

Briefing Note on Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP)

Requested By: West Central Area Committee – 5 July 2018

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This note outlines progress in delivering the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) within West Central area.

2. Recommendations

The West Central Area Committee is asked to:

1. Note progress, and delays where experienced, in delivering the prioritised programme of projects for the area thus far
2. Note the outcome of further investigation undertaken since December 2017 on the three applications not yet prioritised
3. Notes the indicative level of funding not yet committed to projects across the area
4. Notes work under way to consider the forward focus and direction for investment in EIP

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 the current 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 West Central Area Committee last considered progress with project development and delivery, along with applications for new schemes, on 6 December 2017. The Committee determined to:

- abandon two previously committed projects due to changes in circumstances and need
- continue to seek to achieve two further committed projects still considered worthwhile
- allocate funding towards four additional new projects for development and delivery
- support a further project application round early in 2018
- request more information on those projects not considered ready to proceed at that time, the level of devolved funding remaining within West Central, and options under consideration for the future direction of EIP.

4. Project Delivery Progress and Capacity

- 4.1 The report to Area Committee in December 2017 identified that the majority (some 42 out of 51, or 82%) of projects prioritised in West Central from 2011-12 to that date had been completed successfully. 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 where necessary.
- 4.2 Nevertheless, difficulties had been experienced in realising some aspirations particularly where these had complex dependencies; including external permissions needed. Staffing changes, with limitations in expertise and capacity, have further exacerbated the difficulties across all areas.
- 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.
- 4.4 However, some 37 new EIP projects were added to the prioritised programme for development and delivery by the four Area Committees

in the December 2017/ January 2018 round. Progress is being made across all areas and many of these new commitments are under development or have already been completed, however there are currently circa 50 committed EIP projects still to be realised city-wide.

- 4.5 Within West Central area, the current position with the development and delivery of the remaining prioritised schemes is identified in **Appendix C**. The outcome of further investigation undertaken thus far on the three aspirations unable to be prioritised by Area Committee in December 2017 is identified in **Appendix A**, and **Appendix B**.
- 4.6 Latest indications suggest that remaining schemes 2 and 6 from Appendix C, for Grantchester Road and Parker's Piece, may require additional funding beyond that thus far allocated in order to complete them to a standard desirable to local councillors and other key stakeholders (including the County Council).

5. Review of Programme Delivery and Value

- 5.1 Existing committed funding for EIP concludes in the current year 2018-19 and the Council has been reviewing the future focus and direction of the programme in order to inform a decision on future investment. This work has considered the benefits and successes to date, along with the challenges faced – including delivery.
- 5.2 Further amendment to the composition and scope of the programme will be a strategic one, determined at Scrutiny and not Area Committees, and officers are tasked with reporting back to the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT)/ Executive forum further to the item considered during late 2017.

6. Funding Position

- 6.1 Efficient delivery of the Environmental Improvement Programme across all areas in recent years has led to savings against project allocations each year. Additionally, some aspirations have been abandoned, become delayed, or been funded elsewhere. 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 which remains something of a concern moving forward.

- 6.2 The budget available to develop and deliver new EIP projects across West Central area was reduced from £42,800 in 2014-15 to £36,380 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.
- 6.3 However, there is a significant capital reserve rolled forward from previous years. Whilst the exact position is dependent of the final costs of schemes currently being delivered, latest estimates suggest this could be in the region of £114,000. Accounting for the additional funding available in 2018-19, therefore, there may be up to £150,000 or so thus far not committed to new projects across West Central area.
- 6.4 Given the high level of funding available for new EIP projects in the area, allied with the difficulty moving forward with remaining aspirations at this time in Appendix A, it is suggested that an additional £5,000 to £10,000 of further funding may be beneficial to complete the two schemes listed in 4.6. Officers will report back when needs are clearer.
- 6.5 Whilst further funding allocations are available in the current year 2018-19, some Executive Councillors have been sensitive about inviting further project applications until more of the existing programme has been completed and officer delivery capacity becomes available.

7. Proposed Way Forward

- 7.1 Officers will continue to progress with the development and delivery of existing committed projects across West Central area. The Council's SLT/ Executive are expected to consider the future scope and direction for investment in EIP in the coming months. This will take in to account levels of current funding not yet committed to projects, staffing capacity and options available to accelerate spend.

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. Some prioritised projects have, in the past, contributed to

increased operating costs and this is being considered as part of the current strategic review. 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 future investment can be managed and delivered without the requirement for additional staffing resource.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

Environmental improvements have been 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 for the programme has been undertaken and is available as a supporting document.

(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 pricing/ 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.

(g) Consultation and communication considerations

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

9. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this briefing note:

None.

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of EIP applications requiring further investigation

Appendix B – Position statement on provision of free drinking water

Appendix C – Progress of remaining prioritised EIP Schemes

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.