding for match funding as part of the Bath City Centre High Street Renewal Programme.

3.15 The Love our High Street scheme proposals are outlined in **Appendix 2**. While a certain level of detail in terms of design and costing is required for the funding application, there is flexibility within the programme to adjust spend through discussions with WECA and to undertake detailed design working with key stakeholders and to undertake public engagement exercises on detailed designs where there are key choices to be made.

Vacant Units Action Project Scope

3.16 The Council is utilising WECA Recovery Fund grant funding to help bring vacant ground floor shop units back into active and innovative use. Post pandemic High Street vacancy rates have increased nationally, this is reflected within Bath City centre. In the market towns, although vacancy rates have actually decreased in the last 18 months, there are still vacant properties which can be better utilised for community and business benefit. This two-year project will see empty properties brought into use for creative arts and cultural projects and pop-up business and community uses. Phase 1 focused on revenue-based projects supporting arts, creative re-use, community initiatives etc., and has already started - supported pop-up galleries, artists and community pop-ups and technical work, business, university and landlord engagement.

3.17 Phase 2 focuses on capital improvements to properties focused on Bath City centre, the project seeks to bring non-compliant properties up to a standard and condition where they can be re-occupied and utilised for pilot interventions before being re-let on the open market. For example, this WECA funding can facilitate properties to be improved enough to be utilised as they await further investment or separation works.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Elements of the High Street Renewal package include works which will require highways consents including Traffic Regulation Orders, actions under Street Trading and Licencing legislation and other Council consent processes such as events licencing, streetworks permits etc. It is not proposed that the scope of the Love our High Streets work will trigger planning, advertising or listed building consents, however, this will be kept under review. Both Kingsmead Square and Milsom Quarter projects are supported by timed vehicle access restrictions which will be funded, consulted on and implemented in parallel to this project.
- 4.2 Terms and conditions of government funding including consideration of state aid, best value and competitive tendering etc, form part of scope of work and will need to be followed throughout the course of the projects.
- 4.3 Improvements to public space and events will need to consider equalities impacts and support sustainable development including supporting modal shift towards walking and cycling. An accessibility audit has been undertaken to inform the scheme proposals working with an accessibility professional.
- 4.4 Capital works to buildings as part of the vacant unit action project may require listed building consent and or planning permission, and will need to meet building regulations. Framework contractors will be utilised to undertake the work which will be focused the public sector estate and consents will be in place prior to commencement.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

Capital Budget

- 5.1 An approved capital budget already exists for Bath High Street Renewal and forms B&NES match funding to the WECA grant. Capital funding of £593k is already fully approved, of which £205k was spent over 2019/20 and 2020/21. The WECA grant funding will add to this existing capital budget by £1,102k to support further public realm interventions in the Milsom Quarter, Kingsmead Square, Union Street and York Street and elsewhere in the city centre.
- 5.2 The £1,102k provisional capital budget for the Bath High Street Renewal Programme includes:
 - (1) The WECA Love our High Streets grant funding (£995k) and £300k Community Infrastructure Levy (£100k allocated to the 2021/22 provisional capital programme and £200k requested - £100k over 2022/23 and £100k over 2023/24).
 - (2) A £7k revenue contribution to capital has been earmarked in 2021/22 from the Licencing team towards project 3 outlined in the FBC (outdoor trading). In terms of external match funding, Bath BID is providing a £30k p.a. contribution (total £150k in-kind contribution) by providing access to city centre monitoring data to help assess the impact of the schemes. It is anticipated that businesses at Kingsmead Square will be making a £25k third party contribution to support project 2 in the FBC (subject to funding agreement).
- 5.3 When the WECA Love our High Street Funding is confirmed, Delegated Approval will seek Full Approval in the Capital Programme for £1,102K, schemes

relating to confirmed sources of funding; noting that future CIL of £200K is only confirmed in light of CIL receipts received in prior financial year and that we await for receipt of contributions from businesses at Kingsmead Square.

- 5.5 The provisional capital budget for the Bath High Street Renewal Programme also currently includes assumes WECA Recovery funding at £255k, which is still subject to Business Case Submission ahead of delegated approval by WECA Authority Chief Executives.
- 5.6 A separate report for consideration at this meeting is E3293 Commercial Estate Review Update which requests approval of capital budget to invest in the estate address maintenance liabilities. It is anticipated that the WECA Recovery fund may be used to fund some works to bring some of the vacant units back into use and supplement the Commercial Estate Refurbishment Programme, reducing the scope of this provisional budget for full approval to this scheme.

Revenue Budget

- 5.4 The revenue costs for the programme total £240k to be met from the WECA Love our High Streets funding. Programme funding provides revenue for a 1.0 FTE Senior Officer to oversee and deliver the projects for the 5-year project period. Specialist urban design support and events development and delivery support will also be provided as part of the project. Further details of the funding breakdown are included in **Appendix 2**.
- 5.5 Elements of the project will incur revenue or maintenance savings and/or additional costs, these will need to be considered as the project is developed, such elements need to be factored into design decision making processes. A Bath City Centre annual maintenance revenue budget of £15,000 per annum from 2021-22 has also been secured, which will support the implementation of this project and help address existing issues and shortfalls. This scheme also includes maintenance budget for items installed within the parameters of capital funding (maximum 5 years).
- 5.6 In addition, £245k revenue budget has already been fully approved as part of the WECA Recovery Funded 'vacant unit action project' to support art installations, pop-up shops and other pilot interventions in vacant shop units in Bath. Keynsham and Midsomer Norton.

