

Thursday, 23 February 2023

**Report of the Leader of the Council**

**FHSF Quarterly Update**

**Exempt Information**

None

**Purpose**

To update the Committee on the progress of the Future High Streets Fund programme.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended:

1. To endorse the report

**Executive Summary**

The project has progressed well since the last update, with Armac starting on site for the Co-op retail store demolition and with tenders for the main contractor for the Flex, Middle Entry improvements, Enterprise Centre and Peel Café underway. Progress has been made with the Market Street Properties and Castle Bridge designs. Please see below for a detailed update on each project area.

**Projects**

**College Quarter:** The South Staffordshire College planning application was approved subject to conditions and the signing of a legal agreement in October. A tender process via the Pagabo procurement framework commenced on 9<sup>th</sup> September, with a successful contractor appointed in December for the new build.

Armac commenced the Co-op retail store demolition at the end of September 2022. They are currently forecast to finish the demolition in March 2023.

The tender for the main works for the Enterprise Centre is live, with returns from contractors expected the second week of January. A preferred contractor will be selected at the end of February. The strip out of the building will be undertaken by Armac and will enable works on the refurbishment of the building to begin. The strip will be completed in March 2023.

Landscape Architects Node have finalised designs for the public realm in St Editha's Square, factoring in market provision and events space in line with the FHSF bid outputs. A meeting was held with the TBC Arts and Events team to review the

designs and allow them to comment on suitability for future events, in line with the desired outcomes outlined in the FHSF bid. A planning application for the landscaping across the FHSF sites will be submitted in early 2023.

The St Editha's Canopy was removed in November.

### **Middle Entry:**

The legal agreement with Peer Group for the acquisition of the Middle Entry units is now complete. RIBA stage 3 designs for the Flex building have been approved by Programme Board and the planning application has been submitted and will be determined at January's Planning Committee meeting.

Landscape architects Node have been appointed to draft designs for the public realm area in front of the Flex building. Designs were submitted alongside the planning application.

**Castle Gateway:** The planning application for Peel Café has been approved. The tender for the refurbishment is live and a preferred contractor will be selected at the end of February. RIBA Stage 3 designs have now been approved by Programme Board. TBC's solicitor, Freeths are drafting the legal agreement for the assets transfer with Nationwide and are in discussion with their solicitors.

Moving onto Market Street, the heritage structural engineer released a finalised recommendation report in October which detailed further surveys and opening up works required. Due to the heritage listing of the buildings, the proposed schedule of works has been discussed with the conservation officer to understand what can be undertaken. Designs are progressing based on the report's structural recommendation. A specialised heritage contractor will be required for the refurbishment and a bespoke tender will commence once a final design solution has been agreed.

Ongoing surveys will gather the required information to plan the demolition of the current Nationwide building. The lead contractor will produce a demolition procurement strategy for this area. Node have produced a design for the Castle Gateway area that will be finalised and submitted as part of the landscaping planning application in early 2023. Part of the public realm area will be adopted and as such Staffordshire County Highways will need to be involved in discussion once designs have been finalised. A site meeting with the team is planned for the end of January.

As part of the work to widen Castle Bridge, it has been noted that Western Power Distribution (WPD) have existing electrical cables pinned to the underside of the bridge which will need to be relocated. We have now reached an agreement with WPD that allows us to keep the cables in their current location and avoids having to relocate services. The current focus is to engage with a bridge consultant to start the process of delivering a bridge in the planned location in terms of fabrication options and logistics. Discussions have been held with the McBains structural team to find the best options to span the gateway whilst minimising any impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument. The current timetable will be to plan these works between September and November.

### **Engagement and Communications**

Meetings with businesses and interested parties affected by the upcoming works are being scheduled. Comms strategy is discussed at the monthly delivery team meeting updates, allowing the FHSF project team and comms team to update on progress and potential press releases. The TBC comms team are liaising with the College on upcoming press releases and the hoarding for their site.

### **Budget and Timescales**

The cost plan has been reviewed at Stage 3 and will continue to be refined as detailed designs are developed and survey results indicate the scope of works required. An updated cost plan has been issued and presented to the TBC Finance team and Programme Board. Whilst forecast construction costs are c.£2m higher than expected due to inflation and the rising cost of materials, the continued review of the cost plan and input from contractors during the tender process will determine the real costs associated with the works.

There are c.£2m in contingency funds allocated across the Programme to mitigate risks associated with the Programme of works. The contingency funds allocated to risks across the Programme are continually reviewed as new survey information becomes available and can shed light on what are likely risks and associated costs versus what can be reduced.

An updated Programme was issued by McBains with key planning, tender and start on site dates included. The TBC team continues to review progress with McBains weekly and report progress against key milestones to Programme Board.

### **Resource Implications**

There are no resource implications as a result of this report.

### **Legal/Risk Implications Background**

There are no legal issues

### **Equalities Implications**

There are no equalities issues

### **Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)**

The impact of the Future High Streets Fund programme on sustainability is considered by the consultancy team when designing and implementing the projects.

### **Background Information**

None

### **Report Author**

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**List of Background Papers**

None

**Appendices**

None