

| | | |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Report to: | Cabinet | Date: 15 March 2023 |
| Subject: | Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan – update, issues and resources | |
| Report of: | Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth & Skills | |

Summary

Further to the approval by Cabinet of the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan on 9th March 2022, this report provides an update on progress made with several of the proposals contained within it where early external funding opportunities have been identified and secured.

In line with the above, it seeks approval for the appointment of consultants to undertake feasibility work for the proposed enterprise centre; an acknowledgement of the current work being undertaken to prepare a tender specification for two public space projects; and; a need for Legal to provide information on the legal position of Square Street to temporarily continue to be used as pedestrianised outdoor space for the businesses whilst a permanent arrangement as per the proposal in the plan is being worked through.

All of the proposals being developed to date will be subject to further engagement and consultation with stakeholders before being implemented.

This report also highlights the issues arising regarding future delivery of the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan in terms of funding, timescales and capacity. The previous Cabinet report acknowledged that proposals will be brought forward and developed as funding is identified and secured.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- Notes the progress made with the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan.
- Approves the appointment of Focus Consultants to undertake a feasibility study and consultation process on the proposed enterprise centre for Ramsbottom Market Chambers and Ramsbottom Civic Hall buildings.
- Notes the work being undertaken to prepare a tender specification to appoint consultants to undertake feasibilities on two public space proposals.
- Notes the requirement for Legal Services and the Highways Department to provide information on options for the continued use of Square Street as pedestrianised outdoor space whilst the permanent arrangement as per the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan is being considered.

- Accepts that the delivery of the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will be subject to further funding being secured.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

To enable several proposals contained in the Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan to be developed where external funding has been secured.

Alternative options considered and rejected

No other options were considered/were applicable.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Sarah Porru

Position: Assistant Director of Regeneration (Economy & Business)

Department: Business, Growth & Infrastructure

E-mail: s.porru@bury.gov.uk

1.0 Background

1.1 The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan (hereafter known as 'the plan') approved by Cabinet on 9th March 2022 sets out a series of high-level proposals and concepts that look to enhance the town centre for residents, businesses and visitors in the short, medium and long-term. This includes creating quality workspace, as well as identifying opportunities for improvements to the built environment, public realm, active travel and infrastructure to facilitate the continued growth of the town's successful events programme.

1.2 The plan identifies a number of proposals and opportunities for intervention to meet the aim of the vision that in summary includes:

- Creation of a new public square (events space) and other public spaces.
- Improved public realm to better connect streets and spaces.
- Active Travel opportunities to improve strategic pedestrian and cycle links to valuable green assets e.g. Nuttall Park.
- A new enterprise centre to create quality managed and flexible workspace for SME businesses, new business start-ups and including a community space.
- A car parking strategy which will aim to find a better balance for all users of the town centre.

2.0 Progress to date

2.1 Business Project (B1): New Enterprise Centre

2.1.1 The secured Evergreen Surplus Grant funding (administered by Greater Manchester Combined Authority [GMCA]) is being used to progress feasibility proposals for the creation of a new enterprise centre in the heart

of the town centre. The two buildings in scope are Ramsbottom Market Chambers and Ramsbottom Civic Hall.

2.1.2 Bury Council has identified via a procurement framework, Focus Consultants to undertake a feasibility study that will also include market feasibility (soft market testing) and digital opportunities. It is expected that the commission will be complete by the end March 2023. This will result in a piece of work that will enable the Council to consider the best option for the new enterprise centre, but further funding will need to be identified and secured to progress the design plans, obtain planning permission and undertaking of the necessary capital works.

2.2 Public Space Projects (PS1): New Public Square and (PS3): Square Street

2.2.1 UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) administered by GMCA as the lead authority for the funding has been secured under the Communities and Place intervention priority. This funding will be used to procure a firm of consultants to undertake feasibility, design work and consultation for two of the public open space and realm proposals.

