

Thursday 2 December 2021

Report of the Leader of the Council

Future High Streets Fund Update

Not Exempt

Purpose

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

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. To note the report

Executive Summary

The Programme has progressed well since the previous report to the committee on 15th September 2021.

Procurement

McBains have been appointed as the lead consultant and an initial kick off meeting was held on the 7th October. Further to this an initial design team meeting took place on the 27th October. Immediate work has focussed on the programme timeline to ensure that momentum is kept up and the project continues to deliver. At the time of writing a revised programme timeline is almost agreed which has clear milestones setting out RIBA Stage completions to ensure the March 2024 deadline is complied with.

Handover

There is a project hand over stage to get the McBains team quickly up to speed, have the programme reviewed and establish working relationships and administrative tasks so that we can all work as one efficient team. For example, McBains have established a Sharepoint so that everyone in the team can upload and review documents on it, making it quicker and easier to access information and move the project forwards. These back office tasks are important and critical to successful delivery. Putting these new structures in place is taking time but will ultimately support the project.

Upto this point the project has been very linear in its progress moving from project inception to recruitment of a team, procure of resources to support the project including the multi-disciplinary team, survey work and other specialist support such as a legal team to assist.

Now that the procurement of McBains is completed and their multidisciplinary team are actively working on the programme there are multiple workstreams, including design, planning, legals, achieving vacant possession, engagement and dealing with specific town centre

individuals/businesses who may be affected by proposals – and this relates not just to the programme as a whole but all of the individual projects within it.

The number of meetings and site visits have increased to reflect this workload.

Projects

College Quarter: The first round of FECTF (DfE) funding has been secured with the second round submitted on the 7th October ahead of the deadline. The outcome of the funding will be announced in the New Year. A legal agreement has been reached between the Borough Council and the college to cover the initial funding draw down to support ongoing work and ahead of funding confirmation.

It is confirmed that the Chief Executive will be attending the College Board meetings in future, which are held monthly. The Borough Council's Programme Manager already attends the South Staffordshire College Exec Team meeting, which is the equivalent to the Borough Council's delivery team meetings.

The College Board have confirmed their appointment of McBains and a kick off meeting was held on the 4th November with their architectural team ACG in attendance. Discussions are already underway regarding contractor procurement.

Heads of Terms have been agreed with the Coop and a final legal agreement is almost at the point of completion. Vacant possession of the Coop building will be in Q4 21/22 and work on Coleshill with the refurbishment of new premises for the Coop is underway.

Survey work is completed on the Coop building which is feeding into the new college design work with stage 2 at an advanced stage. The timeline is Spring for a planning submission.

Design work has begun on the new enterprise centre to be located in the refurbished part of the Coop building. Submission of a planning application is expected next Spring.

Middle Entry: Discussions are ongoing with the owners of Middle Entry, the Peer Group. The Peer Group have identified some slight problems regarding achieving vacant possession and there remains a couple of outstanding agreements that need to be agreed and signed. A meeting has been recently held with the Peer Group to accelerate this area of work to allow for the development programme to remain on track. Vacant possession is required by Q1 next year to allow for enabling and demolition works to begin. The timeline is Spring for a planning submission.

The Heads of Terms agreement between Tamworth Borough Council and the Peer Group are in abeyance until the Vacant Possession timelines can be resolved. The risks relating to this have been reflected in the risk register.

Measured Building surveys have been completed for these buildings and an onsite review of the bridge link demolitions has been undertaken with McBains.

Castle Gateway: Positive discussions continue with businesses affected by proposals. An agreement with Nationwide in relation to the Peel Café is well progressed and awaiting the resolution of a legal issue before being concluded. Heads of Terms have been agreed with the Nationwide.

Surveys are ongoing in the vacant market street properties.

Peel Café works are targeted for a planning application as soon as possible to unlock this key element of the programmes critical pathway. Design and planning meetings have been increased to allow this component to be fast tracked. At the latest an application will be submitted in February however the team are working to achieve this at the earliest opportunity.

Engagement and Communications

An initial business engagement event was held on the 13th October at the Assembly Rooms. There was a presentation about the FHSF programme and more generally the other regeneration schemes in the town centre, to demonstrate how the FHSF fits in with other aspirations. It was well attended by about 40 individuals and there was a Q and A session and the opportunity to talk 1:1 with officers. Attendees received a pack of information including details of how to access the New Transforming Tamworth website, the Borough Councils new regeneration website and crucially a portal for the FHSF where regular updates will be posted to keep people informed.

To keep up engagement momentum monthly drop in sessions will be delivered every 2nd Wednesday of the month at the business lounge in the TEC. These will run from 2-7 and businesses can drop in to discuss any issues that they have with officers. The economic development team will be engaging with market stall holders separately and with the support from operator LSD promotions. Other engagement is in development following the preparation of an engagement and communications plan, which was discussed at the Programme Board at their September meeting.

Budget and Timescales

Since the kick off meeting held with McBains the Borough Council is in a project handover phase whereby the work undertaken to date is handed over to the McBains team. As such individual project timelines are being revised, project costs are being looked at along with other project parameters including reporting mechanisms, roles and responsibilities and project risk.

Based upon the current budget and programme timelines the project is on track.

Whilst McBains will be reviewing the programme as a whole and organising the coordination of the individual projects slightly differently, the overall programme timeline remains the same, which is fund spend by the end of March 2024.

We are however awaiting the college funding announcement due in the New Year.

Indicative timescales for planning application submissions outlined in this report reflect work undertaken as part of the handover process.

In terms of budget there has been engagement with McBains on project costings. A high level review has flagged initial costing concerns. A detailed RIBA Stage 1 cost plan is targeted for the end of November 2021 to identify the scale of the issue. The Borough Council's Programme Board will be discussing the RIBA Stage 1 cost plan in more detail at their December meeting.

Based upon the current budget the programme is still on track however as set out in this report there are concerns but further design work is required to quantify if there is an issue.

Resource Implications

The Borough Councils project officer Tom Hobbs is leaving the authority on the 30th November to take up a post at another local authority.

At the Appointments and Staffing Committee in April 2021 a report was approved that sought to resource the FHSF workload with two project officers. One post was for 3 years and a second post was for two years. Tom was successful in being appointed to the three year post. The second post was designed to be appointed into and start in the Spring 2022 and cover the last two years of the project.

Following a recruitment process there were two very good candidates who had project management experience. Following approval from the Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive the decision was taken to appoint both candidates into the two project officer roles. One post will be in situ until the end of the project (March 2024) and the second post is for

two years. Therefore there are no budget implications as a result of this decision. Both candidates will be starting their roles on the 29th November leaving the current post holder an opportunity to handover the projects.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

There are no legal implications.

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

Appendices