

Item

Environmental Improvement Programme



To:

North Area Committee 14 December 2017

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Arbury, East Chesterton, Kings Hedges, West Chesterton

Non-Key Decision:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report reviews progress in delivering the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) within North area and outlines decisions needed around future spending priorities.

2. Recommendations

The North Area Committee is recommended to:

1. Note progress, and delays where experienced, in delivering the identified programme of projects since 2011-12
2. Support the allocation of £6,616 in 2017-18 towards the provision of 40 summer hanging baskets in Chesterton High Street and Campkin Road
3. Determine whether to continue to pursue those projects that have proven problematic (as listed in paragraphs 5.4 and Appendic C)

4. Determine whether to continue with a project to improve the environment within Craister Court
5. Consider the allocation of remaining EIP funding available in 2017-18 to further project applications
6. Approve those projects selected for implementation, subject to them being viable, obtaining consents as necessary, positive consultation and final approval by Capital Programme Board and Ward Councillors where required.

3. Background

- 3.1. The creation of direct, lasting and noticeable improvements to the appearance of the public realm environment has been at the heart of the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) since its introduction in 2004. The programme is supported up to and including year 2018-19 with an annual capital budget which is split across the council's four areas depending on population, with devolved decision making to Area Committees to allocate the budget available to project applications each year.
- 3.2 The programme application form and eligibility criteria are attached at **Appendix B.**

4. Review of Principal Achievements

- 4.1 Since 2011-12, some 37 projects have been allocated EIP funding in North area with a good spread across each of the four wards. Of these, 25 (68%) have been completed, two abandoned, two are on-hold and 8 not fully completed. Development and delivery of the programme has been undertaken by the Council's Streets and Open Spaces service, in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council's highways teams, as necessary.
- 4.2 Progress in implementing previous programme commitments is outlined in **Appendix C**. Some of these have been dependent on staffing availability within the County Council's highways service and other permissions necessary, and regrettably there have been delays in the completion of some projects.
- 4.3 A review of the programme was undertaken during 2015 to put more emphasis on smaller, community supported projects that can be developed and delivered more quickly. Applications for projects relating to core transport or highways functions, and infrastructure, are now encouraged via the County Council's Local Highways Improvements (LHI) programme. These amendments have, on the whole, assisted delivery since 2015 with steady progress and associated budget spend being achieved.

5. Scrutiny of Programme Delivery and Value

- 5.1 Whilst the programme is funded for the current year and provisionally next, the Council has been reviewing its spending priorities and has consequently further sought to ensure good value through its investment in environmental improvements. Delivery has generally been good across the four areas and the projects well received, but the complexity and dependencies involved with some have presented challenges that have proven difficult to overcome. This has had a consequent disproportionate impact on staffing resource in comparison with other programme work.
- 5.2 Efficient delivery of the Environmental Improvement Programme across all areas in recent years has led to savings against project allocations each year. Additionally, some projects have been abandoned, or

become delayed. The overall effect is that significant capital reserves have built up in all areas. Some projects, however, have contributed towards an increase in revenue operating costs.

- 5.3 The Council is currently undertaking a service review of Streets and Open Spaces with the objectives of raising standards, improving delivery and reducing duplication and operating costs. It has become clear that, moving forward, environmental improvements might be better focused towards achieving broader corporate and service objectives.
- 5.4 In light of this, the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) / Executive have been considering the best way forward with some ten projects city-wide, along with some potential further adaptations to ensure best value from future programme investment. Within North area, Executive Councillors have requested that the following schemes be reported back to the Area Committee seeking a steer on whether they should continue to be pursued, or alternatively abandoned with un-used funds becoming available for re-allocation to further projects:

North Area:

(References numbers as schemes listed in Appendix C)

(19) - Green End Road pedestrian crossing (£2,500) – review in light of developing Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) proposals

(20) - Green End Road tree planting (£8,500) - review in light of developing GCP proposals

- 5.5 A project to improve the environment within Craister Court (listed as scheme 11 in Appendix C), in Kings Hedges ward, although apparently previously abandoned, may still be considered needed.

6. 2017-18 Year Applications

- 6.1 The budget available to develop and deliver new EIP projects across North area was reduced from £59,200 in 2014-15 to £50,320 annually from 2016 to 2020. This is in order to support the city-wide £30,000 contribution to ensure an LHI programme can be delivered across Cambridge, where the majority of costs involved are met by the County Council. Further, some £6,612 of the annual budget has been allocated

in recent years to support the provision of summer hanging baskets in Chesterton High Street and, more latterly, in Campkin Road.

