

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 24
NOVEMBER 2021**



Title of Report	COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME	
Presented by	Barrie Walford Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager	
Background Papers	Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Midpoint Review - Cabinet 5 March 2019	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no staffing or corporate implications directly from the report. The lessons learnt should however be incorporated into the design and administration of any similar programme.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To provide Community Scrutiny with an overview of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme	
Recommendations	TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROGRESS OF THE COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME TO DATE TO CONTRIBUTE COMMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED AS PART OF A FINAL EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME AND LESSONS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO ANY SIMILAR FUTURE PROGRAMME	

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHEME

- 1.1 The importance of making improvements to shop fronts in Coalville town centre was identified in the Prince's Foundation Coalville Regeneration Strategy (2009) and a Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme (CFIS) covering Hotel Street and High Street was introduced in July 2015 (phase 1).
- 1.2 In July 2016 the frontage improvement scheme was extended to include properties on parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road (phase 2).

- 1.3 Following a mid-point review in March 2019 a revised scheme utilising the services of a retained architect, Simon Foote Architects (SFA), was relaunched in August 2019 (phase 3).
- 1.4 A Local Development Order (LDO) was put in place for all phases to negate the need for applicants to submit individual planning applications providing improvements complied with the terms of the LDO and the Coalville Frontage Improvement Design Guide.
- 1.5 The objectives identified for the Frontage Improvement Scheme in 2015 were to:
- Support growth of local businesses
 - Improve local environment
 - Improve image of town centre for local residents, shoppers and visitors
- 1.6 15 properties were completed in Phases 1 and 2, three properties were completed as part of Phase 3 with a further three properties due to be completed in 2022.
- 1.7 The scheme has succeeded in improving the physical appearance of Coalville town centre, particularly High Street where a critical mass of properties have either participated in the programme or have independently improved their frontages (e.g. either through a change of business or a refresh of an existing business).
- 1.8 The scheme has been challenging to manage from the outset however the changes made following the mid-point review have improved the quality of the frontages delivered through the scheme.

2.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2.1 The CFIS has had a great impact on the visual appearance of the Coalville street scheme and delivered significant improvement to the quality of the frontages on the properties that have been funded.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 details all 'before' and 'after' photos of the properties that have been completed together with frontage improvement plans for the 3 properties that are still in progress.
- 2.3 Appendix 2 outlines all properties that have been improved in the scheme together with the amount of grant awarded and private funding leverage.

3.0 FINANCE

- 3.1 Table 1 below details the funding allocations for Phases 1 and 2 of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.

Table 1

Project stages	Funding allocation	Coverage
Phase 1	Initial £350,000	Focused on Hotel Street and High Street (Phase 1), parts of Belvoir Road,
Phase 2	Additional £300,000	Extended to include parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road

Other projects	£94,723	Targeted investment to the Emporium and to the former Arriva bus depot on Ashby Road (now Desirable Car).
Total	£744,723	

- 3.2 Between July 2015 and March 2019 almost £290,000 grant was awarded to 15 projects. Following the mid-point review, phase 3 of the Coalville Frontage Improvement scheme was relaunched in August 2019 with a remaining budget of £456,354. The budget for SFA is funded separately from a £15,000 per annum allocation in the Economic Development and Regeneration budget. See Table 2

Table 2

	Budget
Phase 1 EMR	£156,214
Phase 2 EMR	£300,140
Consultancy fees (19/20 & 20/21 & 21/22)	£45,000
Total Phase 3 budget	£501,354

- 3.3 By November 2019 the estimated project cost of enquiries for frontage grants exceeded the remaining project budget and a hold was place on any new applications being developed. In June 2020 the Council reviewed all existing earmarked reserves, which included the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme budgets, in response to Covid 19. This led to a review of all of the remaining undelivered frontage projects and those projects that could not commit to completion were notified and removed from the scope of the project.
- 3.4 Five properties in Phase 3 did not proceed to completion. There were costs associated with those projects that did not proceed to completion including architects fees for design work, site visits, liaison with applicant and council, amendments to designs, drafting panel reports, conducting tender process, producing tender returns reports and liaison with subcontractors for structural and asbestos surveys etc. See Table 3.

Table 3

Property	Architects fees	Structural surveys and asbestos surveys
70-74 High Street	£7,875	£1,235
Former Rex	£1,875	£0
Coalville News	£4,575	£0
Dally's Kitchen	£6,675	£575
2a Hotel Street	£517	£0
TOTAL	£21,517	£1,810

- 3.5 The reasons given for some of the applications not proceeding to completion included the level of private sector match funding required to access the grant, the standard cap of £50,000 on grant awards and concerns over the 3 year clawback clause mechanism within the grant offer terms and conditions that restricted the sale of the property within three years of the frontage works being completed.

