

Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	24 March 2021
Title of report:	Ramsbottom Place Management and Movement Plan – Appointment of Consultants.
Report by:	Cllr. Eamonn O’Brien (Leader) – Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth
Decision Type:	For information
Ward(s) to which report relates	Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor Wards

Executive Summary

In November 2020, Cabinet approved proposals to engage consultants to prepare a public realm and place management plan for Ramsbottom. The plan will principally set out a series of initiatives to improve public realm, townscape and movement within the town centre and explore opportunities to improve its visitor offer in order to help maintain its role as a quality destination for the next 10 to 15 years.

This report provides an update to Members with the commission of the project having now been subject to a competitive tendering process which culminated in 13 submissions. Detailed consideration of those submissions concluded that a proposal led by Layer Landscape Architects Ltd. was the strongest and an appointment has been made on this basis.

The consultants will engage with stakeholders and businesses to develop concepts and interventions that will help build on the town’s success, as well as assist with the recovery process as businesses emerge from the latest lockdown.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note that Layer Landscape Architects Ltd. have been appointed to prepare the Place Management and Movement Plan for Ramsbottom town centre on behalf of the Council; and
2. Note that a draft of the Place Management and Movement Plan will be presented to Cabinet for approval for consultation purposes and that, following consultation, a final version will be subject to further Cabinet approval.

Key considerations

1. Background

- 1.1 Over recent years Ramsbottom has developed a strong reputation as a food and drink-led visitor destination, supported by the East Lancashire Railway, a good range of independent retailers, expanding events programme, and a growing reputation as one of the best places to live in the region.
- 1.2 As a key destination and one of the most popular visitor destinations in the Borough, Ramsbottom is in a good position to continue its recent success. However, an updated approach to further improve the quality, appeal, and range of attractions in the town is required, to ensure that the offer remains attractive to visitors and Ramsbottom retains its important role in supporting the local economy.

2. Issues and Opportunities

- 2.1 Whilst Ramsbottom has performed relatively well, town centres across the country have, for a number of years, been facing significant challenges that have eroded high street retailing and its role in underpinning the vitality and economic strength of town centres. The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant intensification and acceleration of these challenges, and this is likely to have far-reaching consequences for the economies of all town centres.
- 2.2 Heritage and the layout of Ramsbottom town centre is one of its key assets. However, this does cause some tensions with its function as a key visitor destination. In particular, the centre can be difficult to navigate, there are issues with pedestrian and vehicular conflict when visitor numbers are particularly high, linkages between attractions are, in some cases, poor and the centre has a longstanding problem with the quantity and location of parking for visitors.

3. The proposal

- 3.1 In November 2020, Cabinet agreed to the commission of a study to set out an approach to addressing the issues identified above and to create a positive and proactive vision for Ramsbottom with a focus on improving public realm, infrastructure and movement through the town centre.
- 3.2 The Place Management and Movement Plan will build on Ramsbottom's existing strengths and will play a key role in identifying a way forward for the town, playing a key role in supporting the post-Covid economic recovery of town centre businesses and the town centre in general. It will build increased confidence in the town centre, promoting it as a visitor destination and as a location for inward investment.
- 3.3 The commission of the Ramsbottom Place Management and Movement Plan has now been subject to a competitive tendering process which culminated in 13 submissions. Detailed consideration of those submissions has concluded that a proposal led by Layer Landscape Architects Ltd. is the strongest and an appointment has been made on that basis.
- 3.4 The proposal by Layer Landscape Architects Ltd. shows a clear understanding of the brief which is backed up by a strong team with considerable project experience in delivering plans to improve placemaking and movement in other similar-sized towns across the country. Layer Landscape Architects Ltd. will work closely with Council officers to ensure that the objectives and outputs set out in the brief are fully delivered in a timely manner.
- 3.5 The successful proposal includes a robust methodology and suggests some innovative approaches to how the public realm and townscape of the town centre and the ability to move within it can be improved.
- 3.6 The commission will comprise two main phases. Phase 1 will involve the preparation of the Place Management and Movement Plan, including a series of proposed interventions with outline costs.
- 3.7 Phase 1 of the commission will include an extensive programme of engagement and consultation as an integral and ongoing part of the project. Effective early phase engagement will include all key stakeholders including businesses, community representatives and residents. A full programme of formal public consultation will also follow approval of the draft Place Management and Movement Plan. The nature of the consultation will be dependent upon Covid restrictions but will include a virtual consultation programme if necessary.
- 3.8 Phase 2 would comprise detailed design work and costings for an agreed list of priority interventions. Progression to Phase 2 activity will be subject to satisfactory completion of Phase 1 and availability of funding for implementation of priority interventions.

- 3.9 A draft of the Ramsbottom Place Management and Movement Plan will be presented to Cabinet to approve for consultation purposes and, following this consultation, a final version will be brought back to Cabinet for formal approval. In doing so, it is intended that the new Plan will be adopted as a material planning consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications and, in the longer-term, it will be used to inform statutory policies and proposals in the emerging Bury Local Plan.
- 3.10 It is anticipated that Phase 1 of the Place Management and Movement Plan will be completed by late summer/early autumn (including a period of consultation).
- 3.11 The November Cabinet Report identified that £100,000 was allocated to the overall project and that this can be met from within the 2020/21 capital programme. An initial budget of up to £50,000 was allocated to cover the costs of the Phase 1 work.

4. Other alternative options considered

- 4.1 The invitation to tender for the commission of the Ramsbottom Place Management and Movement Plan resulted in the submission of thirteen proposals in total. All submissions were fully considered as alternative options.

Community impact / contribution to the Bury 2030 Strategy:

The new Place Management and Movement Plan for Ramsbottom town centre will establish a clear vision for the town centre and set out how improvements to the town's public realm, townscape and movement can contribute towards ensuring that Ramsbottom remains a quality destination for locals and visitors., enabling it to continue to be a key economic driver for the Borough and play a key role in the delivery of economic aspirations set out in the Bury 2030 Strategy.

Equality impact and considerations:

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.*

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

Consultation:

Subject to Cabinet approval, a draft of the Ramsbottom Place Management and Movement Plan will be subject to a period of public consultation to give an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to have their say on the proposals.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications arising from the report. The procurement has been completed and the appropriate contract documentation will now be entered into.

Financial implications:

The cost of the contract can be met from the funding available.

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Background papers:

Cabinet Report – Ramsbottom Place Management Plan (24 November 2020)

Glossary

Term	Meaning