



INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 26 February 2009

Title: HISTORIC CORE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS CASTLE STREET

Report of: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report reference: CS 12/09

Summary:

This report was considered by the Executive at their meeting on 16th February and a copy of the (draft) Minute is appended. This resolution will feed back to the County Council for consideration by the Local Committee.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

Does this Committee support the Executive's position?

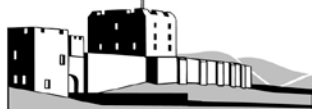
Recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers the options for the way forward as set out in the report.

Contact Officer: Michael Battersby

Ext: 7325

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: CS 20/09 & CS 09/09



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Date of Meeting: 16 February 2009

Public

Key Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: HISTORIC CORE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS – CASTLE STREET

Report of: Director of Community Services

Report reference: CS 09/09

Summary:

This report provides an update on the current position and a reference back from the Carlisle Local Committee. A range of options and associated implications are identified to move the scheme forward.

Recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED that the Executive provides clear feedback to the Carlisle Local Committee on how it wishes to proceed with this project.

Contact Officer: Michael Battersby

Ext: 7325

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: CS 20/08

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

- 1.1 At its meeting on 21 April 2008 the Executive considered report CS 20/08 which set out details of this project. The scheme had been amended to reflect the extensive consultation in late 2007/early 2008 and the proposals were approved and funding released to progress the scheme. Subsequently Officers and the informal joint Members group have developed the detailed proposals.
- 1.2 The design of the public realm works in Castle Street have now been substantially finalised. The design evaluation fully embraced features of the other public realm projects being developed by consultants, Gillespies who were an integral part of the design team to ensure integration and compatibility with future works. Sample panels have been constructed which were extremely beneficial in finalising the choice of materials and engaging a range of partners to finalise the design. Detailed costings from this confirmed the preliminary estimates that the scheme can be completed within budget.
- 1.3 Alongside this the various Traffic Orders have been progressed. One of these, related to the designation of a 'Restricted Zone' for the area which requires approval by the Department for Transport. An application was submitted in May and the timescale to achieve approval has been much longer than envisaged. Whilst it is understood that the proposals have been recommended for approval a formal decision is still awaited from the Department for Transport. The remaining Traffic Orders were advertised by the County Council in October.
- 1.4 Despite a comprehensive and lengthy consultation exercise in late 2007/early 2008 and amendments made to the scheme a number of objections were received by the County Council both during and after the formal consultation period. These were considered by the Highways and Transport Working Group at their meeting on 11 November who were minded to support the proposal as they stood because it was considered that any significant changes would detract from the purpose of the scheme. The response to the advertised Orders was due to be considered by the County Local Committee at their meeting on 17 December 2008, but consideration was deferred.
- 1.5 A general summary of the issues raised through the Traffic Order consultation process is as follows:-
 - (i) A number of objections were raised to the closure of West Walls

- (ii) Three religious establishments (not including the Cathedral) raised concerns about parking for their worshippers, particularly on Sundays
- (iii) There were concerns raised about the loss of disabled parking provision and the fact that whilst a greater number of designated spaces were included in the project these were further away from the City Centre
- (iv) The greatest area of objection was raised by some businesses in and around the historic quarter who considered that the loss of general 1 hour disc parking for the public would jeopardise their viability, particularly in the current economic climate

1.6 In deferring consideration of the Traffic Orders the Local Committee referred the matter back to the City Council and to the Carlisle Renaissance Board to consider the following issues:-

- Car park accessibility and tariffs
- An economic impact assessment of the proposals

1.7 In respect of the car parking issue then the City Council has always recognised the need for good pedestrian links to and from its car parks. Indeed as part of the current project improved pedestrian signage to adjacent car parks is included. The City Wall does create a barrier and as part of the development options for Caldew Riverside colleagues in Carlisle Renaissance are exploring options to overcome this physical barrier.

On the issue of parking charges then the City Council review these annually and take into account a range of factors. The current economic climate has been recognised in the Council freezing the main charges in 2009/10.

1.8 The completion of an economic impact assessment is not normally something which would be undertaken for a highway scheme of this nature. Carlisle Renaissance have established a strategic group to create a vision for the Historic Core which, once completed, will address many aspects for the area. This specific public realm scheme has been fully developed with partners and will make a positive contribution to that vision.