- 3.6 As of writing this report, the remaining capital budget we have is £214,347 and the remaining revenue budget we have is £16,196. These will fund the delivery of the final projects within the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHEME IN MID-POINT REVIEW

- 4.1 The following recommendations outlined in the mid-point review were implemented as part of the revised frontage improvement scheme in Phase 3:

Table 4

Recommendation in Mid-Point Review	Implementation in Phase 3
Due to the importance of making improvements to the south side of Marlborough Square it is recommended within the Midpoint Review that £150,000 of the existing funding available through the Frontage Improvement Scheme is prioritised, for a period of 12 months, to the frontages of the buildings marked red on the map (Appendix 3 of the Midpoint Review).	Implemented. Newmarket and Metro Stores on the south side of Marlborough Square are included in scheme. Council agreed to purchase Marlborough Centre and implement frontage improvements to all units (Dominos, Betfred, Subway, Chaplins Fish Bar)
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 Stage1.	Implemented.
An architectural consultancy is appointed as the professional adviser to support the delivery of the two stage process. They would replace the service currently provided by the Principal Historic Buildings Officer for Leicestershire County Council.	Implemented.
More detailed criteria for awarding grants in excess of the standard cap of £25,000.	Implemented. Architects detail rationale for awarding grants in excess of £25,000 (or £50,000 for a double frontage) as part of Stage 1 report to panel.
The project officer and professional adviser to seek to widen the pool of contractors willing to provide quotes	Implemented. SFA approached at least 3 contractors as part of tender process.
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.	Implemented. Due diligence checks include legal, financial, planning, licencing and environmental health.
Officers to review all documentation and content associated with the grant scheme.	Implemented.

Officers to consider how to integrate best practice from other similar frontage improvement schemes to enhance the terms and conditions and associated processes.	Implemented. Best practice from schemes in South Derbyshire, Newport and Paisley incorporated.
To give the Business Focus team manager delegated 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.	Implemented.
The project officer to invite Coalville Heritage Society to supply historic photographs on request to aid the development of frontage designs.	Implemented. Coalville Heritage Society provided historic photos for projects.
A communications plan is developed to promote the Frontage Improvement Scheme to improve the level of media coverage	The successes of the scheme will be publicised once all Phases have completed.
Consideration is to be given to options for leveraging match funding from external funding programmes to increase the scope and extent of the scheme.	Implemented. Additional funding for frontage improvement requested as part of Future High Street Fund application and Coalville Heritage Action Zone application.

5.0 MONITORING CRITERIA

- 5.1 A number of quantitative measures were proposed within the mid-point review to evaluate the scheme. Table 5 details the outcomes.

Table 5

Measure	Outcome
Number of properties supported	18
Grant funding awarded	£287,439 plus Phase 3
Private investment levered	£134,517 plus Phase 3
Metres of shop front refurbished	278m of frontages
Total retail floor space supported	7,685m ²

- 5.2 It is also proposed to conduct a light touch evaluation exercise with grant recipients and property owners.

6.0 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

- 6.1 Complete the remaining frontage improvements for Roger Bolstridge (High Street), Fast Cash (High Street) and Metro Stores (Marlborough Square)
- 6.2 Officers are proud of the improvements made and plan communication/promotion with public to celebrate Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme across all 3 phases at the close of the scheme.
- 6.3 Undertake evaluation of the scheme with applicants and property owners.

7.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 7.1 To consider the schemes grant terms and conditions, in particular the clawback mechanism clause. The 3 year clawback period was a significant factor in the decision of those that decided not to proceed to completion of the scheme.
- 7.2 Ensure that the appointed architect can accommodate the responsibility to support the applicant to meet planning obligations not covered in an LDO such as advertisement consent, signage and planning consent for gates.
- 7.3 Ensure that time and budget is factored in to the approval process to allow for the schemes architect to accommodate requests from panel for redesigns.
- 7.4 Agree a mechanism at contracting stage for architectural fees in the event that projects do not proceed to completion.
- 7.5 Include the Council's Conservation Officer as part of the Panel decision making process particularly where any of the planned frontage works fall outside of the scope of the LDO and requires additional planning approvals.
- 7.6 Phase 3 of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme was relaunched in August 2019. The project encountered some serious delays as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It is essential that any future frontages scheme builds in flexibility to allow for unexpected events and delays. Due to the national lockdown no surveys or site visits could be undertaken until the restrictions had been lifted.
- 7.7 To consider cost implications across projects with a long delivery schedule. Phase 3 projects seem to be more expensive than those delivered in Phase 1 and Phase 2. The reasons for this include:
 - A desired improvement in quality and execution of frontage improvements
 - The increase in construction costs between the scheme launch in 2016 to 2021
 - The nature of intervention required and complexity of projects.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town - Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Developing a clean and green district
Policy Considerations:	Local Plan Coalville Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	Financial assistance given to grant recipients
Economic and Social Impact:	As per report
Environment and Climate Change:	As per report
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None
Risks:	Not applicable
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