

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	21 July 2016
Title of report:	Hereford city centre improvements
Report by:	Cabinet member transport and roads

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

NOTICE has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards affected

Central, Greyfriars, and Widemarsh

Purpose

To consider consultation feedback and approve the Hereford city centre improvements delivery programme including on street parking in Hereford.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) The High Town public realm scheme shown in appendix A to the report be approved for phased implementation;**
- (b) Funding of up to £1.6m be allocated from within the existing highways and transport capital budgets within the approved capital programme to enable the delivery of phase 1 of the High Town public realm scheme as set out in appendix B to the report to be delivered in 2016/17 and the schemes identified in (c) and (d) below. Subject to funding being available, further phases be included in future public realm annual plans from 2017/18 until the schemes are completed;**
- (c) a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) be promoted to enable the introduction of on-street parking charges together with appropriate consequential changes to existing restrictions in the streets listed in paragraph 12 of this report and that authority is delegated to the assistant director environment and place to finalise the details required to commence the formal consultation process, and that, subject to the consideration of any representations received, take the necessary**

- operational decisions required to implement an appropriate TRO; and,
- (d) public consultation be carried out in relation to the potential introduction of residents parking schemes within residential areas to the west of the A49 trunk road between the River Wye and Widemarsh Common and the introduction of a cycle contraflow on St Owen Street as shown in Appendix C to the report.

Alternative options

- 1 The proposals outlined in this report are inter-related and aim to improve the city centre and encourage economic vitality whilst also promoting active and sustainable forms of transport. However, three alternative options have been identified.
- 2 Firstly that not all elements of the recommended improvements for the city centre outlined in this report are delivered. Whilst it would be possible to progress the elements individually or not at all, this is not recommended as the package of measures proposed are inter-related and together form a comprehensive set of proposals to improve the retail environment whilst promoting active travel and effectively managing access and parking of vehicles within the area. It is considered that not proceeding with all elements would undermine the overall objectives of the scheme to promote economic vitality within the city centre and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3 Secondly, an option could be to reduce the area covered and standard of the proposed refurbishment scheme. This is not recommended as this could compromise the attractiveness of the Hightown area with different types and standards of pavements in close proximity and would weaken the benefits to the economy that the full refurbishment scheme could provide. It would also result in continued maintenance problems associated with areas left untreated. Recent experience gained through the implementation of Widemarsh Street refurbishment has shown that the effective use of high quality materials can reduce ongoing maintenance costs and produces a much more attractive street environment. As such this option is not recommended.
- 4 Thirdly, not to progress any improvements to High Town. This option is not recommended because the council has given commitments to invest in improvements to the historic retail centre of the city maintaining its attractiveness to shoppers and visitors and supporting the local economy from the heart of the county.

Reasons for recommendations

- 5 The proposals support the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and aim to support the local economy.

Key considerations

- 6 In order to support the local economy, enhance the city centre retail environment and reduce the revenue maintenance costs of the public realm, proposals for a range of improvements within the historic centre of Hereford were subject to a wide ranging public consultation. The proposals included a capital investment in a refurbishment scheme for the High Town central retail area to be delivered in phases to improve the retail environment and bring the public realm in this area up to a similar standard as Widemarsh Street and the Old Market development. In addition, the consultation covered the introduction of on-street parking charges, the extension of residents parking schemes to further areas adjacent to the city centre and outline proposals for the provision of a contraflow cycle scheme in St Owens Street.
- 7 These proposals form part of the overall vision for the growth of Hereford city as part of the overall economic plan for the county. The growth of Hereford could include further retail development at the site of the Old Market, urban village development,