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 The detailed design and delivery of projects will need to address and consider equalities impacts, as a key part of the detailed design process.
- 7.2 In addition, the community engagement and cultural programme elements of the Love our High Streets project will also need to consider inclusivity and accessibility as part of their detailed public realm scheme design and in the delivery of events/activities. Recommendations to this effect are included in the Equalities Assessment accompanying this report. The Equalities Assessment

has been informed by input from an accessibility specialist engaged by the Council.

- 7.3 Since submitting the FBC to WECA for the Love our High Streets project, the High Street Renewal team has continued to work closely with the highways team to ensure that opportunities to improve accessibility to the Milsom Quarter and Kingsmead Square are realised through this Love our High Streets scheme. Replacement and additional seating will be provided throughout Kingsmead Square and Milsom Street at a minimum of 50m intervals, to ensure there is adequate resting space to allow the street to be used more easily. The project will de-clutter the public realm and layout the new furniture in an accessible way to accommodate ease of movement through the space. The furniture will be fully accessible with a range of seating types including perch seats, backrests and armrests. Visual clarity will be designed into the street furniture with materials used that contrast with the immediate surroundings and surfaces.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The focus of the Love our High Streets project is to support the vibrancy and vitality of the High Street which will support 'buy local' agendas, elements of the project support outdoor events, outdoor trading and markets, which will attract local residents. The projects are also underpinned by improving the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport and prioritise these modes. Improvements to electricity infrastructure will also help to minimise the use of polluting diesel generators by street vendors and during events.
- 8.2 Procurement of street furniture and restoration works to buildings will prioritise natural materials and sustainable sourcing. The project scope also includes greening and planting which can help reduce urban heat island impacts and improve biodiversity.
- 8.3 The vacant unit action project will ensure better use of existing resources, and opportunities to improve energy efficiency will be sought as part of capital projects.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There is an option to not accept either grant and to not progress the High Streets Renewal programmes or to re-scope parts of the projects. However, our High Street are in urgent need of support, and releasing funding now will allow the benefits to businesses and the community to be realised as soon as possible.
- 9.2 Another option would be to focus the Love our High Streets grant funding on hard landscaping works, however, the impact and coverage would be more limited. The proposed programme aims to bring maximum benefits and animation to support footfall and economic vibrancy.
- 9.3 Work to demonstrate the economic and social benefits of the proposed Love our High Streets scheme prepared by Turley Economics highlights that the interventions proposed will have a significant economic uplift including supporting the creation of 48 FTE jobs and 20 net additional FTE, (including 15 for WECA residents and 10 for B&NES residents) and that the scheme proposals will contribute a net total £6.5 million GVA over a five year period and will attract an additional 316,000 people over weekend events on Milsom Street

generating an additional £5.4m net additional expenditure over the next five years. In terms of gross social value the scheme will generate a gross social value of £475,000 over 5 years by supporting people returning to work and will generate £150,000 worth of volunteering opportunities. The scheme also generates social value by creating healthy streets, promoting wellbeing and supporting healthy lifestyles.

9.4 The focus on vacant shops for the Recovery grant funding directly responds to business priorities relayed during consultation and engagement, including priority actions identified in the Bath Business Improvement District 5 year plan (2021-2026). The proposal is also supported by other key stakeholders such as Bath Spa University and local arts organisations who are already engaged in Phase 1 of this project.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The development of the project scope has been informed by consultation and engagement with the community, local traders and businesses, as well as property agents and landlords. The project team also meets regularly with Councillors to develop project scope and feedback on pilot activities.

10.2 The Kingsmead Square proposals have been subject to significant community consultation over a two-year period, this is proposed to continue as the detail of the scheme is drawn up.

10.3 Further engagement with key stakeholders including landlords, tenants and businesses as well as Bath BID, as well as other civic and community groups will also be undertaken as part of the vehicle access restriction proposals and to inform detailed design. Particularly for Milsom Street where consultation to date has focused on landlords and traders and further public engagement is planned for summer 2021.

10.4 Undertaking the original grant application, supporting work and pilot initiatives were agreed by the s151 officer, Chief Executive, Cabinet and Senior Management, and have been in line with Council strategies and priorities.

10.5 The report has been agreed by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Contact person(s)	<i>Lynda Deane/Cleo Newcombe-Jones/Wendy Maden</i>
Background papers	<p><i>B&NES Core Strategy & Placemaking Plan</i></p> <p>https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-planning-policy-and-guidance</p> <p><i>Public Realm and Movement Strategy</i></p> <p>https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/major-projects/public-realm-and-movement/public-realm-movemen</p> <p><i>Bath Pattern Book</i></p> <p>https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-</p>

[control/major-projects/public-realm-and-movement/preparatory-projects](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/major-projects/public-realm-and-movement/preparatory-projects)

Kingsmead Square consultation reports and proposals
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