2.2.2 The new public square will enable the creation of a new public space/flexi space in the heart of the community that will be able to host events, including the Saturday market. This is located just off King Street and Prince Street (opposite Ramsbottom Kitchen Company).

2.2.3 The funding for both feasibilities has been profiled to be spent from April 2023 to March 2024 but it is anticipated that work on the brief will commence as soon as possible and likely to be complete before March 2024. It should be noted that no funding has been identified for implementation of the designs at this stage.

2.3 Active Travel Projects

2.3.1 In the region of £2.3 million will be available to help deliver the active travel proposals and connectivity elements in Ramsbottom, as part of a wider Greater Manchester scheme where funding has been secured from the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).

2.3.2 Following on from surveying and assessment work, a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) has been developed for the borough-wide schemes and it is expected that by May 2023 at the latest that Transport for Greater Manchester will approve the SOBC and GMCA will note approval and enable the capital funding to be drawn down. Work will then commence to progress to detailed design.

2.3.3 Post SOBC approval, the Ramsbottom traffic modelling programme will be used to assess various impacts of the wider plan including the parking strategy, public realm initiatives etc.

2.3.4 The CRSTS funding will not be able to deliver the full spectrum of the projects that have been identified for Ramsbottom and priority projects will need to be agreed. The Council's Strategic Transport Group will consider the proposals in the strategic context of the Borough-Wide Transport Strategy and the plan itself. Further funding will be identified and secured as the plans are developed in more detail.

2.4 Car Parking Strategy

2.4.1 The Council has received from the appointed consultants a draft parking strategy and its Transport Team are in the process of considering the document in the context of the borough-wide transport strategy.

3.0 Issues

3.1 Public Space Project (PS3): Square Street

3.1.1 Square Street is currently closed on a temporary basis by a licence issued originally under Coronavirus legislation (The Business & Planning Act 2020) to support local businesses on the street continue to trade during Covid and effectively allowed the extension of their business to the outdoor area i.e. tables and chairs onto the highway to take into account of Covid restrictions and social distancing. This was then extended under the Business and Planning Act (Pavement Licence) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 and the licences granted on Square Street are due to expire on 16th April 2023. It is understood that this cannot be extended any further. And as such the highway is scheduled to reopen to traffic on 16th April 2023

3.1.2 The temporary licence as explained in the paragraph above is not able to be extended under the existing arrangement due to the temporary Covid legislation coming to an end. Any future road closures will possibly require the use of a more permanent arrangement such as a stopping up order.

3.1.3 Opportunities to continue with a temporary arrangement are being explored with both Legal Services and the Highways Department and it is hoped that a solution can be reached which will allow the road closure to remain in place whilst the public realm design work and consultation takes place, as per the proposal in the plan. However, it is unknown at this stage what the options are and how quickly they could be implemented, alongside what capacity the Highways Department have to deliver the work required. As previously explained, this could result in the road being reopened to traffic in the short-term on 16th April 2023.

3.1.4 All affected businesses have been informed and some are in favour of the road being reopened to traffic.

3.1.5 The commissioning of the public realm design work is scheduled for delivery during Year 2 (2023/24) of the UKSPF programme. Whilst there is a desire to start to progress this, there are significant interdependencies with the development of other key Council strategies and programmes i.e. Active

Travel, the Borough-Wide Transport Strategy and Ramsbottom Parking Strategy that will require very careful consideration. A brief is currently being developed that will set out these interdependencies for further discussion before the invitation to tender document for the public realm design work is drawn up.

- 3.1.6 The UKSPF is for the feasibility and consultation on the public realm improvements only. Capital funding for delivery of capital works is still to be identified and secured. Additional work is required to identify future funding opportunities.

3.2 Business Project (B1): New Enterprise Centre

- 3.2.1 The Evergreen funding is for the feasibility study only. Further funding will need to be identified and secured for the capital works required. Additional work is required to identify future funding opportunities.

3.3 Resources

- 3.3.1 Management of the above projects will have significant resource implications within the Business, Growth & Infrastructure (BGI) department. There is no allocation for staff time within the Evergreen funding allocation or the UKSPF funding adding further pressure to BGI's capacity.

