



Title of report: City and Market Town Public Realm Investment

Decision maker: Cabinet member roads and regulatory services

Report by: Corporate Director – Economy & Environment

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Wards affected

Aylestone Hill, Belmont Rural, Bobblestock, Bromyard Bringsty, Bromyard West, Central, College, Dinedor Hill, Eign Hill, Greyfriars, Hinton and Hunderton, Holmer, Kings Acre, Kington, Ledbury North, Ledbury South, Ledbury West, Leominster East, Leominster North and Rural, Leominster South, Leominster West, Newton Farm, Redhill, Ross East, Ross North, Ross West, Saxon Gate, Tupsley, Whitecross, Widemarsh.

Purpose

To approve the 2025/26 £1.2m City and Market Town Public Realm Investment.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) approval is given to draw down the £1.2 million additional budget allocated in the capital investment budget for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment for 2025/26; and
- b) Delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment to take all operational decisions, including the agreement or otherwise of appropriate schemes that after following the process set out in paragraph 4, may be requested by the City and Town Councils and their subsequent delivery route, over the lifetime of the project, to deliver the investment set out in recommendation (a).

Alternative options

1. That this additional investment is not made and the Council continues to maintain Herefordshire's highways and improve the public realm in accordance with sound asset management practices but wholly within the maintenance allocations and grant funding made available by Central Government.

Key considerations

2. On 7 February 2025, Council approved a Capital Programme Review and Update report. As part of the report, a £1.2 million additional budget was allocated for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment during 2025/26.
3. The £1.2 million additional budget for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment was provided for targeted investment in highway maintenance and public realm improvements relating to accessibility, overall condition and active travel across the city and market towns that are not currently planned to be delivered during 2025/26 as part of existing investment plans or to supplement existing s106 funding that is insufficient to deliver the required projects. £200k of investment would be provided for each of Hereford City and the market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.
4. It is intended that officers work with each of the city and town councils to help them identify appropriate, affordable and deliverable highway maintenance and public realm improvements that meet the requirements of the original business case associated with the funding being made available. A list of agreed and costed schemes would then be presented for final approval by the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment, following which Herefordshire Council would then deliver the necessary works within the 2025/26 financial year, through appropriate routes to market, the final approach being agreed as set out in recommendation (b).

Community impact

5. The £1.2 million additional budget allocated for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment contributes to the Council Plan 2024-2028 ambitions, to expand and maintain the transport infrastructure in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county.

Environmental Impact

6. The investment seeks to deliver the council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the Council Plan 2024-2028.
 - a) Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county.
 - b) Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity
 - c) Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.
7. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors

we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

8. The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification and includes appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions. This will be managed and reported through the ongoing contract management.

Equality duty

9. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
10. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this activity and it has been found to have low impact for equality.
11. Due to the potential impact of this decision being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision about this activity:
 - a. That the needs of road users/residents with protected characteristics (particularly age and disability) will be prioritised alongside other factors such as asset condition, affordability and deliverability when deciding on which maintenance and improvement activities to take forward.

Resource implications

12. The £1.2 million additional budget allocated for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment relates to accessibility, overall condition and active travel. It is proposed that works will be undertaken through either through the Council's Highways and Public Realm Schemes Framework or through the existing Public Realm Contract, the final approach being agreed as set out in recommendation (b).
13. Unique project codes will be allocated so that progress can be monitored and reviewed to enable reporting to relevant capital programme boards. The £1.2 million additional investment was approved at Council in February 2025 to be funded from corporate borrowing.
14. There are no implications to revenue funding as any future maintenance is managed within the existing programme and budget, however, capital investment should ease the revenue budget reducing the need to undertake additional repairs over the whole life of the asset. The interest for borrowing was approved at full council from the corporate revenue budget during budget setting.

Capital cost of project	2025/26	2026/27	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
City and Market Town Public Realm Investment	1,200	0	0	1,200
TOTAL	1,200	0	0	1,200

Funding streams	2025/26	2026/27	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate Funded Borrowing	1,200	0	0	1,200
TOTAL	1,200	0	0	1,200

Legal implications

15. The delegation to the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment allows the officer to commission the delivery of the project.

Risk management

16. The £1.2 million additional budget allocated for City and Market Town Public Realm Investment was approved at Full Council on 7 February 2025 and will be delivered during 2025/26.
17. Any risks will be managed at service level and escalated in accordance with the Risk Management Plan.
18. Risk / Opportunities:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Demand exceeds available budget.	Demand will be managed between officers and the City and Market Towns
Environmental issues / constraints restrict project delivery in year.	Review and reprofile as required.
Deliverability due to required decision making.	The City and Market Towns will be required to agree priorities by given dates.

Consultees

19. As part of the revised consultation process for key decisions, a Political Group Consultation (PGC) was undertaken on 20th June 2025 with Officers outlining the proposed investment. Through the PGC process, clarification was sought as to the purpose of the funding and it was confirmed that it was being provided for targeted investment in highway maintenance and public realm improvements relating to accessibility, overall condition and active travel. As a result of the PGC, it was agreed that officers would work with the City and each of the Market Towns to agree schemes that were deliverable and met the funding criteria.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.