- 6.2 There is, however, a significant capital reserve in North area rolled forward from previous years. Whilst the exact position is dependent of the final costs of schemes currently being delivered and recharges processed, latest estimates suggest this could be in the region of £35,000. Overall, therefore, there may be in the region of £80,000 available for allocation to new projects in North area from this year.
- 6.3 Applications for new EIP projects were invited between July and September 2017; with a significant number of new suggestions submitted within North area. Each has been assessed by officers for eligibility and practicality; including an estimate of the likely costs involved in delivering those projects considered, at this stage, to be potentially feasible. The 21 potential new projects are listed in the table attached as **Appendix A**.
- 6.4 A suggestion to consider continuing with a project to improve the environment within Craister Court has come forward from one of the local ward councillors.
- 6.5 Some of the suggestions received, whilst potentially viable, require further investigation or are dependent on external factors and may, therefore, not prove quite ready to proceed at the current time. An additional column has been added to the Appendix A table identifying where there may be delivery risks or other uncertainty, with supporting comments.
- 6.6 The total anticipated cost of the suggested new projects considered worthwhile developing further (£73,500) is, however, less than the funds currently available within North area. Area Committee is therefore able to support adding them all to the forward programme, should they wish. Members are, however, asked to recognise the large number of potential new projects and that many require detailed work, and that therefore not all may be deliverable within a 12 month annual cycle.

7. Proposed Way Forward

- 7.1 Area Committee needs to determine whether to continue to pursue those legacy projects listed in paragraph 5.4 that have thus far proven difficult to develop and deliver. These may still be considered necessary, and prove viable, dependent on other works under development in the area.
- 7.2 Area Committee also needs to determine whether to continue with a project to improve the environment within Craister Court (Kings Hedges) which was a previous funding commitment, and for which there appears renewed local appetite.
- 7.3 The Committee is asked to consider supporting the new projects listed in Appendix A that are considered viable at this time, for further development, and implementation - subject to them proving viable, obtaining consents as necessary, positive consultation and final approval by the Council's Capital Programme Board and Ward Councillors where required.

8. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

This is an annual capital programme of projects currently funded up to and including 2018-19; with significant additional funding available re-phased from previous years. Those new projects identified as being viable at this time, provided they are developed carefully, are not anticipated to generate any significant revenue implications for the City Council. Where projects are on the public highway or hard-surfaced definitive footpaths, ongoing management and maintenance is the responsibility of the County Council.

(b) Staffing Implications

Historically a small number of projects have proven difficult to develop and deliver for reasons as laid out in this report, and have had a disproportionate impact on staffing resource in comparison with other programme work. The programme is under review to ensure it can be managed and delivered without the requirement for additional staffing resource.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

Environmental improvements are prioritised across all areas proportionate to population and in accordance with locally identified need. They can be enjoyed by all and do not discriminate between any particular user groups. All schemes are designed to accommodate those less able and / or mobile. The overall impact of investment in such facilities is therefore considered to be positive. An Equalities Impact Assessment is included as **Appendix D**.

(d) Environmental Implications

The programme aims to preserve and improve the quality of the natural and built public realm environment across Cambridge, in a manner that does not contribute towards climate change and leaves a positive legacy for future generations. The overall impact of the programme on the environment within Cambridge is therefore rated as +M (positive; Medium).

(e) Procurement Implications

Improvement to infrastructure facilities within Cambridge are, dependent on their nature, scope, scale and complexity either delivered in-house utilising existing resources within the Streets & Open Spaces service, or via existing framework contract arrangements (such as with Skanska for highways related services). Other schemes may best be procured and constructed via individual competitive tender processes.

(f) Community Safety Implications

Environmental improvement of the outdoor public realm encourages use and promotes face to face contact, reducing social exclusion and isolation. The programme is thus considered to have a positive impact on community safety.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

Professional and public stakeholder engagement and consultation will take place, as appropriate, to help shape the recommended projects and ensure they are fully focused on and targeted towards local needs.

9. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

None.

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Potential EIP Schemes for 2017-18

Appendix B – EIP Application Form and Eligibility Criteria

Appendix C – Progress of Existing Prioritised EIP Schemes

Appendix D - Equalities Impact Assessment

11. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact John Richards, Senior Engineer, tel: 01223 458525, email: john.richards@cambridge.gov.uk.