

## Agenda Item 5

For decision – Further improvements to the area around Boyle Cross, Market Place

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### Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for FTC to undertake further improvements to the Boyle Cross area, including additional planters, plants, seating, and shade.

The report gives Cllrs two options. First, revisit the plans for the site produced by landscape architects Nicholas Pearson in October 2018 and with minor modifications explore integrating these into the current Phase II of the Market Place project.

The second option is to start these improvements afresh and the report sets out the steps that will be necessary to implement the proposals together with an estimated timeline.

### Background

The area around the Boyle Cross and fountain is seen by most residents and businesses as the centre of the town. It is the space that is used to celebrate the switching on of the Christmas lights and it is at the juxtaposition of the towns historic shopping streets.

It is the most visible open space that anyone travelling through the town sees as they enter Frome from either the northern or southern approaches. It is the space that could be used to attract visitors passing through to decide to stop and spend some time exploring the town, visiting our numerous retailers, restaurants, bars, and coffee shops.

The need to improve the centre of town was identified long ago, first in the Vision 4 Frome Community Plan and latterly in the last three four-year Strategic Plans of the town council. Over the past seven years FTC carried out extensive primary research and numerous surveys and engagement projects. All of which highlighted the unsatisfactory traffic and road crossing issues in the centre of town. As a consequence, FTC commissioned plans to improve the town centre.

Phase 1 of this project which was completed in April 2018 transformed the Boyle Cross area and made the following improvements to:

- The listed monument incorporating the Boyle Cross
- Fountain and plinth were restored
- The whole area was resurfaced with Welsh pennant stone paving
- New seating area at the Bath Street (southern) end was built
- Electric connection points and removeable bollards were installed to enable traders and event managers to use the space optimally
- A loading bay was established to enable deliveries to local businesses

Additional landscaping proposals for the Boyle Cross area including more seating and planters were commissioned from Nicholas Pearson Associates in October 2018. These plans included

additional seating, planters, and trees outside the Coventry Building Society and on the corner of Market Place and Cork Street. There was some consultation with the local community and with Highways and Mendip all of which was positive. Other than on the Boyle Cross area, the proposals posed security problems such as tree masking CCTV sight lines and did not progress. It was also felt at the time that Phase 1 and 2 needed to "settle down" in order to understand how the whole area was used. The Nicholas Pearson proposals were, therefore, retained with the intention of taking them forward at the right time.

Phase 2 of the Market Place works are now underway and will provide improvements to the bus stops, create two new courtesy crossings on to the Boyle Cross area, pavements will be widened and resurfaced and improved parking for disabled drivers will be allocated on Subway side of the road for the first time.

## Discussion

Phase 3 of the Market Place project is the subject of this report. As indicated above, it was always the intention of FTC to add to the soft (vegetation) and hard (seating) landscaping around the Boyle Cross area. Over the past few weeks, a picture of how the space could be used has been produced and some initial discussions have taken place with local residents and business owners in the centre of the town. There remains a desire to see the space used more for selling and consuming food or drink, hosting live music events as well as using the space as it always has been for markets and congregations. Given the level of support received from these initial discussions, it is proposed to bring forward phase 3 now.

## Next steps - Cllrs have two options

### Option 1

#### Re-engage with Nicholas Pearson to update their existing scheme

We would ask them to review their proposals from October 2018 for the Boyle Cross area only and enhance them with additional seating and more planters along the pavement outside *eyetech* opticians and the TSB (the south side). Given that the majority of the surveying, drawing and investigations have already been done, it is expected that their costs would be much less than employing a landscape architect from scratch (as in option 2). As far as we can tell, the current designs are acceptable to Highways and Mendip. The picture referred to above will be used as a starting point for discussions with Nicholas Pearson.

Although we do not know precise costings of this additional work, it is hoped that some of the contingency for Phase 2 could be used for this purpose. Obviously, there may be other demands on this contingency as the Phase 2 projects proceed and these demands would need to be given priority. However, based on these cost assumptions and following a suitable level of engagement to "check" they are still popular with the local community and confirmation they would be acceptable to Mendip and Highways, it is realistic to aim for completion of this work within the window of the current Phase II works.

