

REPORT TITLE: ENHANCING ST MAURICE'S COVERT - UPDATE

CABINET

12 SEPTEMBER 2017

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

20 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr Caroline Brook, Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

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WARD(S): ST MICHAEL

PURPOSE

In 2012, a report to Winchester Town Forum set out a number of measures to improve the presentation of the commercial centre of Winchester ([WTF176](#) – Streetscene in the Retail Centre, 12 September 2012 refers). This was in response to concerns raised by Members at that time about poor maintenance of commercial properties, pigeon nuisance and empty shops. In particular, Members felt that St Maurice's Covert was a missed opportunity, and should be enhanced to create an elegant and attractive feature on the High Street.

A public realm team consisting of the Council and the BID has facilitated a whole-council approach, and drawing on additional funding from the Winchester Town Account to help progress project work in this area by the Historic Environment Team.

Most recently, Members will be aware that efforts have been made to reduce the number of individual A boards in the centre of Winchester by replacing them with a series of three, strategically-positioned composite A boards and removing any others that appear ([Question 14](#), Full Council papers – 19 July 2017 refers)

This report provides an update on the ongoing enhancement project for St Maurice's, and is one of two reports on today's Cabinet agenda (see also CAB2971 – Trade Waste Initiative) demonstrating the Council's commitment to enhancing the vibrancy and presentation of Winchester's central shopping streets.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Cabinet:

That:

1. the package of priority actions for the St Maurice's Covert enhancement project and listed at paragraph 11.5 of the report be endorsed, and approved for delivery;

To Winchester Town Forum:

That:

1. the recommendations to Cabinet above be noted, and that Cabinet's role in taking forward these two initiatives which are of significant interest to the Members of Winchester Town Forum be welcomed.

IMPLICATIONS:1 COUNCIL STRATEGY OUTCOME

1.1 Improvements to the commercial heart of Winchester support the following outcomes:

a) 'Winchester will be a premier business destination'

Prioritise support for the ... tourism sector(s) – a well presented city is an attractive one for visitors, and encourages them to spend time and money in local shops and eateries.

Utilise our environment to drive business growth – the quality and appeal of Winchester's historic streetscene are important factors in attracting customers to local businesses.

b) 'Improving the quality of the District's environment'

By working with our partners and by using powers available to us, make Winchester a safe and pleasant place to live, work and visit – the City and County Councils have complementary powers to require improvements to commercial premises in order to enhance the experience of visitors/shoppers.

Work to change attitudes to waste, fly-tipping and littering and improve recycling levels – a combination of collaborative approaches and enforcement is undertaken to encourage behaviour by businesses that will bring about an improved environment in the City Centre

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Winchester Town Forum made an original allocation in the Town Account of £40,000 to support the St Maurice's enhancement project. Of this, £10,000 was the fee to produce a design scheme (commissioned in 2016/17) and £30,000 was intended to support delivery of the scheme.

2.2 The estimated costings were considered by Members as part of the report presented to Cabinet and to Winchester Town Forum in November and December 2016 (WTF247 refers). These originally ran as follows:

a)	Initial design costs (already spent)	£ 10,000
b)	Phases 1 & 2 delivery (i.e. the bulk of the enhancement works)	£170,000
c)	Professional fees and charge for phases 1 & 2	<u>£ 30,000</u>
	TOTAL	£210,000

- 2.3 Following the report in November/December and subsequent approval of the Council's budget in February 2017, funding for delivery of a number of elements of the scheme was approved as part of a phased approach:

Funding Source	Budget Contribution
Town Account – original allocation for scheme delivery	30,000
Town Account – additional allocation 2017/18	30,000
General Fund– 2017/18	50,000
Total Funding	110,000

- 2.4 Depending on the perceived success of the initial works, further phases could see the opening on a regular basis of the former church tower, and highways enhancements to Market Lane. This was estimated last November at a further cost of £105,000, but is not within the current scope of works. No further detailed costing work has been carried out and there is no budget allocation at present. Members are not asked to make any further commitment to future phases of work at this stage.

- 2.5 Members also approved the reappointment of architects ScottWhitbyStudio to oversee the delivery of the project. Since the New Year, they have been working closely with the Council's Project Team and with the St Maurice's Covert steering group – chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment – to refine both the design proposals and the costings.

