

Agenda Item 34.

TITLE	Market Place Regeneration Interim Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2018
WARD	Wescott;
DIRECTOR	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Interim Sarah Hollamby

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Improved processes and procedures in executing public works in the highway and reassurance about the safety of the Market Place Environmental Improvement Scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee note that the: -

1. Independent lessons learned report is due to report by mid-December;
2. The road safety audit will be undertaken as soon as the Peach Street element of the works have been completed, likely to be at or before mid-December; and both reports should be possible to report to the January 2019 meeting.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The independent lessons learned report was commissioned after an extended period of procurement due to a lack of takers for the commission. The report has now successfully been commissioned with an independent party and is due for receipt by mid-December.

The initial road safety audits have not flagged any actions, however they have highlighted areas to consider. The final report cannot be undertaken until the Peach Street works have been completed and we are expecting an outcome in similar timescales.

Background

The Wokingham Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (and Masterplan) 2010 sets out the background to the regeneration and public engagement for works to the Town Centre. Page 72 shows the masterplan for the Town – Market Square: - .

Figure 34: Illustrative Masterplan, Key Diagram



On page 87 it refers to aspirations in the context of Market Place, marked with a red star above: - *“Market Place will remain the primary focus for the town centre and its most significant formal square. In respect of the town centre’s historic pattern the form of the space itself will remain unaltered. A united materials palette will be used across Market Place and Denmark Street to unify street and square, strengthen pedestrian footfall through the town centre’s extended retail core and provide a higher quality setting for markets and other events.”*

The scheme was a jointly funded project between Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Town Council. Market Place is at the heart of Wokingham, it is a sensitive public assembly and shopping location used for events, market and sitting out. The paving scheme is a high quality York stone and granite finish that aims to increase and enhance the pedestrian user environment whilst taming the traffic and comprises a key element in the regeneration of the Town as a multi visit longer stay centre supporting wider growth of the town/Borough.

Analysis of Issues

Wokingham Borough and Town Councils are aware that some people have raised safety concerns over the new look Market Place and as you would expect the Councils have already proactively commenced a period of assessing the operation of the space for safety purposes during this settling in period. We have also commissioned an independent lessons learned report.

Although the redesigned market place has received a lot of positive feedback and has already hosted a successful Heritage Day and Market Celebration (September 15), the councils are not complacent about potential safety issues. In order to make fully sure we will consider any measures which may be necessary and those accessibility and disability groups and representatives who were consulted over the original design will be brought back together to review the scheme as it is actually working.

The borough council also commissioned an interim safety audit to see if any immediate action was required, however this did not find any measures were needed immediately and recommended any changes await the full review. The interim safety report recommends letting the scheme settle down and giving further consideration after a full review and that two areas would need monitoring:

- (i) the brass studs used to mark the signalled pedestrian crossing may not stand out enough, increasing the chance of pedestrians choosing to cross elsewhere, and
- (ii) the granite setts adjacent to the 60cm kerb may not stand out enough for pedestrians.

Any action necessary be agreed after the full report (which can only be carried out when the current works at the Peach Street / Broad Street junction are complete).

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)	£30k	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	None	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	None	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

Procedural

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

Wokingham Town Centre masterplan 2010

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