- redevelopment of the Buttermarket and development of a university campus across the city.
- 8 The growth of Hereford city will include a number of major projects over the coming years including
- Hereford transport package (Hereford Bypass)
 - Hereford city centre transport package (city link road)
 - South Wye transport package (southern link road)
 - City centre improvements
- 9 These projects will support economic growth by enabling the development of new homes, ensuring the accessibility of the enterprise zone attracting new business and therefore creating jobs and creating an attractive shopping and leisure environment for residents and visitors.
- 10 A detailed consultation report has been prepared which is contained in appendix D of this report. All responses have been considered in developing final proposals. Key findings of the report are summarised as follows:
- 64% of respondents supported improvements to the city centre
 - 55% of respondents agreed that the scheme would bring economic benefits
 - 61% of respondents supported the phased delivery of the scheme
 - Over 60% of respondents supported the use of high quality paving, high quality street furniture and the increase in cycle parking in the city centre area
 - Over 70% of respondents supported improved street lighting, improved signage and high quality landscaping and planting.
- 11 There was a high level of response to the online survey. This feedback route is often favoured by younger people as a higher proportion of younger people engage with social media.
- 12 The High Town public realm refurbishment scheme has a high degree of support and has been developed by a multi-disciplinary team which includes the Hereford Business Improvement District (BID), markets and fairs and economic development to ensure the proposals are informed by these key stakeholders. Phase 1 has been developed to a level of detail that means it can proceed to construction.
- 13 Feedback regarding the desire for quality materials directly influenced the scheme design. The whole scheme extents can be seen in appendix A and the phase 1 extents can be found in appendix B of this report. The capital investment in this scheme will improve the quality of the public realm in this area and through the use of high quality materials and construction will contribute to reducing ongoing revenue maintenance costs in the future, as has been experienced following the refurbishment of Widemarsh Street. Enabling works are currently progressing on site and this has enabled the introduction of proper parking controls on Widemarsh Street in advance of completion of the works. Therefore cabinet approval is sought to commence phased delivery of the refurbishment scheme which would immediately follow these works in August. It is anticipated that phase 1 works will be completed before the Christmas shopping period later this year.
- 14 A wide range of responses were received in response to parking and traffic order elements of the city centre improvements consultation. Responses were received both

for and against therefore it is requested that cabinet approve formal consultation commencing to take these proposals forward. Proposals for on street parking in the following streets are essential to the successful operation of the city centre improving traffic flows around the city centre and maintaining adequate parking supply to support the city's economy.

- Aubrey Street,
- Bridge Street,
- Broad Street,
- Gaol Street,
- Harrison Street,
- King Street,
- St John Street,
- St Owen Street (west of its Bath Street junction).

- 15 The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) formal consultation process will allow response and objections to be considered further in the development of the parking and traffic order proposals.
- 16 There was strong support from local members and respondents for residents parking during this consultation and therefore approval is sought to progress.
- 17 St Owen Street cycle contraflow has been considered and consulted on over a number of years. It was outlined in the recent city centre Improvements consultation and further design work has been progressed. Cabinet is asked to approve consultation commencing on a detailed design for St Owen Street as outlined in appendix C of this report.
- 18 The proposed package of measures are inter-related and together form a comprehensive set of proposals to improve the city centre environment whilst promoting active travel and effectively managing access and parking of vehicles within the area. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve all recommendations.

Community impact

- 19 The proposed city centre improvements detailed in this report will provide better access, bring economic benefits to the city centre and reduce on-going maintenance costs and issues. By improving signage it will enhance pedestrian movement and de-clutter the area, improve the space and liveability of the area and provide an improved consistent approach to city centre.
- 20 The introduction of on street parking charges in the city will assist management of parking in the city centre and improve traffic flows and allow greater access for sustainable transport modes.
- 21 The extension of resident parking schemes will discourage inappropriate parking in residential streets adjacent to the city centre. It should also encourage visitors to make use of city centre car parks and reduce congestion and disruption in residential streets.
- 22 The delivery of the St Owen Street contraflow cycleway scheme will provide a dedicated and safe route for cyclists on a key route into the city centre. It will include designated crossing points for pedestrians and improve safety between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles on the street, as well as encourage sustainable modes of travel.