- 2.6 The architects have focussed on progressing actions considered to be a priority, in terms of the impact they will make and functionality they offer. These priority actions have now benefited from detailed costings. Earlier costs were desk-based estimates attached to the enhancement strategy, for which there was no cost consultancy budget in the original specification. The allocated budget currently stands as follows:

a. Initial design costs (already spent)	£ 10,000
b. Priority Actions – including fees and contingency	£110,000
TOTAL	£120,000

- 2.7 Inevitably, the costing work has identified some elements previously unknown to the project team – such as the cost of decommissioning the existing lights in the Covert. The contingency budget has been raised to 10% to reflect the potential for further unknowns to come to light during the course of the project.

- 2.8 Following a presentation to the Board of the Business Improvement District at the end of July 2017, it was agreed that the BID would contribute £10,000 over two financial years (2018/19 and 2019/20) towards the enhancement project, ring-fenced for the bin store element. This means that the total budget allocation for the project will be increased to £120,000. The current costings stand at £135,000, but the architects are confident that these can be value-
- 2.9 The Council has the option, taking the project forward in this prioritised way, of assessing the impact of the initial delivery programme and then deciding whether it wishes to progress the rest of the scheme in total or in part. More details about the priority actions can be found in section 10 of this report.
- 2.10 Officers believe that the new scheme will require some additional revenue spend if it is to be maintained in good condition following completion. This is likely to take the form of increased electricity supply, basic maintenance and additional sweeping/cleaning. The current estimate is for £4,000 per annum, and will need to be considered within the 2018/19 budget process.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Legal and procurement implications were dealt with in the report [WTF247](#) – Enhancing St Maurice’s Covert, 16 November 2016. It is not proposed to repeat them here. Officers will ensure that the appropriate procurement procedures are followed in all cases, drawing on any existing framework agreements and noting any restrictions arising from previous works such as the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) for street lighting.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are implications for officer time in all aspects of the preparation, delivery and ongoing management of town centre improvements. For example, the Council’s Project Office is dealing with the delivery of the St Maurice’s Covert enhancements, but draws on the expertise of officers from across the Council as well as a wide range of external stakeholders and businesses such as Debenhams and the Wessex Hotel.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Property implications for St Maurice’s Covert were considered in report [WTF247](#). The main development since that time has been confirmation from the Diocese that the Bishop of Winchester has signed an Order removing the legal effects of consecration from St Maurice’s Covert. This means that the site no longer falls under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court, so there is no requirement for a Faculty for any works proposed. This was a ‘tidying up’ action proposed by the Church Commissioners, who are represented on the steering group, and who helpfully facilitated the discussion with the Diocese.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 An account of the extensive engagement activity associated with the development of the St Maurice's Covert enhancement scheme as set out in report [WTF247](#). As the project moves towards delivery on the ground - which will include the need for Listed Building Consent – the steering group is keen to ensure there is a further programme of active consultation. This would take the following form:

Monday 18 September 3.30pm – 5.30pm: Open meeting for all colleagues, Members and stakeholders at which the updated designs for the Covert will be presented and discussed. Opening of exhibition in the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) with the plans and a model on show.

Monday 18 – Saturday 23 September. Exhibition at the TIC during opening hours, with the opportunity for visits to record comments/feedback. The exhibition will be manned by staff and the architects from **10am to noon on Wednesday 20 September.**

- 6.2 There has been information since the enhancement strategy was first commissioned on the ScottWhitby Tumblr site at <http://stmauricescovert.tumblr.com/> but this is now reached via an information page on the Council's own website on the corporate project pages.
- 6.3 The project continues to benefit from the oversight of a working group of Members from Town Forum, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment and expanded to include representatives of the Winchester Business Improvement District, Debenhams, The Wessex Hotel and The Church Commissioners (England). Greggs have also been invited to all meetings, and the architects have visited the store in person to foster communications.
- 6.4 The sense is that this is a well-supported project. Concerns raised by individuals such as the flower seller, the Cats' Protection League, Winchester Areas Tourist Guides Association and local cyclists have been dealt with on an individual basis and led to satisfactory outcomes.
- 6.5 Issues raised at the forthcoming open meeting and exhibition will be considered in finalising the designs and specifications for the works, and will in turn inform the application for Listed Building Consent.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8 Paragraph 1.1b sets out the ways in which the project contributes to an improved environment in the City Centre. The outcomes will range from better accessibility and pedestrian flow in the shopping streets to reducing the potential for health hazards, pests and fire from the current approach to managing trade waste in the area around the Covert.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 A number of the proposed improvements will have a direct benefit for individuals from the range of groups named under equalities legislation: for example, the removal of street clutter and improvements to lighting will be beneficial for those with visual impairments. The addition of fixed seating may be helpful to older people and pregnant women. The aim of the proposed plinth in the St Maurice's Covert scheme is to allow ramped access up through the tower, improving access and movement the Covert for wheelchairs and prams. There should also be less visual confusion for those with certain mental health conditions and dementia.
- 9.2 Winchester Area Access for All Forum has been invited to send representatives to the open meeting about St Maurice's Covert on 18 September 2017. It is not considered that any of the improvements set out in this report would have a negative impact on any other minority groups.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 A risk analysis for St Maurice's Covert is included in WTF247. Those set out are additional risks, and incorporate those arising from the trade waste project.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p><i>Timescales</i></p> <p>This initiative is tied to the enhancement project for St Maurice's Covert (see update elsewhere on this agenda), in terms of the provision of a new transit bin store to demonstrate the Council's community leadership role in the area of trade waste.</p>	<p>Decision-making timescales currently synchronised (September Cabinet), in order to ensure timings and funding for both the Covert and trade waste projects are aligned.</p>	<p>St Maurice's Covert will be a showcase for the Council's work in this area – public consultation activity to explain integration of the two projects.</p>