- 3.3.2 Whilst BGI is committed to the delivery of the plan, it must be accepted that there will be a significant period of time prior to delivery of the proposals mentioned within this report and the other proposals in the plan to consider further funding opportunities and staffing resources.

4.0 Governance

- 4.1 As per the Cabinet report 9th March 2022, there will need to be good robust governance and leadership in place to ensure a successful transition from the proposals in the plan through to detailed design and implementation. The Council will be looking to involve the local community and local businesses as part of any governance arrangements.

- 4.2 It is the intention to create a dedicated Ramsbottom Programme Management Office (PMO) i.e. a group of officers, relevant to the size of the programme. This group will provide the oversight and monitor the proposed projects, including having a delivery role in line with available resources. This will sit within the Economic Development and Projects Service area, which will work across a range of public and private sectors as stakeholders to help provide a co-ordinated approach to project implementation. The PMO will feed into the Council's Regeneration Board.

- 4.3 It is the intention to also utilise any existing Ramsbottom Town Centre groups and the community hubs to support delivery, given the finite Council resources.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The recommendations contained at the beginning of this report will enable the Council to undertake feasibility work and other outline work to progress towards detailed design and implementation of some of the key proposals of the plan that have secured funding. However, it must importantly acknowledge that there are several important and unavoidable interdependencies that must be considered that will affect the timescales for delivery, as well as the time needed to identify and secure further funding and resources to progress to delivery.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan will deliver a range of short, medium and longer terms interventions that will enhance the town centre for the benefit of all its residents, local businesses and visitors.

The preparation of the town plan is consistent with the 2030 'Let's Do It' Strategy, particularly in terms of driving economic growth and inclusion.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

There are no negative impacts on equality and there is a positive impact recorded.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan includes proposals for enhanced and new active travel links into and across the town centre, which will help provide an alternative to the use of vehicles.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

| Risk / opportunity | Mitigation |
|--|--|
| Adequate funding is not available and/or secured to progress to the delivery of the proposals outlined in this report, alongside the remaining proposals contained within the plan. | The Council is committed to sourcing and securing additional sources of funding where this is identified, including the option of placing the proposals and funding requirements on future pipeline requests that may come from GMCA or other. |
| Adequate resources are not available within the BGI department to manage the delivery of the proposals outlined in this report, alongside the remaining proposals contained within the plan. | BGI is committed to looking at options to ensure delivery of the proposals and overall plan. |

| | |
|---|--|
| There is not an immediate solution for continuing the temporary licence arrangement on Square Street. | BGI is committed to working with Legal Services and the Highways Department to consider all options. |
|---|--|

Legal Implications:

The recommendation to appoint Focus Consultants follows a compliant procurement procedure. Focus Consultants were successful in a mini-competition conducted under the NGS SBS Framework – Lot 10 Multidisciplinary Team and Ancillary Services.

Financial Implications:

The Council's Capital Programme includes £270k for the preliminary work required on the town plan and market chambers, it does not include a budget to carry out any works as a result of these plans. The sourcing of external grant funding through Evergreen, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and CRSTS and any other sources will be pursued further once the plans are further developed. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet at that time

Background papers:

Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan Cabinet report 9th March 2022 - <https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s30372/Ramsbottom%20Town%20Centre%20Plan.pdf>

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

| Term | Meaning |
|--|--|
| City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) | A funding source that will help to transform local and strategic connectivity, making it easier to travel sustainably, affordably and quickly, improving access to employment and enhancing quality of life. |
| Evergreen funding | A funding source that will support development projects that contribute towards the local economy. |
| UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) | A key funding source that is supporting the Government's Levelling Up agenda. |
| Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) | A business case that represents the final deliverables for a project. The document is |

| Term | Meaning |
|-------------|---|
| | used to demonstrate the case for investment in a project to deliver strategic transport improvements. |
| PMO | Programme Management Office – a group of officers. |