Equality duty

- 23 This proposal will support the council in demonstrating its commitments to the Equality duty. The council has been proactive in considering its Duty and consulted widely and this has meant that a number of significant issues have been raised by the Disabled community and will be acted upon.
- 24 Detailed discussions took place with Herefordshire Vision Links and Royal National College for the Blind to explain the detail of the refurbishment scheme and to obtain feedback.
- 25 Both were keen to ensure current vehicle movements restrictions in High Town were maintained and enforced to avoid problems for partially sighted users. Both provided detailed comments about street furniture and street lighting which will be incorporated into the detailed design and a review of cycle parking will be undertaken in response to comments. There was strong support to retain tactile arrangements in High town as this is used extensively for crossing and orientation purposes – this will inform the detail design. Care will also be taken to ensure layout of granite setts supports their continued use by visually impaired users.
- 26 The detailed design and delivery of this scheme will continue to include these groups to ensure the needs of their users are reflected in the completed scheme.

Financial implications

- 27 The implementation of a package of measures will require significant investment over several financial years. The speed of delivery is dependent on funding being available and priorities.
- 28 Expenditure during 2016/17 on phase 1 of the high town refurbishment is estimated as £1.1m. Expenditure during 2016/2017 on parking and St Owen Street improvements is estimated as £500K.
- 29 These costs can be contained within the current capital programme budgets. Local Transport capital funding (received from central government for use in 2016/17) is available for significant spend on assets for this type of large capital project. It cannot be used to fund revenue functions and as such this funding could not be reallocated to other public realm functions. Investment in high town should promote economic vitality in the city centre generating further income for the councils revenue programme.

Legal implications

- 30 The council, as traffic authority has powers to makes TROs under the various provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (as amended).
- 31 Temporary road closures, or restrictions, for construction works may be made under the provisions of section 14 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, for a period of up to 18 months, although this may be extended with the consent of the Secretary of State.
- 32 Proposed permanent TRO's, may be made by the council, as traffic authority, under the relevant provisions of the said 1984 Act, to include formal advertising in the press, and any objections received would be further considered before any final decision whether to make the proposed TRO with or without variations.

- 33 In this regard is noted that the assistant director environment and place will be given delegated authority to agree the proposals of the TRO to be subject to such formal consultation as outlined above.
- 34 A Section 58 notice will be served on completion of phase 1 and further phases of the scheme when delivered to prevent statutory undertakers works (other than emergency) in the area following the refurbishment works.

Risk management

- 35 If schemes are not progressed as a package the growth of the city centre and improvement to the city economy could be at risk as the public realm area deteriorates and on-going maintenance issues continue- this could discourage visitors and shoppers from coming into the City Centre. Lack of control of parking and cycle provision would adversely impact on local residents and reduce opportunities to promote sustainable transport.
- 36 A detailed risk register which highlights all project risks has been developed for the City Centre Improvements project. Risks are summarised, with proposed mitigating actions, assigned an owner and any cost associated is identified and agreed. Risk workshops are held on a regular basis to discuss and manage any risks as they occur.

Consultees

- 37 Public consultation took place from November 2015 to January 2016 in relation to draft proposals for a High Town Public Realm scheme together with related proposals to introduce on street parking charges to better control parking within the area, residents parking proposals in streets immediately surrounding residential areas which do not already benefit from such schemes and the potential for a cycle contraflow scheme in St Owens Street. Together these form a package of measures to improve the quality of the retail environment within the city centre, encourage active and sustainable forms of transport and reduce the impact of indiscriminate parking on local residents living close to the city centre. A public exhibition and consultation was held regarding the proposed City Centre Improvements – this included a two day public exhibition and a number of meetings with stakeholders. Whilst a range of views were expressed during public consultation and there were varying levels of support for the individual elements of the package, there was a generally high level of support for taking forward the proposed measures.
- 38 A consultation report has been produced which summarises the consultation and feedback and can be seen in Appendix D. The City Council and Hereford Bid team have expressed support for the scheme.

Appendices

Appendix A – High Town scheme extent

Appendix B - High Town phase 1

Appendix C – St Owen Street cycle contraflow

Appendix D – City centre improvements consultation report

Background papers

- None