

Agenda item 5

For decision: Market Place remodelling

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Summary

This report brings councillors up-to-date with negotiations with Mendip District Council (MDC) and Somerset County Council (SCC) regarding proposals to remodel the Market Place. MDC have confirmed that in principle they are happy to work with FTC to deliver the first phase of improvements around the Boyle Cross monument and propose a Memorandum of Understanding governing how the two parties will work together. Given that planning consent (on appeal) and the necessary funds are also in place, councillors are asked to delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to finalise the negotiations with MDC and let a build contract for the first phase. Agreement is also sought to apply for a Traffic Regulation Order to enable a 20-mph zone to be created in the town centre as the first part of improvements on the highway.

Background

Councillors will be aware that we have been working on a project to improve the Market Place which has been subject to extensive consultation over many years. Details of the scheme were presented at the Council meeting on 8 March. There was sufficient support from councillors to delegate authority to the EDRM in consultation with Mel Usher as Project Sponsor to continue negotiations with MDC and SCC to secure their commitment to the project.

Where have we got to?

Negotiations with MDC regarding the first phase of improvements on land owned by MDC around the Boyle Cross have had a positive outcome. MDC lawyers are currently preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will govern how the two parties will work together to deliver this phase of works and how the area will be managed.

The works to the Boyle Cross area are estimated to cost £243,385. This includes the cost of construction and supervision. Tenders for this work had been invited earlier and the lowest tender was submitted by Dave Lucy Limited, a Frome based civil engineering and groundworks specialist who are now considered as our preferred contractor. The tender price is currently being checked with the contractor and I will update councillors at the meeting. Funds are already in place.

With regard to the other elements of Market Place remodelling, these are still subject to approval by SCC as local highway authority. However, discussions with highway engineers that followed the original approval in principle by the relevant Cabinet member have reached an advanced stage. The discussions have covered the scope of works, material specifications, the legal process and construction programme. They have been subject to 2 stages of safety audit. Currently, the scheme is being viewed by SCC as improvements to the existing

highway not requiring a formal planning application but subject to a s.278 Highway Agreement between SCC and FTC.

We are now preparing a final set of drawings and technical details for formal submission to SCC which involve only minor changes to those seen by councillors earlier this year which will include extending the proposed 20 mph zone to include more of Bath Street and North Parade. A plan showing this proposed extended zone will be presented at the meeting. It is understood that there is an opportunity to bid for funding through the SCC Small Improvements Scheme to cover the costs of introducing the 20-mph zone and possibly other elements of the highway works. This will be explored further with Frome's county councillors and highway engineers.

Our experience suggests that a period of 2-3 months will be required for SCC's formal response to the submission following which any amendments or modifications can be made as necessary. Once this has been completed the scope of the works will be set, formal legal work on the s.278 Agreement commenced and tenders will be invited from contractors with a view to undertaking the works in 2018. It is anticipated that a report will be brought back to Council on 11 October for formal agreement to go out to tender on the highway works.

What needs to happen next?

Subject to finalising negotiations with MDC and the contractor, the way would be clear to proceed with the first phase of the remodelling project. The construction work is expected to last 16 weeks. A start date needs to be discussed with MDC and the contractor before any formal announcement is made.

Next steps are to:

- Finalise negotiations with MDC around the MOU
- Finalise negotiations with the preferred contractor and let the contract
- Work with town centre businesses including market operators to minimise disruption during construction
- Continue working with SCC to secure approval for the proposed works on the highway
- Investigate the possibility of funding through a Small Improvement Scheme funding for the proposed 20 mph zone and other elements of the scheme and work towards securing the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders for that purpose

Recommendations

That councillors agree to delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with Cllr Mel Usher as Project Sponsor to:

- Finalise negotiations with MDC around the MOU
- Finalise negotiations with the preferred contractor, Dave Lucy Limited with a view to letting the contract as soon as possible
- Work with town centre businesses including market operators to minimise disruption during construction
- Continue working with SCC to secure approval for the proposed works on the highway with a further report to come back to Council in October 2017
- Investigate the possibility of funding through a Small Improvement Scheme for the proposed 20 mph zone and other elements of the scheme and work towards securing the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders for that purpose