

Agenda item 4

For decision: Next steps on Market Place Remodelling

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to update cllrs on the work to remodel the Market Place to improve its appearance and make it more pedestrian friendly. Delegated authority is sought to continue negotiations with Somerset County Council (SCC) and Mendip District Council (MDC) with a view to bringing a scheme forward.

Background

Cllrs will be aware that FTC submitted an appeal against refusal of planning and listed building consent for improvements around the Boyle Cross. The appeal was allowed and costs were awarded against MDC.

Plans will be shown at the Council meeting, but the works that are now permitted include:

- The renovation of the Boyle Cross and reinstatement of a fountain
- New high quality natural stone paving and seating
- Power and lighting
- The removal of parking except for a loading bay for delivery vehicles/police bay

The Boyle Cross scheme is only part of a bigger project for the Market Place that is designed to improve its appearance and make it more pedestrian friendly. Again, plans will be shown at the meeting to illustrate this bigger project. The main features that impact on highway land and which have already been approved in principle by SCC include:

- The introduction of a 20-mph speed limit and 'gateway' features to alert drivers to the fact that they are entering a zone of high pedestrian footfall
- Uncontrolled 'courtesy crossings' in locations that are already well used as crossing points at the bottom of Bath Street and between the George Hotel and Boyle Cross; survey work conducted last year demonstrates that between the bottom of Bath Street and the junction with King Street in the region of 1500 pedestrian crossing movements a day occur
- Widening of the bus laybys to aid visibility in the carriageway and reduce congestion in the Market Place; this is designed to overcome the current problems that occur when two buses arrive at the same time on either side of the road and block the highway
- New bus shelters and paving around them

Update

Since the outcome of the appeal was announced, discussions have been held with officers and cllrs at MDC with a view to securing MDC's commitment as landowner to enabling works around the Boyle Cross monument. They have requested that we consult with representatives of parish councils around Frome before negotiations resume. A briefing is to be held on 29 March to which parish council representatives have been invited.

The plans relating to highway land have been submitted to highways officers for more detailed and technical approval and a meeting was scheduled to take place on 8 March which the EDRM will provide a verbal update on. Included on the agenda was whether SCC could contribute financially to the scheme.

Provisional costings have been prepared for all elements of the scheme and the indication is that they are affordable although it is likely that we will need to draw on the Benefit Grant that we have received from MDC (2016/17) and part of the current Saxonvale EMR to top up the Market Place Remodelling EMR that currently stands at £282k.

Conclusions

Momentum is being achieved on this project and it is important that delegated authority is given to the EDRM to continue his negotiations, the outcome of which will be reported back to Council.

Recommendations

1. That delegated authority be granted to the EDRM in consultation with Cllr Mel Usher as Project Sponsor to continue negotiations with MDC and SCC to secure commitments that will enable Market Place remodelling to proceed
2. That a report is brought back to Council to report on the outcome of these negotiations and the costs of the scheme prior to a decision being taken to commit to implementation