

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2013**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT**

SUBJECT: **TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To seek approval for the allocation of funding to streetscape projects in Flintshire town centres as part of the Town Action Plan programme.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Nationally, town centre businesses continue to face a very challenging economic environment, in part due to long term changes in shopping patterns, competition from out of town retail parks, supermarkets and internet retailing, as well as the impact of the recent recession. Flintshire towns have not escaped this process but have, in general, suffered less than many comparable areas, with fewer vacant units than the national average and levels of footfall generally remaining stable.

2.02 Town centre regeneration is identified as a sub-priority in the Council Improvement Plan 2012-2017; the Plan also refers to the need to deliver actions from the master plans for each town centre. The process set out in this report will help deliver some of those actions.

2.03 The Town Action Plan (TAP) programme was established in 2008 to address the problem of town centre decline by creating a bespoke programme of regeneration for each of the town centres in Flintshire. Partnerships were developed to lead the process in each town and long term plans have been put in place to guide future regeneration activity. Integrated programmes of work are now underway in each town and are set out in Appendix 1.

2.04 There is a wider programme of investment which has taken place across the County's towns that is not covered by this summary, such as the Broughton Amelioration Funding and Town Improvement Grant, as well as Health Trust Primary Care investment, schools modernisation, housing investment and the creation of Flintshire Connects facilities.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 On 30 March 2010, the Council's Executive Committee approved the submission of a bid for funding to the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) to support town centre regeneration and this was approved by the Wales European Funding Office in January 2012.

3.02 The ERDF project is valued at just under £4m, it covers both Wrexham and Flintshire and includes the following elements:

- streetscape improvements in Flintshire town centres - £1,302,500
- streetscape improvements in Wrexham town centre - £1.5m
- a new grant scheme ('the Business Enhancement Scheme) to provide help to bring vacant High Street properties back into use across Wrexham and Flintshire - £1m
- management costs, that is staffing, promotion and evaluation - £153,538

This programme must be fully implemented by June 2015 in order to draw down the full ERDF grant. For that to happen, funding needs to be allocated to specific projects in each town, in line with the overall approval given by WEFO.

3.03 Members will be aware that the Council also provides an annual allocation of capital funding for town centre regeneration of £200,000 the ERDF funding is additional to that budget. This has been held back to provide the necessary match funding for the ERDF project, thereby extending the scale of the streetscape improvements available within the County. Approximately £393,000 is currently available to support projects, with a further £262,500 allocated as match funding and included in the £1,302,500 ERDF total for streetscape improvements. Appendix 1 shows in emboldened text the funding streams covered by this report; this includes £200k RDP Streetscape monies, for Holywell and Mold, which have already been approved by the Council's Executive in August 2010, as a first step to securing resource for the wider Programme set out in this report.

3.04 Projects have been developed as part of the wider masterplanning process following consultation with local stakeholders. These are set out in three main themes:

1. improving the image and appearance of town centres;
2. encouraging investment;
3. attracting customers.

Appendix 2 summarises the current range of activities and shows where ERDF and Council capital funding is required to support current projects. Outline costs are provided for each project and, subject to approval, detailed designs and costs will be prepared for each project prior to tendering and securing the necessary consents; this process

may lead to changes in the estimated values shown. Where ERDF is used, prior approval from WEFO is required before any work can start.

3.05 Streetscape projects for the ERDF and Council capital funding were identified on the basis that each project will:

- make a significant contribution towards meeting the needs identified in the long term plans for each town and be proportionate to the needs of the town;
- meet the priorities identified by local stakeholders for their town, including those of the local partnership where it exists;
- deliver visible improvements to the town centre environment as this was one of the main parameters for the ERDF bid submitted;
- not be funded from other sources (such as Section 106);
- be deliverable in the timescale for the ERDF programme of completion, that is, by June 2015.

