

Thursday, 30 September 2021

Report of the Leader of the Council

Future High Streets Fund Update

Not Exempt

Purpose

To Update the Cabinet on the progress of the Future High Streets Fund programme

Recommendations

That Cabinet endorses and approves the report.

Executive Summary

The Programme has progressed well since the previous report to the Cabinet on 17th June 2021.

Procurement

Significant steps forward have been made to appoint a Lead Consultant. The tender process was undertaken throughout August with three tenders returned. Two tenderers were taken forward to be interviewed on 7th September 2021 with a final recommendation to be made for review and agreement with the Programme Board on 10th September 2021.

Surveys

Carter Jonas surveying company have been appointed to carry out measured surveys, topographical surveys and utilities mapping of the buildings and areas affected by the Future High Streets Fund. So far they have completed all measured surveys to FHSF buildings aside from the properties on the southern side of Market Street which require a minor clearance works contractor before they can safely access all areas to complete surveys.

Projects

College Quarter: South Staffordshire College have achieved a first round pass for their funding bid to the Department for Education. The second round bid is due to be submitted in October 2021. SSC are a part of the Lead Consultant tender process so their design team will be appointed at a similar time to the TBC design team.

Solicitors are currently progressing with a legal agreement between TBC and the Co-operative Society to arrange acquisition of the department store with vacant possession by the end of the year. The next stage will be progressing of a legal agreement to formalise arrangements between TBC and SSC.

Middle Entry: Discussions are progressing with the Peer group to achieve vacant possession. Purcell architects have prepared concept sketch designs support ongoing discussions with Peer Group.

Castle Gateway: Positive meetings with the Conservation Officer and Historic England have been held and set some high level principles regarding what would be supported regarding renovation of the listed properties.

Agreement has been reached with Nationwide Building Society on their move into the former Peel Café building (12-13 Market Street). Freeths Solicitors are now communicating with Nationwide's solicitors to formalise this into a legal agreement

Progress continues to be made with Coop, Peer Group and Nationwide on the relevant 3rd party agreements required to meet programme and ensure land acquisitions are completed.

Engagement and Communications

A Communications Plan and Engagement Plan have both been developed to manage the stakeholders and public understanding of the programme.

Work has already begun to engage key stakeholders and those most affected by the programme. It is intended to begin engaging with town centre businesses, as an important group of stakeholders, over the next month with one to one discussions and drop in sessions. Following this a wider public engagement process will be launched to include press releases and stalls in the town centre for members of the public to visit. A website is also being developed which will contain regular updates of progress.

Budget and Timescales

To date the programme progress accords with the master programme previously approved and also the budget.

Resource Implications

There are no resource issues

Legal/Risk Implications Background

There are no legal issues.

Equalities Implications

There are no equalities issues.

Sustainability Implications

The impact of the Future High Streets Fund programme on sustainability is to be taken into account by the consultant team when designing and implementing the projects

Background Information

None

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List of Background Papers

None

Appendices

None

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