

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2019

Title of report	COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes/No b) Community Yes/No
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Purpose of report	To inform Cabinet of the midpoint review of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme, and seek Cabinet approval for the prioritisation of existing funds to buildings on Marlborough Square and other key buildings for a limited time.
Reason for decision	To progress the relaunch of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.
Council priorities	Building confidence in Coalville Business and jobs
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	There are no financial implications from this report as it refers to funding which has been previously approved, and no staff implications.
Risk Management	N/A
Equalities Impact Screening	N/A
Human Rights	N/A
Transformational Government	N/A
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.

Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	None
Background papers	Provisional Outturn - report to Cabinet – 29 July 2014 Local Development Order - report to Cabinet – 21 July 2015 Report to Cabinet – 26 July 2016 Report to Cabinet – 6 March 2018
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CONSIDERS THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME MIDPOINT REVIEW AND NOTES THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE. 2. NOTES THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME AS SET OUT IN THE MIDPOINT REVIEW (APPENDIX A) AND APPROVES THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. 3. APPROVES THE PRIORITISATION OF £150,000 OF EXISTING FUNDS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME TO BUILDINGS ON MARLBOROUGH SQUARE FOR A PERIOD OF 18 MONTHS AND TO PRIORITISE 50% OF THE REMAINING FUNDING FOR KEY PROPERTIES FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS. 4. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLACE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS TO IDENTIFY KEY PROPERTIES AND TO REVIEW THE SCHEME ANNUALLY AND MAKE ANY REQUIRED CHANGES.

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the progress made on the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.
- 1.2 To inform Cabinet of the recommendations to improve the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme as set out in the Midpoint Review (Appendix A) .
- 1.3 To request Cabinet approval to prioritise £150,000 of the existing funding available through the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme to buildings on Marlborough Square, for a period of 18 months and to prioritise 50% of the remaining funding for key properties for the first year of what is expected to be a three year scheme.

- 1.4 To seek Cabinet approval to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business to identify key properties and to review the scheme annually and make changes as necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the improvement scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

- 2.1 The Prince's Foundation's Coalville Regeneration Strategy (2009) identified the importance of making improvements to shop fronts in Coalville town centre.
- 2.2 To this end, the Coalville frontages scheme was launched in July 2015 offering grant funding to improve the frontages of eligible properties along Hotel Street and High Street.
- 2.3 In July 2016, Cabinet approved extending the scheme for Phase 2 to include properties on parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road.
- 2.4 To date, the scheme has approved grant intervention for 16 eligible applications. Grants have been paid out for 14 completed projects. Please see Appendix 2 of the Midpoint Review for further information.
- 2.5 The positive impacts of the scheme to date includes improved shop appearance and security as well as positive feedback from shopkeepers. Extending the monitoring (as described in section 4) will illustrate these benefits more clearly. However officers managing the project have encountered a series of difficulties administering the scheme that have resulted in delays and frustration for applicants, contractors and council officers.
- 2.5 Acknowledging these difficulties, it was decided to pause the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme project to complete a midpoint review. The review has allowed officers to reflect on the outputs of the scheme, and propose changes to improve the future administration to ensure the scheme runs effectively and value for money is being achieved.
- 2.6 The Midpoint Review sets out a series recommendations to improve the scheme which is expected to continue for up to a further 3 years.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHEME

- 3.1 Due to the importance of making improvements to Marlborough Square it is recommended that £150,000 of the existing funding available through the Frontage Improvement Scheme is prioritised for this area, for a period of 18 months. This will enable the remainder of the uncommitted funding, £231,770, to be allocated to the other previously approved areas which comprises of parts of Belvoir Road, Jackson Street, Ashby Road, Hotel Street and High Street and for half of this amount to be prioritised for key buildings on these roads.
- 3.2 The Midpoint Review makes a series of further recommendations with regard to improvements to the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme:
- A two stage process is adopted for the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme, to replace the current single stage process. At Stage 1, the design drawings and specification would need to be approved by the grant panel. At Stage 2, the applicant would source quotes on the basis of the design and specification agreed at Stage 1.

