

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2019

**REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****TOWN CENTRE PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS UPDATE****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None.

**PURPOSE**

To update Cabinet on progress made on the Town Centre Programme and individual projects, including the Gungate project.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. To note the progress on the town centre programme and individual projects.
2. To note the feedback so far in relation to the Tamworth....What's Next? Campaign.
3. To approve the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Future High Street Fund based on the outline of the vision described in this report.
4. To note and endorse the workstreams and timetable for the feasibility stage of the Gungate project.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The programme approach to managing various town centre projects is being implemented.

The Leader has launched an engagement campaign to start a conversation about the future of the town centre. There has been a high number of people making comments and asking to be involved in the future. Future engagement activity is planned and will be developed over the coming months.

The Government have a "Future High Streets Fund" to support the regeneration of town centres. The Council has prepared an Expression of Interest (EOI) for revenue funding to help develop a business case for capital funding for various projects as detailed below.

The Gungate project is currently at an early stage and the Council is currently working with consultants to develop options for the site, and resources have been secured from the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership to fund this work. Future reports will be brought back to Cabinet as the options are developed and narrowed down.

**OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

In relation to the town centre programme the options considered formed part of the November 2018 report.

In relation to the Expression of Interest to the Future High Street Fund, various options for the vision have been considered by officers however, the proposed option is the one that is felt to align closest to the aspirations of the Council and community and the principles of the Fund.

In relation to the Gungate workstreams there are no alternative options.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no implications arising directly from this report. The EOI provides an estimate of the revenue funding support that is needed to develop project plans for capital funding applications. The Cabinet report of the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018 approved a 5 year revenue town centre programme budget that could be utilised to develop plans in support of a formal submission if we are successful with the EOI.

## **LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND**

There are no legal or risk implications arising directly from this report.

## **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

At its meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018, Cabinet approved a programme management approach to the delivery of town centre activity and projects.

The town centre coordination group have continued to work up projects and the Executive Leadership Team have considered and approved a project brief for the "Town Centre Strategy" and will consider a brief for Communication and Engagement Project and Project Implementation Document (PID) for Gungate later this month.

### Communication and Engagement

On January 31, the Leader of the Council launched a new 'Tamworth...What's Next?' campaign with a 10-minute video to start a conversation about the evolution of Tamworth town centre so it is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As part of this campaign, people are being encouraged to fill out a short survey form so we can identify those who would be willing to take part in future discussions/workshops and support the work of the council.

At the time of writing, more than 180 people have filled out the form and 165 of those have indicated they would be willing to actively participate in shaping the future vision for the town centre. So far 20 of those have come through the Tamworth Herald newspaper and the rest via our dedicated webpages. Respondents include more than 20 businesses, many of which we were not previously engaging with.

The campaign has resulted in our widest ever reach and engagement on our social media channels, including a Facebook reach of more than 30,000 on the TBC page alone, plus widespread media coverage. Specifically, Tamworth What's Next is being supported by the Tamworth Herald and Tamworth Informed. Hundreds of ideas have been submitted on what people would like to see the town centre used for and these cover a variety of themes, such as a greater variety of high quality restaurants and bars, more independent niche retailers, more activities and destinations for families, transport links between the town centre and Ventura Park, promotion of the town centre in Ventura Park, better promotion of the town's history and cheaper parking/parking schemes.

The Leader of the Council has met with groups including the former BID steering group, now operating as Tamworth Together, and business networking group FaB Networking.

Some of the ideas have been fed into the State of Tamworth Debate report which will be discussed at Full Council on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Further actions will be considered as part of the Communication and Engagement PID.

### Town Centre Funding

On the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018, the Government launched the £675m “Future High Streets Fund” the purpose of which is to “support and fund local areas’ plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future”. On the 26<sup>th</sup> December 2018, the Government launched a call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for funding as part of the “Future High Streets Fund”. The fund will contribute up to £25m to a place to enable the projects they put forward. The deadline for EOI’s is 22<sup>nd</sup> March and the Government have indicated they will announce in the summer 2019 those Councils that they will ask to develop a final submission for capital funding. The Government will provide some revenue funding to help Councils develop their cases.

The EOI requires Councils to identify a town centre and the challenges it faces. It also asks for a vision and ambition for change.

Officers have been developing an expression of interest to secure funding to help the evolution of the town centre so it is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is based on the Councils adopted plans and Strategies such as the Corporate Plan and Local Plan, relevant national best practice, consultation feedback from the Leaders “Tamworth’s...what next?” campaign, engagement with the former BID steering Group – Tamworth Together CIC, along with other stakeholders.

The EOI sets out a vision for the Town Centre which is to restore it as the beating heart of the community; to become a place that people *want* to visit, rather than a place they *have* to visit. It expresses the desire to make the town centre a place where people can come together, to relax, to eat and drink, to be entertained and to enjoy activities with their friends and families in pleasant surroundings. This will be achieved through:

- A greater leisure offer, including places to eat and things to do;
- A greater variety of smaller independent shops;
- Provision of housing to meet a range of local needs
- Provision of offices and places of innovation
- An accessible and improved physical environment

### Gungate Project Update

Council on 11th April 2018 approved the purchase of the Gungate site within Tamworth town centre, incorporating the site of the former Gungate shopping precinct; a private pay and display car park currently leased to NCP ; and a Council run pay and display car park. . This was funded from a £4million capital budget financed from capital receipts from the sale of the Golf Course..

The Council is entitled to purchase land to hold as an investment and regeneration opportunity under the Local Government Act 1972; and the Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council the power to invest for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment, or for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs.

As part of that report, Members also approved the development of a regeneration opportunity including further site acquisition should this be beneficial; including formal negotiations with Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Police to look at the inclusion of land bordering the site; and to commence masterplanning works to bring the site to a commercially viable development opportunity.

The report to Council recognised that any return from future redevelopment is not guaranteed, and that it could take several years to get a major regeneration project up and running. Initial plans are for a mixed housing/leisure development. The Council is currently working with consultants to develop options for the site, and resources have been secured from the Local Government Association (LGA) to pay for 40 days’ consultancy; and an £80k grant has been received from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership. It is expected that this will take approximately 8 - 10 months to complete.

This is the feasibility stage of the project and the workstreams and timeline is as follows:

Stage 1 – Baseline Analysis : January 2019 – March 2019  
Stage 2a – Options, Masterplan & Viability : April 2019 – June 2019  
Report to Cabinet – update on options and consideration of preferred option - June / July 2019  
Stage 2b – Options, Masterplan & Viability - July 2019  
Stage 3 – Delivery and Implementation Strategy : August 2019 – September 2019  
Report to Cabinet – update and consideration of preferred option and delivery mechanism

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

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## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report to Cabinet, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018, “Town Centre Report”  
Future High Streets Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund/future-high-street-fund>

## **APPENDICES**