1.9 The purpose of this report is to seek a view from the executive how and if it wishes to progress this scheme to shape the response to the Carlisle Local Committee. There are a range of options and these together with the potential implications are set out as follows:-

1.9.1 **Option 1 – Proceed with the substantive scheme as advertised**

- The project purpose of removing unnecessary traffic from the historic core and to re-prioritise highway space would be achieved
- The concerns of some businesses would not be addressed and this may lead to their closure/relocation, others may prosper
- The ongoing engagement of some objectors in the development of the Historic Core could be prejudiced
- Subject to a decision by the Local Committee the scheme and associated benefits could progress relatively quickly
- Two minor amendments would be required:-
 - Temporary loading restrictions on West Walls near the junction with Victoria Viaduct caused by the scaffolding on the former Central Hotel
 - Introduce a motor cycle/cycle bay at the north-eastern end of Castle Street

1.9.2 **Option 2 – Amend the Traffic Orders to respond in whole or in part to some of the objections:-**

- Dependant upon the degree of change the overall aim of the project may not be fully achieved i.e. removing un-necessary traffic from the area
- Any traffic changes could be amended in future as the area develops i.e. the ultimate aim may be achieved by ongoing amendments to the traffic as the Historic Core develops
- The potential changes which could be considered are:-
 - Introduction of additional disabled parking spaces in St Mary's Gate/Fisher Street
 - Retention of some 1 hour disc parking spaces in the area. This could range from a small number in Abbey Street and Finkle Street to all current spaces outwith the limits of the physical work
 - Amend the Restricted Zone to only apply Monday – Saturday i.e. exclude Sundays
- The introduction of changes would show a positive response to objectors and potentially solicit greater engagement in the future of the area
- Implementing changes may appease existing objectors but create others
- Any changes would require the Traffic Orders to be amended and re-advertised. This would result in additional costs of up to £10,000 and extend this timescales to commence the project

1.9.3 Option 3 – Defer the project until the overall vision for the Historic Core is in place.

- This would provide a clearer context for this project
- The detailed design and traffic arrangements have been developed taking into account consistent design and material palettes which will be used in any future public realm projects
- The timescale for the production of this vision is unclear although it is unlikely to alter the fundamental brief for this project
- The associated delay could erode support/commitment for action within the Historic Core

1.9.4 Option 4 – Shelve the project and review expenditure priorities

- The executive could decide to withdraw its funding (£840,000) for the project and re-allocate this to other priority projects
- Some costs have been incurred to date to progress the scheme to its current stage

1.10 The Carlisle Renaissance Board considered the reference from the Local Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2009. At that meeting it was agreed that work should be undertaken to the scheme to proceed. The issue of signage and interpretation was considered to be important. The Board also considered that the public realm improvements proposed for Castle Street would not prejudice any future works in the work Historic Core.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Enterprise represent the City Council on the Board and may wish to comment further.

The issue in respect of signage and interpretation should be supported and can be accommodated within this project once a clear strategy is defined. The comments regarding co-ordination and integration with other potential schemes in the Historic Core supports the current proposals.

1.11 Ultimately the County Local Committee with its delegated Highway Authority powers will make a decision on the relevant Traffic Orders associated with the project and the Executive should make its position clear.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Consultation to Date - Highways & Transport Working group, Carlisle Renaissance
- 2.2 Consultation proposed - As above, any future consultation is dependant upon the Executive's preferred option.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that the Executive provides clear feedback to the Carlisle Local Committee on how it wishes to proceed with this project.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has been developed over the past 12-18 months and engaged a range of partners and been subject to various stages of consultation. In light of recent feedback the Executive needs to consider how it wishes to move forward.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – If the option to proceed is supported the works would be delivered by a mixture of existing inhouse resources and external contractors. An additional fixed term Project Manager post would be required the costs of which are included in the project budget.
- Financial – There is currently £838,000 in the 2008/09 Capital Programme for Castle Street Historic Quarter Improvements. Options 1-3 would require a significant carry forward to future years which would need to be reported and formally approved as part of the Outturn reports which will be presented to members in June 2009. The carry forward request would need to detail the level of spend required to fund the scheme in future years including the appropriate split between revenue and capital. If option 4 is approved, any unused resources will be transferred to capital reserves which could then be used to meet any future priorities of the Council.
- Legal – The legal powers to make Traffic Orders of the sort envisaged in this report rests with the County Council as highway authority.
- Corporate – N/A

- Risk Management – The risks associated with the various options are identified in the body of the report. Should the project proceed a Contract risk register would be produced.
- Equality and Disability – There has been a number of objections from disabled drivers regarding the existing proposals. These do provide for more designated disabled parking spaces than currently exist but these are further away from the City Centre. The detailed design incorporates features to assist mobility in the area.
- Environmental – The memorial of unnecessary traffic in the area and the re-prioritisation of road space in Castle Street would have a positive impact on vehicle emissions.
- Crime and Disorder – N/A
- Impact on Customers – Changes to the current traffic management arrangements in the area will have an impact on existing businesses and residents. There will be some disruption during construction works in Castle Street but every effort will be made to minimise this.