

TITLE	Woodley Town Centre (North Precinct) Improvement Programme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 27 October 2016
WARD	Bulmershe and Whitegates
DIRECTOR	Josie Wragg, Interim Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	Angus Ross, Executive Member for Environment

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Improved community and recreational facilities within Woodley precinct along with aesthetic enhancements that will encourage; greater footfall, improved perception, reduce fear of crime and potentially encouraging economic development.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) agrees to the release of £250,500 of Section 106 (s106) contributions (from Woodley developments only) to fund the regeneration proposals for Woodley Town Centre;
- 2) notes the approval of third party funding of £90,000 as outlined in the financial section of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The north end of Woodley precinct has suffered from a lack of footfall due to limited investment and facilities. A partnership project has brought together key stakeholders in the area to design and fund a scheme to enhance the area, drive up footfall and increase the potential for economic development.

Wokingham Borough Council WBC, Woodley Town Council (WTC) and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative (WTCMI) have created a proposal and obtained commitment of up to £90,000 from other funding sources that will enable the regeneration to take place with the help of £250,500 of s106 contributions all from developments in the Woodley area. These contributions were earmarked for the scheme in 2015 but now need formal approval for release.

A delivery committee was established in 2015, which includes the Executive Member for Environment, Councillor Angus Ross. This committee will oversee the completion of the work, delivered through the WBC Capital Programme Team.

Background

Woodley precinct is divided into two areas, north and south, split by the disabled parking bays. The north end is cluttered with a mismatch of street furniture which restricts the use of the space, and hosts a 1970's style pagoda which has low usage due to its lack of flexibility.

The area has limited footfall compared with the popular south end, and is generally considered an area to walk through with little to encourage shoppers to stop, linger and browse.

Woodley Town Council have led discussions on the design and regeneration of this area with other stakeholders, including; WTCMI, WTC and other user groups.

Funding has been made available from a variety of sources. The WTCMI offered £30,000 to support improvement of the north end of the precinct and received an addition £10,000 from Mary Portas Town Team funding in 2014. In 2015 WBC also identified and earmarked £250,500 in s106 contributions to support improvement works.

A delivery committee was established in 2015 combining representatives from all main stakeholders, including the WBC Executive Member for Environment (Cllr Angus Ross). The committee has produced and costed a brief to deliver the following improvements;

- Removal of the existing pagoda and replacement with a new multi-use performance shelter in a new location adjacent to the pub car park. This will provide the flexibility and space for commercial or larger community events.
- Removal of the old street furniture and replacement with new coordinated street furniture to complement the brushed steel benches already installed in the south precinct, while enhancing the lighting of the area. This will bring the north end up to the standard of the southern end, make the area more welcoming and in keeping with the overall design of the precinct.
- Position the street furniture to create a family / community zone with play markings so families have a place to meet and linger. This will provide space to attract people in to the area, and support greater footfall and opportunity for businesses.
- Create a flexible open space that can be used for community and commercial events e.g. concerts, pop-up dining etc. This will provide a space to support local priorities and initiatives, provide an addition attraction to draw footfall and provide an opportunity to generate income.

Analysis of Issues

The works incorporate a number of small projects covering services across the Environment Directorate, which will regenerate the northern precinct. Each project is relatively small, but overall will have a significant impact on the look, feel and function of the north end of the precinct.

The space will become warm and inviting during the winter months through the creative use of lighting, while making it look and feel safer and so increasing footfall and with it the viability of the businesses in and around that area. The addition of a space for children will also support this, adding a new attraction to draw people in.

In addition, the works will provide a flexible community space that will be managed and maintained by WTC, allowing an additional range of events and activities that will bring people in to the space and support other agendas e.g. health, wellbeing, income generation, and community interests.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£340,000	Yes	s106 and 3 rd party contributions
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	£0	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	£0	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

In addition to the s106 contributions, which are from developments within Woodley, there is additional funding, including;

- £30,000 from WTCMI
- £10,000 from Mary Portas
- £50,000 from Woodley Town Council (to be confirmed)

As per finance regulation 12.1.17.8, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Environment approve the allocation of the additional 3rd party funding to this project, £90,000 in total.

The costs for managing the project as well as any associated costs, such as planning permission or licenses, have been factored into the budget.

Cross-Council Implications

There are implications across Environment, Leisure and Highways services, all of which have been involved in the design and planning stages, and will be included in delivery of the works.

There are also implications on the Capital Programme Team (part of Operational Property) who will project manage the delivery of the works.

List of Background Papers

N/A

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