<p><i>Financial / VfM</i></p> <p>Detailed costings come in over budget for St Maurice's Covert</p>	<p>Steering group and project team looking at options to reduce costs or adapt designs accordingly.</p> <p>Cabinet briefed to enable informed decision about identifying additional budget to support the project.</p>	
<p><i>Reputation</i></p> <p>If the Council's own market bins are not removed from the Covert early on during the trade waste project the Council will be accused of failing to act in accordance with its own policies</p>	<p>Careful dovetailing of St Maurice's Covert and trade waste initiative in hand via officers and Portfolio Holders</p> <p>Communications will explain that the Council is putting its own house in order as part of the same pilot</p>	

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 In 2012, a report to Winchester Town Forum set out a number of measures to improve the presentation of the commercial centre of Winchester (WTF176 – Streetscene in the Retail Centre, 12 September 2012 refers). This was in response to concerns raised by Members at that time about poor maintenance, pigeon nuisance and empty shops. In particular, Members felt that St Maurice's Covert was a missed opportunity, and should be enhanced to create an elegant and attractive feature on the High Street.
- 11.2 Officers have worked with Members and with the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) since this time to address concerns as they arise, forming a cross-disciplinary 'Public Realm Team' to facilitate a whole-council approach, and drawing on additional funding from the Winchester Town Account since the report to Winchester Town Forum in September 2012, the following steps have been taken to improve the presentation of the City Centre:
- a) Additional staffing in the Historic Environment Team enable proactive approaches to be made to those responsible for commercial properties,

leading to an effective programme of gutter clearance, down pipe repairs, replacement shop signs, repainted window frames and so on.

- b) The BID routinely provides vinyl 'wraps' to fill the windows of empty shops, which add colour and interest to the street. These include adverts for forthcoming events, information about the City Centre and images of Winchester.
- c) A pilot scheme to deter pigeons in hotspots around the Buttercross and St Lawrence's Church using 'fire gel' was successfully implemented. The potential to introduce this as a service available commercially through the Special Maintenance Team is now being investigated.
- d) The Casson Block enhancement scheme has been delivered, with a public art installation due imminently to complete the scheme.
- e) A budget allocation was made from the Town Account and a Member Informal Working Group was established to consider how best to use this in enhancing St Maurice's Covert.

11.3 More recently, the concerns about the retail centre of Winchester have focussed on:

- a) Trade waste – trade bins or piles of bin bags left in the street and causing a visual nuisance as well as physical blocks and potential health hazards: CAB2971 elsewhere on this agenda refers (Trade Waste Initiative);

and

- b) A boards – a proliferation of individual A boards advertising businesses located in secondary shopping streets, creating visual clutter as well as a potential hazard for those with mobility difficulties. Officers have collaborated with Winchester BID and Hampshire County Council to agree a shared approach. This has seen the provision by the BID of three 'composite' A boards to stand at the High Street end of St Thomas's Street, Parchment Street and Little Minster Street. Each has advertising consent from the Council, and promotes all the businesses located in the street. In return, the businesses have agreed – in principle -- to discontinue the practice of placing their individual A boards on the High Street.

