

Subject:	SANDWICH GUILDHALL FORECOURT IMPROVEMENT WORKS
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 5 October 2020
Report of:	Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Corporate Property
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Purpose of the report:	To consider the business case to carry out improvement works to the Guildhall Forecourt in Sandwich, which form part of 'A New Vision for Sandwich'.
Recommendation:	<p>To confirm agreement to the improvement works to the Guildhall Forecourt (a multi-stakeholder-funded project), using the £400,000 allocation in the Medium-Term Financial Plan towards a total project budget of £1.05 million.</p> <p>To confirm agreement to the advance purchase of Yorkstone paving (that is on a long lead-in) required to deliver the project at a cost of approx. £70,000 to £100,000 (up to 25% deposit required).</p> <p>To authorise the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial), in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Environment and Corporate Services, to take all necessary actions, including, but not limited to, the awarding of contracts, to deliver the works that are the subject of this report.</p>

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Guildhall Forecourt, a focal point and hub within Sandwich was identified by the public (during a wider review of Sandwich) as an area in need of improvement. This project seeks to rejuvenate the forecourt area; providing an improved surface, new street furniture, easier access, a more flexible space as well as improve connections to the rest of the town and improvement works to the public highway.
- 1.2 Within an overall project budget of £1.05 million a provision of £400,000 identified in the current Medium-Term Financial Plan is to be used alongside funding from a number of key stakeholders to carry out the improvement works.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Guildhall Forecourt Improvement Works are part of the wider "A New Vision for Sandwich" programme of improvements to Sandwich Town, they are seen as the driver for future works. The programme is managed by a partnership board, established in September 2016, chaired by the Mayor of Sandwich. The New Vision for Sandwich Project includes representatives from Kent County Council, English Heritage and Dover District Council, all who participated in the development of the proposals.

- 2.2 Originally planned for delivery in 2020, due to Covid 19 and the rescheduling of the Open Golf tournament to July 2021 it is now envisaged that these works will commence Autumn 2021.
- 2.3 Planning Permission (DOV/18/00312) for the erection of a bus shelter, replacement paving and street furniture, installation of external lighting and associated landscaping was obtained on 3rd August 2018 by lead consultants HMY and Mark Hanton Studios.
- 2.4 The project also includes improvement works to the Public Highway which will be carried out under light touch Section 278 agreement. The precise terms and conditions are currently being negotiated.
- 2.5 In order to commence the works within the 3 years period required under the planning permission the bus shelter will be relocated within Sandwich from the Guildhall Forecourt in Spring 2021.
- 2.6 The project is being delivered in partnership by Dover District Council, Sandwich Town Council and Kent County Council. Dover District Council are taking on the Project Management for delivery of the works.
- 2.7 In previous reports to Cabinet the forecourt and highway works were reported as separate works packages. It is now proposed to deliver both at the same time. By bringing both workstreams together it will allow closer management and sequencing of the works and allow closer control across what is ultimately a single project. It will prevent help prevent potential conflicts between different the phases of work.
- 2.8 Given the effects that Covid 19 has brought upon us all the project has taken on even more significance as there is a greater desire to see more progressive use of outside areas to serve business needs.
- 2.9 Cabinet are asked to note that following a competitive tender process the Strategic Director (Operations & Commercial) will evaluate tenders, value engineer if necessary and award the contract for the works in accordance with the existing scheme of officer delegation in consultation with Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Corporate Services and key stakeholders.
- 3. **Advance purchase of Yorkstone**
- 3.1 In order to ensure that the improvement works transition into the existing townscape seamlessly reclaimed Yorkstone paving is being used to allow new surfaces to match the existing (seen throughout much of Sandwich).
- 3.2 The paving is difficult to procure in the quantities required for this project so it is proposed to place a deposit to in effect advance purchase the material and secure its availability for Autumn 2021.
- 3.3 To secure the paving suppliers require between 15% - 25% (subject to change) deposit of the total sum. It is envisaged that the Yorkstone paving for the project will cost in the region of £70 - £100k requiring up to £25k to be made available. Cabinet are requested to note that the Strategic Director (Operations & Commercial) will seek to make a payment in 2020 in order to ensure the material is ready.
- 4. **Identification of Options**
- 4.1 Option 1: To do nothing
- 4.2 Option 2: For the improvement works to go ahead
- 5. **Evaluation of Options**
- 5.1 Option 1: Not doing this work will mean that this key space within Sandwich is not be improved. The continued and future uses of the space will be put at risk as drainage and safety issues associated with the cobblestone surface and general access will

remain and could worsen. The forecourt will not be fit for purpose for the future and accessibility across the space will remain an issue.

- 5.2 Option 2: Updating the street furniture and surface will make the space safer, provide more flexibility in use and make it more accessible to the visiting public. Reconfiguration of the bus hub will improve traffic flow and safety for pedestrians. It also starts the important pedestrian links through the rest of the town.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 The total project budget is £1.05 million.
- 6.2 It is proposed to use the £400k provision in the current Medium-Term Capital Programme along with the other partner funding to carry out the improvement works; there are no revenue implications. Sandwich Town Council take on the legacy of the maintenance once the works are complete.
- 6.3 Sandwich Town Council are applying for a £350k loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). Confirmation of this is expected in advance of the Cabinet meeting.
- 6.4 The funding partners are listed below:

Funder	Amount	Funding Status
Sandwich Town Council	£350k	Approved PWLB loan (awaiting)
Kent County Council	£150k	Confirmed Contingency Sum
Royal & Ancient (R&A) Golf Club	£75k	Confirmation in writing
Discovery Park	£50k	Confirmation in writing
Princes	£25k	Confirmation in writing

The above are all subject to formal agreements and payment structures being put in place.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 Due to its conservation area setting alongside historic buildings the materials to be used for the works must complement the existing environment. Where possible locally sourced and reclaimed materials (Yorkstone) will be used. The main pallet of materials is one of longevity and low maintenance.
- 7.2 The main strength of this project from an environmental point of view is that it is helping improve a public transport and pedestrian hub, providing links within and to the town and surrounding areas. Its redevelopment will encourage the use of these sustainable methods of transport within a town centre location (in a bid to help reduce local car congestion as a result of the works). These works aim to improve the local environment for all who visit Sandwich.

8. Corporate Implications

- 8.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment. (DL)
- 8.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Head of Governance has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make.

- 8.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 8.4 Other Officers (as appropriate): Head of Inward Investment and Tourism: The proposal to improve the Guildhall Forecourt and the adjacent highway at the Cattle Market has been the subject of an extensive multi-partner approach alongside local consultation that has informed the development of the scheme. While relevant consents and approvals have been obtained as part of this process, the implementation and timing of the scheme has been determined by the need to align with other works, events such as the 149 Open and conclusion of the funding sources. The cancellation of the 149th Open and the impacts of Covid-19 have brought challenges to the intended timing of the start of project; it effectively being pushed back a year to September 2021. However, while the need for the project evolved in an earlier climate, it is very evident that the post Covid-19 lockdown has resulted in greater awareness of the value of outside space and the environment; the benefits of the café culture and the need to lessen the impacts of vehicular traffic in town centre localities. Adding this to the changing habits borne out of the 'staycation', where coastal localities are experiencing a resurgence of interest, has highlighted the need to deliver this project as a matter of priority both for the local community and the wider district. This would, therefore, accord with and support the aims of the Tourism and Visitor Strategy. Finally, it should also be noted that improvements in the place making fostered by this project will also add value to the growing development and investments at Discovery Park and elsewhere in the area.
9. **Appendices**
- None.
10. **Background Papers**
- Planning Permission (DOV/18/00312)

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