

Agenda item 7

For decision – Proposed implementation of Market Place Phase 2

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Summary

The main purpose of this report is to seek approval to implement a proposed Market Place Phase 2 scheme. It provides information on the objectives and main elements of the scheme which has been subject to thorough public consultation over several years and scrutiny by Somerset County Council (highway authority) and Mendip District Council (planning authority) and now has planning consent. The report also sets out how FTC will seek to minimise disruption in the town centre once work begins.

The scheme has been out to tender. Due to the confidential nature of the bids, details of the tenders received, other fees, the resultant scheme costs, how the scheme will be financed and the proposed timescale for delivery will be presented in confidential session following this item. This will be with a view to delegating approval to the Deputy Town Clerk to finalise a construction contract and enter into a legal agreement with Somerset County Council to enable FTC to work on the highway.

Once the contract has been finalised, the details will be made public and FTC will inform town centre businesses, event organisers and residents and the wider community. This will be done well in advance of the start of works and will provide updates at regular intervals throughout the construction phase.

Background

Proposals for a second phase of improvements to the Market Place have been the subject of thorough engagement with the local community over several years and scrutiny by Somerset County Council (as highway authority) and Mendip District Council (as planning authority). The scheme now has planning consent. The main objectives are:

- to make the Market Place more attractive;
- to make the Market Place more pedestrian and bus passenger friendly;
- address some of the congestion with a view to reducing high levels of pollution;
- improve the facilities for deliveries to support town centre businesses;
- make Cork Street a better environment for disabled drivers

Main elements of the scheme

These are:

- Realignment of the bus lay-bys & new bus shelters which will be future proofed to enable the installation of Real Time Information displays later
- New uncontrolled pedestrian crossings to complement the existing zebra and pelican crossings
- Additional disabled parking bays in Cork Street, the facility for disabled drivers to park on-street through the evening and more dropped kerbs to enable better access onto the pavements
- A dedicated delivery bay outside The George
- Better pavements to improve conditions for pedestrians and the visual appearance of the area

[Appendix 5](#) provides a more in-depth briefing on the scheme including visualisations and an illustrative layout plan.

Update on progress

- Planning consent was granted last summer
- A legal agreement between FTC and Somerset County Council (SCC) that enables FTC to work on the highway is ready for signature
- SCC's technical approval is imminent
- New construction tenders have been received

Construction tenders

Tenders have been received which at the time of writing this report were subject to analysis by FTC's team and transport consultants, IMA Transport Planning. The plan is to present the conclusions of this tender exercise in confidential session at the meeting owing to the confidential nature of the bids. In that session, the costs of the scheme including fees will be presented in more detail with a view to delegating authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to finalise a construction contract. Once the contract is finalised, the details will be made public.

It is proposed that the contract will be supervised by IMA who have been involved with the design of the scheme and have helped to secure planning and highways approval. Their fees which will be a percentage of the contract sum will be set out in confidential session.

Timescale for construction

Further details of the timescale for construction proposed by the bidders will be provided in confidential session. As soon as the contract has been finalised, this information will be made public.

How we will minimise disruption in the town centre

The following represent the key measures to minimise disruption:

- **Phasing** - the work will be undertaken in short discrete phases so that only small parts of the Market Place are impacted at any one time and scheduled events are unaffected by the works. However, every effort will be made to complete the works as quickly as possible.
- **Car parks** - access to all car parks will be maintained throughout construction.
- **Buses** – notwithstanding the work on bus stops, arrangements will be made for passengers to catch a bus in the Market Place throughout the construction phase.
- **Disabled parking** – the first phase of work will involve the construction of a new disabled parking bay in the Market Place and the installation of new bays in Cork Street to maximise disabled parking throughout and beyond the construction phase. There will be some short-term disruption to disabled parking facilities outside the George, but this will be mitigated by the measures outlined above.
- **Minimising queues** - to enable work on the carriageway, it is proposed that a one-way system will be in operation with the diversion of traffic. This is designed to keep the traffic moving and avoid lengthy queues during construction. The details are subject to further discussion with the appointed contractor and approval by the highway authority.
- **Customer access to business premises** - we will ensure that access to shops, banks and other businesses is maintained throughout the build with pavement works around doorways and ATMs undertaken outside normal shop opening hours.
- **Deliveries** – there will continue to be provision made for deliveries within the Market Place and once the new bespoke delivery bay is installed outside the George, these facilities will be enhanced.
- **Night working** - where necessary, some elements of the work will be undertaken at night to minimise disruption to town centre users.
- **Engagement with town centre business owners, event organisers and residents** – ahead of and at regular intervals during the works, we will contact all town centre business owners, event organisers and residents to ensure that they are fully informed, and disruption is minimised
- **Community information** – we will use all our channels of communication to keep the community informed both ahead of and during the works

Bus shelters

The design of the proposed bus shelters allows for some artwork that is unique to Frome to be displayed on the glass panels in the form of etching. Councillors have already agreed that we should re-confirm our commitment to working with our twin towns. As an expression of this, it is proposed that FTC in consultation with Frome Twinning Association launches a design competition in the town to come up with a suitable design that reflects this commitment. FTC to lead on this project. The cost of this is estimated to be £1000 to be funded from the budget for the scheme.

Recommendations

1. Proceed to implement the Market Place Phase 2 scheme as soon as possible subject to agreement on the costs to be discussed in confidential session
2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to:
 - a. launch a design competition for the bus shelter artwork designs in consultation with the Frome Twinning Association
 - b. contact business owners, town centre event organisers and the wider community well ahead of the start of works and at regular intervals through the construction phase to provide information on the details of the scheme and traffic management arrangements