3.06 A proposed allocation is set out as follows;

Buckley

The town action plan for Buckley focuses on achieving commercial development on the Precinct site and does bring the opportunity to secure Section 106 funding. The proposed development of the Co-op store on Precinct Way means that a substantial sum has already been agreed through S106 funding. It is proposed that an additional **£118,000** is allocated to complement improvements along Brunswick Road. The streetscape in Buckley remains in good condition following the pedestrianisation scheme in the late 1990s but some improvements are proposed to refresh it.

Connah's Quay

The existing masterplan for Connah's Quay focuses on developing the main sites in the town which require land assembly before they can be improved. The masterplan also recommends improving the streetscape and it is proposed that **£149,000** is allocated to improving the area around Wepre Brook bridge.

Flint

The masterplan for Flint sets out major investment through the replacement of the maisonettes. The town centre is also undergoing a transformation through the Townscape Heritage Initiative and it is proposed that **£247,000** is allocated to complementary projects including the upgrade of St. Mary's Church Square.

Holywell

The town centre assessment for Holywell stresses the need to attract

visitors to the town and to improve its appeal. There is limited private sector funding available to the town so improvements will largely rely upon the public sector. It is proposed that **£342,000** is allocated alongside a further £100,000 allocated within the Rural Development Plan (RDP) to improve the street environment in the town centre.

Mold

The Sense of Place study for Mold recommends a broad range of environmental improvements to maintain the town's appeal. The Daniel Owen Square is identified in the study and by the town partnership as a particular priority due to its importance as a venue for events. It is proposed that **£405,000** is allocated to the improvements to the Square and the adjacent Indoor Market alongside the £100,000 allocation from the RDP already secured. A masterplan to encourage developer interest in key town centre sites will also be supported.

Queensferry

The environmental improvement plan for Queensferry highlights a number of areas for visual improvement, some of which have already been achieved. It is proposed that **£52,000** is allocated to improving the signage to the town centre and to improving its visual appeal.

Saltney

There is no current action plan for Saltney although the Council is supporting the Town Council in developing their business plan for the town. An allocation of **£25,000** is proposed to make environmental improvements in the town centre in the short term. Further improvements identified in the business plan could be funded from capital allocations in the future.

Shotton

The masterplan for Shotton focuses on streetscape improvements given the limited space for development. It is proposed that **£181,000** is allocated to these works.

County-wide

An allocation of **£30,000** is proposed to support the empty shops scheme across the town centres to make small scale improvement to vacant properties to enable them to be used by social businesses or voluntary groups whilst long term tenants are sought.

- 3.07 The projects highlighted in 3.06 will, if approved, be developed further through detailed design work and the preparation of full costings. The figures allocated may therefore be subject to revision. It is therefore proposed that a contingency fund of £146,500 is left unallocated at

this stage until this design work is complete and more accurate costs for each project obtained.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the proposals set out in paragraph 3.06 are approved.
- 4.02 That delegated authority is given to the Director of Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to allocate the residual £146,500 as deemed appropriate within the funding allocated.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The funding to be allocated has already been secured through the ERDF programme and can be claimed retrospectively based on actual expenditure defrayed up to 30 June 2015. The Council capital resources allocated are drawn from unspent capital funds allocated to the TAP programme between 2009/2010 and 2012/2013.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 Town centres play a key role in providing accessible goods and services for those most vulnerable.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 The investment programmes outlined in this report will make improvements to sustainable transport links, the quality of the built environment, heritage assets and the energy performance of buildings, especially housing.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 The investment programmes identified will help local service centres remain viable. These centres provide vital locally based services, especially to those without access to private transport. Some of the investment programmes listed in the appendices specifically target support to the most vulnerable households in Flintshire.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 Detailed consultation on each project will be required as the designs for each streetscape improvement are developed. Local Members, Town Councils, businesses, residents and disabled user groups will all be targeted.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Considerable consultation has been undertaken in each town throughout the process so far, with two rounds of workshops held in most towns and more detailed consultation on the various masterplans as they have been developed.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 – Regeneration programmes in town centres
Appendix 2 – Town Action Plan projects

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Contact Officer: Niall Waller
Telephone: 01352 702137
Email: niall.waller@flintshire.gov.uk