We would also like to expand to the landscaping scheme in the Boyle Cross area to include more planters and seating, especially along the roadside edge of the site and we would like to

discuss this with Nicholas Pearson too. If their proposals are within the Phase II budget, then we could implement them. This is possible but by no means certain so Cllrs may have to consider re-allocating a budget for these works in this financial year or if that was not possible, agree to include it in the 2021/22 budget.

## Option 2

Engage a landscape architect or other suitably qualified person to design a landscape scheme for the Boyle Cross area.

To do this, we need to prepare a brief that clearly sets out the vision and requirements for a new scheme, this will include the production of technical drawings required for permissions and manufacture of planters and seating, and artists impressions/photomontages for engagement purposes. Because of the sloping nature of the site there are many different levels and angles including steps so any new planters and seating may need to be bespoke in design to ensure that they can be levelled on site. There will be a direction in the brief, where possible, to use local companies to manufacture suitable items.

The brief will also set out the need to ensure that any scheme does not compromise the weekly and monthly markets, events, access to the site and our ability to maintain the fountain and the electricity/water pop ups. Any scheme will need to complement phases 1 and 2 and not impact on pedestrian and vehicular visibility. Ensuring the area is safe for all users including those with restricted mobility and visual impairment is also important. Any quotations will need to include an estimate of the overall costs of implementation and maintenance costs.

In addition to the above requirements, there will be an option in the brief to provide a separate quote to project manage the implementation of the scheme.

A draft has been prepared (at [Appendix 2](#)) so that, should Cllrs agree the recommendation, it can be issued on 25 June. We will ensure that those who have had any previous involvement/interest in the scheme are invited to quote.

In line with the Council's financial regulations, quotations will be required from a minimum of three suppliers, any quotations will also need to adhere to the Council's ethical decision making matrix. Based on previous quotations for landscaping design work, the amount Cllrs should expect to allocate for this part of the project is £7000 - £10000, not including project management.

## Obtain necessary permissions

As Mendip District Council are the owners of the Boyle Cross Area, we will need their permission to proceed. Once a detailed scheme has been drawn up, we will submit this to Mendip for approval.

In parallel with this we will need to apply for a certificate of lawful development for a proposed use, to establish whether planning permission will be required, although initial indications are that planning permission and listed building consent will not be required.

Consultation with SCC highways will also be required to ensure that there are no visibility issues to drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. It should also be noted that any works that impinge or impact the pavement area outside of Eye tech, HSBC and TSB will also require a separate highways licence.

### Public engagement

Once all the necessary permissions have been obtained, a programme of public consultation/engagement will be required to ensure that there is support from residents and businesses.

We would prefer to carry out an extensive public engagement exercise to understand exactly what people would like to see happen on the Boyle Cross area. However, we have learned from our previous engagement exercise on phase 1 and 2 that there will be restrictions on what can be included due to the limitations of the site and it is important that we do not consult the community on a scheme that isn't achievable. If it is possible, we will ask the architects to provide design options for the seating and planters, so that residents will be able to have some input to the overall design.

### Estimated Timeline

The timeframe set out below is based on previous experience of how long it could take to implement this project. However, we will do our best to streamline the process as set out in the report and aim for the works to coincide with the end of the Market Place phase 2 works.

Action	Estimated timeline
Brief sent to landscape architects	25 <sup>th</sup> June
Quotations received	10 <sup>th</sup> July
Architects engaged	13 <sup>th</sup> July
Scheme design submitted by	12 <sup>th</sup> August
Permissions in place	1 <sup>st</sup> October
Public engagement/consultation	5 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> October
Scheme implementation & completion (allowing time for manufacture of planters etc)	TBC

### Estimated costs

Based on the costs of previous schemes, we suggest that Cllrs should expect the total cost of the scheme (including architects fees) to be in the region of £25k. There is no allocated budget for this project and so either the General Reserve or the Saxonvale legacy EMR are possible options.

### Recommendations

1. Approve the principle of further landscape improvements to the Boyle Cross area as described in the report
2. Take option 1 and delegate to the Planning and Development Manager, in consultation with Cllr Dove, to progress the scheme as far as possible within the constraints of the existing project budget for Phase II of the Market Place.
3. Return to Council for further approvals if necessary.