Any A boards that do appear are now subject to enforcement action by the County Council's Highways Team, including prosecutions for any persistent offenders. Enforcement follows a stepped approach, but the County did begin it as soon as the composite A boards were placed on the High Street this spring. Anyone – including Members – can report the (re)appearance of offending A boards. There is potential to extend this approach to other secondary streets, and to other parts of the

District, as required. At the time of writing this report, officers are developing an additional tab on the 'My Council' phone app specifically for A boards, making it possible for anyone to report rogue boards easily to the right authority.

- 11.4 Work has also been ongoing on the project to enhance St Maurice's Covert over the past 18 months. Members approved a recommendation in the November 2016 report ([WTF247](#) – Enhancing St Maurice's Covert, 16 November 2016 refers) to reappoint architects from ScottWhitbyStudio who had been commissioned to develop the enhancement strategy to oversee delivery of the first phase of works. This has required more technical input, ranging from a clearer understanding of the lighting fittings in the Covert ceiling to checks for asbestos. More accurate costings have also been possible, although these have so far been restricted to a set of actions identified as a priority for early delivery – both in terms of the impact they will make and the functionality they offer.
- 11.5 The priority actions for this first phase are now identified as follows:
- Cleaning, decluttering, making good the space (painting etc.)
 - Commissioning and installing new lighting
 - Enhancing the paving on the Market Lane side of the Covert
 - Installing a plinth to enable people to flow under the Tower, reducing antisocial loitering and increasing access for those with mobility difficulties
 - Introducing a covered bin and bike store with seating
 - Mounting the gravestones on the wall in heavy duty frames, and adding interpretative information
- 11.6 Aligning helpfully with the wider project has been the refurbishment of the Market Lane toilets, and this has allowed for improved access by curatorial staff to clean and maintain the display of museum artefacts in the window, improving the overall aspect of the building. Moreover, it has been agreed that the lights over the display will be left on later during darker evenings to help make the area feel bright and interesting.
- 11.7 Based on the enhancement strategy produced at the end of 2016, future actions – which involve complications of ownership and potentially conflicting business priorities – could include:
- Enhancement of Market Lane to provide visual continuity and encourage pedestrian flow to the Cathedral Close (e.g. shared surface, repaving, narrowing);
 - New door for Greggs bakery to reveal base of Tower and improve aspect of Covert;
 - Improving sightlines to the Cathedral (e.g. Wessex Hotel car park, trees);
 - Opening the Tower to the public.

- 11.8 The package of priority improvements will be set out in detail at the open meeting on Monday 18 September detailed elsewhere in this report. Members are asked to approve this prioritised approach, with a view to taking stock of the impact of this set of actions before considering any possible future works such as those as set out in paragraph 10.8 above.
- 11.9 At this time, no Member approval is being requested for any future phases of work.
- 12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED
- 12.1 There has been a high level of community support for this project, with approbation for the Council's intention to make more of this unsung corner of the City. It is a very deliverable scheme, and will make an impact in the heart of the shopping area, making for positive reputational benefits to the Council. The option to 'do nothing', was considered in the report in November 2016, but Members determined at that point that it should proceed – and identified additional funding to support it in the 2017/18 budget cycle.
- 12.2 The designs for St Maurice's Covert have been through an iterative process, starting with 'front loading' engagement with a wide stakeholder group and including feedback from meetings, public exhibitions and written communications. The current plans reflect the fact that the architects have already explored many options, and indeed tested some of them out 'on the ground' (e.g. a pop up café; opening the tower for the 2016 Heritage Open Days weekend) to assess the very best options for the Covert allowing for the aims of the project set out in the commissioning brief. The forthcoming open meeting and exhibition will enable them to evolve the plans still further, ahead of application for Listed Building Consent.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[Question 14](#) - Full Council papers, 19 July 2017

[WTF247](#) – Enhancing St Maurice's Covert, 16 November 2016

[Minutes](#) of the Winchester Town Forum meeting of 21 September 2016 at which a presentation was given by ScottWhitbyStudio of the emerging design scheme

[WTF219](#) – St Maurice's Covert Environmental Enhancement Update, 10 June 2015

[WTF 200](#) - St Maurice's Covert Update, 22 January 2014

[WTF 193](#) – St Maurice's Covert and Other Town Centre Enhancements, 11 September 2013

Other Background Documents:-

Minutes of the Winchester Town Forum (St Maurice's Covert) Informal Group

Commissioning Specification for "Public Realm Design Scheme, St Maurice's Covert, Winchester"

St Maurice's Covert Enhancement Strategy and revised costings, ScottWhitbyStudio
– June 2017

APPENDICES: None