- An architectural consultant is appointed by the Council as the professional adviser to support the design and delivery of the two stage process. They would replace the service currently provided to the Council by the Principal Historic Buildings Officer for Leicestershire County Council and also support grant applicants in sourcing quotes and managing contractors.
- Develop more detailed criteria for awarding grants in excess of the standard cap of £25,000.
- Widen the pool of contractors used to provide quotes for works.
- To increase due diligence checks in respect of the status of applicants, as well as greater input from relevant council teams prior to consideration of applications by the grant panel.
- Officers to review all documentation and content associated with the grant scheme.
- Officers to consider how to integrate best practice from other similar frontage improvement schemes to enhance the terms and conditions and associated processes.
- To give the Business Focus team manager authority to approve additional costs of up to 10% above the grant offer. For additional costs above 10% of the grant offer, approval would be required from the grant panel.
- The project officer to invite Coalville Heritage Society to supply historic photographs on request to aid the development of frontage designs.
- A communications plan is developed to promote the Frontage Improvement Scheme to improve the level of media coverage.
- Consideration is to be given to options for leveraging match funding from external funding programmes to increase the scope and extent of the scheme.

4.0 MONITORING CRITERIA

4.1 It is proposed to extend the monitoring criteria for reporting the outputs of the scheme. The following potential monitoring criteria has been developed. These comprise of a range of quantitative and qualitative measures.

4.2 Quantitative measures

- Number of shops supported
- Grant funding awarded
- Private investment levered
- Metres of shop front refurbished
- Total retail floor space supported

4.3 Qualitative measures

- Public survey to understand perception of the impact of improved shop fronts on the attractiveness and physical appearance of the town centre.

- Grant recipient survey for businesses, including profitability and turnover (increased/stayed the same/decreased) and general feedback, including comments received from customers.
- Grant recipient survey for property owners.

5.0 RESOURCE COMMITMENTS

- 5.1 The Business Focus team will continue to provide overall management and administration of Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme. Business Focus also provides ongoing record keeping, administrative responsibilities and oversees the preparation of applications presented to the grant panel for determination.
- 5.2 Frontage grant applications will continue to be determined by a panel of three council officers. Currently, they are the Strategic Director of Place, the Head of Economic Regeneration, and the Head of Planning and Infrastructure (or substitute).
- 5.3 Business Focus currently manages the Leicestershire County Council Principal Historic Buildings Officer who, through a Shared Officer Agreement, has performed the role of the professional adviser to the scheme to date.
- 5.4 The Midpoint Review makes recommendations to make changes to the role and responsibilities of the professional adviser to better support the scheme and grant applicants.
- 5.5 With input from the council's procurement officer, Business Focus will undertake a procurement process to appoint a new professional adviser to the scheme who will provide both specialist conservation experience and the necessary architectural skills.
- 5.6 The Business Focus team will coordinate the implementation of recommended improvements to the administration of the Frontage Improvement Scheme. A letter will be sent to the relevant businesses and landlords to advise of the restructure of the grant scheme and the plan to reopen to applications.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 To date, the Council has committed £650,000 general fund reserves to the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme. This comprises of an initial allocation of £350,000 for properties on Hotel Street and High Street (Phase 1) and a subsequent contribution of £300,000 into the scheme that saw the area of eligibility increase to include properties on parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road (Phase 2).
- 6.2 A further £94,723 has been allocated to support frontage improvement works to the Emporium in Marlborough Square and the former Arriva bus depot on Ashby Road, increasing the total scheme pot to £744,723.
- 6.3 £362,953 of the scheme pot has been committed to grant approvals and £381,770 remains for further grant applications.
- 6.4 The cost of the professional adviser will continue to be funded from the existing £15,000 per annum allocation in the Business Focus budget.