

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

4TH AUGUST 2010

FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Dyer/Booth/Denaro
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Frontage Improvement Scheme is a town centre regeneration project between Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council which aims to regenerate and revitalise the town centre.
- 1.2 A budget of £20,000 has currently been allocated to the scheme to be spent during 2010/11. This comprises of £10,000 from Worcestershire County Council, £5000 from the Bromsgrove Town Centre budget and £5000 from the Strategic Planning Team budget. The existing fund could potentially assist with 5 improvement schemes within the Phase 1 target area of 19 properties. Additional funding of £50,000 is therefore being sought to boost the impact of the scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommend to Full Council the approval of £50,000 funding to support the project, to be released from balances to be funded by receipts generated from VAT refunds.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area was designated in 1968 and contains a high number of listed buildings and notable unlisted historic buildings. The Council has a statutory duty under s71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. A draft Character Appraisal for the town centre including management and enhancement proposals was therefore produced in November 2009. The draft management proposals highlighted the need for improvements to the shopfronts within the town centre, and improved maintenance of the historic buildings which led to the allocation of the existing scheme budget for frontage improvements. A copy of the draft character appraisal has been attached as Appendix A.
- 3.2 The current budget of £20,000 is being targeted to No's 61-97 High Street (odd properties only) between Church Street and Mill Lane which contains

19 retail units - 13 of which are in listed buildings. A map of the target area and photos of the historic buildings have been included as Appendices B and C. Assistance is available for shopfront improvement works, replacement signage and external repairs to upper floors such as window refurbishment at a rate of 80% of the cost of the works to a maximum of £4000 per property. Where possible additional funding will also be offered for conversion of empty upper floors through the Housing Empty Spaces scheme to maximise impact.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 The current budget will potentially improve 5 properties within the target area, however additional funding would have a more noticeable impact on the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. A concentrated effort to enhance this cluster of listed and unlisted historic buildings will improve public perception of the town centre as a more active retail centre and demonstrate the Councils commitment to town centre regeneration in a tangible way.

4.2 It is proposed that a further budget of £50,000 be allocated to the Frontage Improvement Scheme to be spent initially on the Phase 1 target area of Nos. 61-97 High Street (odd properties only) prioritising works to the listed buildings. Dependant on uptake from Phase 1, a second phase would target other groups of important historic buildings within the Town Conservation Area for example potentially linking to the proposed street café project at Nos. 2-46 High Street. The exact details of the Phase 2 target area would be delegated for approval by the Town Centre Steering Group at a later date if required.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It is proposed that the additional £50,000 could be funded from the VAT refunds that have recently been received in relation to VAT liability over a number of years. The scheme would be managed by the Town Centre Regeneration Programme Team in conjunction with the Conservation Officer. All associated administration costs would be met by the existing Town Centre and Strategic Planning Team budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council has a statutory duty under s71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Frontage Improvement Scheme will support the regeneration and revitalisation of the town centre, which is a key Council priority. Improvement of the High Street frontages will enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and supports our current Local Plan policies relating to the historic environment. The scheme will also make the town centre a more attractive location for businesses, thereby adding to the vitality of the area.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The Frontage Improvement Scheme supports CO1 Regeneration and CO1 Priority to improve the Town Centre. The additional funding would improve the contribution the scheme could make to these Council objectives.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There may be some risk of under spend as the additional funding would not become available until September 2010 and should be spent by the end of March 2011. It is therefore envisaged that any unallocated funds would be redirected either to a Phase 2 target area or to support the conversion of empty upper floors on the High Street. Details of the reserve schemes could be delegated for approval by the Town Centre Steering Group. The risks are being managed by separate risk registers for both the Town Centre Regeneration Programme and the Strategic Planning teams.

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Phase 1 of the scheme is being targeted to owners and tenants of properties between 61 and 97 High Street (odd numbers only). The target area was approved by the Town Centre Steering Group on 20th May 2010. Leaflets advertising the scheme have been sent by post to the registered owner of each building within the target area and hand delivered to the tenant of each retail unit. Details of the scheme have also been included on the Conservation page of the Council website and a press release issued, which was reported in the Bromsgrove Advertiser on 7th July. Following this, three properties (no.61, 67 and 89 High Street) have indicated that they wish to apply for assistance.

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11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Frontage Improvement Scheme is not means tested and applications are welcomed from any owner or tenant within the Phase 1 target area.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 The funding associated with the scheme will be spent within the Council's current procurement framework to ensure Value for Money. In addition the expenditure on the scheme will encourage businesses into the town and therefore generate more cash to the local economy and the Council.

- 12.2 The owner or tenant of the building is responsible for preparing plans for the improvement works, arranging contractors and project managing the works on site. The Council will check the suitability of the proposals before making a formal funding offer, and will then check the quality and extent of the works carried out before any payments are issued. The Council therefore has no liability for overseeing the contractor or maintaining the works in the future.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

- 13.1 The improvement works carried out to buildings within the target area will improve their energy efficiency and retain the embodied energy within the existing historic fabric. Applicants will be encouraged to use local contractors and locally sourced materials.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

- 16.1 None

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 17.1 None

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18. LESSONS LEARNT

- 18.1 Any lessons learnt from the improvement scheme will be used in other Town Centre Regeneration projects and heritage based funding schemes.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 19.1 The Housing Initiatives Officer has carried out a public consultation to gauge interest in assistance from various existing housing assistance schemes. This has established initial interest from six properties within the Phase 1 target area.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	No
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Executive Director - Finance & Corporate Resources)	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

21. WARDS AFFECTED

St. Johns

22. APPENDICES

- A Draft Character Appraisal
- B Map of Phase 1 target area
- C Photos of Phase 1 target buildings

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AUTHOR OF REPORT

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