

Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	20 January 2021
Title of report:	Review of Radcliffe Shop Front Improvement Scheme
Report by:	Cllr. Eamonn O'Brien (Leader) – Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth
Decision Type:	Non-Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	All Radcliffe Wards

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews phase one of the Radcliffe Shop Front Improvement Scheme and considers how the remaining scheme funds can be most effectively used to support ongoing regeneration of Radcliffe town centre.

It proposes that the remaining funds be used specifically to support improvement works to Radcliffe Market Chambers building to deliver early activity as part of the Radcliffe SRF. This proposed use of the funding was recommended by the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee to Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 December 2020.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That:

- Approval is given to the transfer of the remaining Radcliffe Shop Front Grant funds to support improvement works to Radcliffe Market Chambers as part of the wider investment in this high profile building and in line with the Radcliffe SRF

objectives as per the recommendation of the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee on 22 December 2020.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Background

- 1.1 The Radcliffe Shop Front scheme was set up as part of the Radcliffe Regeneration Action Plan in 2018 with £100,000 allocated to the scheme. The aim of the scheme was to provide grants of up to 80% (up to a maximum of £8,000) to cover the cost of the improvement works for high street retail properties.
- 1.2 For maximum impact, the initiative focused upon a tightly defined boundary within the core town centre and targeted independent high street businesses. Eligible improvement works included, for example, new shop fronts, painting, new signage and re-rendering, and applicants were asked to set out the benefits the proposed works would bring to their business and the high street overall.
- 1.3 Following a full application process, six submissions met the criteria and circa £36,000 has been allocated from the budget. All six businesses are in the process of/in a position to commence the agreed works.

2. Issues and Opportunities

- 2.1 The remaining balance of the Shop Front Scheme funding is £64,000. In March 2020, Cabinet agreed that this remaining funding be used to deliver a second phase of the Shop Front Grants Scheme as an early action in the Radcliffe SRF. This proposal, plus an extension of the scheme boundary, was also shared as part of the SRF consultation process. A small number of businesses have previously enquired about a future scheme.
- 2.2 However, due to the continuing impact of Covid 19 on town centre businesses, a review of the Shop Front Scheme has been undertaken to help determine whether a second phase of the grant scheme would be the best use of the remaining capital funding, or whether this budget could be used to greater effect elsewhere.
- 2.3 The review identified a number of issues and challenges in taking forward a second phase of the scheme:
 - **Limited uptake of the Scheme** - Despite receiving 23 expressions of interest, only 7 (6 eligible) full applications were submitted in phase 1. It may be that the limited take up is due to the requirement for financial investment by businesses /owners of business premises.

- **Impact of Works** - Whilst the grants allocated are likely to have a positive impact on the street scene, the limited nature of the uptake is likely to dilute the potential benefits that would have been achieved had a greater number of businesses accessed the funds.
- **Timescales** – Each grant funding agreement includes a deadline and the delivery timeframe varies depending on the specific details. Some of the agreements have been delayed as there has been a need for planning consents and there has been contractor issues during the pandemic.

2.4 The uptake of the Shop Front Grant funding going forward is dependent on the capacity of local businesses to contribute towards the improvement works. However, the continuing impact of Covid 19 is a challenge facing all town centre businesses and high street property owners and it will have had a significant impact on business finances. It is anticipated that physical improvements to business premises is unlikely to be a priority, thereby reducing the effectiveness of a shop front grant scheme in delivering positive impacts in Radcliffe town centre.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 As part of the Radcliffe SRF, an early opportunity has been identified to deliver improvement works to the Council-owned Market Chambers building which is in a prominent location and its early improvement would have an immediate positive impact on the core town centre.
- 3.2 A development project plan for the building has been developed, which will identify the condition and cost of the required works. It is likely that the ground floor façade will require significant improvements.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the remaining shop front budget be used specifically to improve the shops fronts / façade of Market Chambers as a concentrated project.
- 3.4 The main benefits that would be achieved by the transfer of the remaining £64,000 shop front grant funds are as follows:
- **Positive impact on the High street** - Market Chambers is a high profile building occupying a prominent location in the heart of Radcliffe town centre and adjacent to Radcliffe Market. The property consists of office space and street level retail units, which are in a poor state of repair, and the condition of the building detracts from the town centre core. Although the longer-term use of the building is being considered in line with the Radcliffe SRF, any improvement works to the retail units will quickly enhance the high street and bring these units into active use. Where

appropriate, improvement works could incorporate the Radcliffe brand to reflect the consistent approach to regeneration within the town centre.

- **Improved Businesses/Retail units** - The creation of a Radcliffe Hub is likely to require the relocation of existing businesses and retailers into alternative premises in the centre. Early improvements to the Market Chambers building would help in ensuring there is added capacity within the centre to potentially accommodate any necessary relocations.
- **Ease of Allocation** - Unlike the existing Shop Front Scheme, there would be no need for an application process or reliance on third party investment for delivery. The funding would be used to deliver improvement works as part of the SRF programme and, in particular, the delivery of the Market Chambers programme of works.

3.5 It is acknowledged that some premises elsewhere in the town could still benefit from some grant funding to improve their frontages. In the event that the recommendation is supported, the Council will keep under consideration and review whether there will be a future opportunity for a shop front scheme to reflect the ambitions within the SRF.

3.6 This proposal was taken to the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee on the 22 December 2020 where the proposals outlined in this report were supported and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

4. OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 To progress with Phase Two of the Shop Front Regeneration Scheme. Having considered the factors set out above, this is not the recommended option.

EQUALITY IMPACT AND CONSIDERATIONS:

24. *Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:*

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

(c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

25. *The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.*

ASSESSMENT OF RISK:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
N/A	.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed change to the allocation of the fund requires Cabinet approval as it is outside the original delegation and provides for a change in focus and allocation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding is currently available within the Council's Capital programme and there are no additional financial implications arising from the proposal.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Radcliffe SRF and further information relating to it can be found on www.bury.gov.uk/radclifferegeneration.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
SRF	The Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework