

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 30 AUGUST 2016

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HERTFORD URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY – REQUEST TO FUND
TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: Hertford Wards.

Purpose/Summary of Report

Hertford Urban Design Strategy was adopted by East Herts Council in May 2016 and a member steering group comprising councillors from Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council and Hertford Town Council has been established to implement or support the implementation of the recommendations. This is the first significant step forward in implementation, and addresses the areas of The Wash, Maidenhead Street and Bull Plain.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION:

That the Executive be advised that:

(A)	East Herts Council commits 50% of the £1m required to implement key improvements to The Wash, Maidenhead Street and Bull Plain Hertford, as detailed in the Hertford Urban Design Strategy.
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1.0 Background

1.1 The Hertford Urban Design Strategy sets out a vision for Hertford Town Centre, and addresses the key issues of movement, design and public realm – all of which play a critical role in the success of any town centre and particularly so in Hertford.

1.2 Extensive research and consultation was undertaken during the development of the strategy, which has been formally adopted by both East Herts and Hertford Town Councils, creating a clear set of priorities for town centre improvements. The final report can be found at:

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s32498/Hertford%20Town%20Centre%20UDS%20-%20ERP%20B%20strategy.pdf>

1.3 Hertford Urban Design Steering Group is a member group representing all three tiers of local government (HCC, EHDC and HTC). The group has drawn up an action plan of short, medium and long term actions and its role is to implement, or support the implementation of these actions.

2.0 Report

2.1 **Maidenhead Street, Bull Plain and The Wash**

An early piece of work that the group believes is deliverable, and would make significant impact, is to improve the public realm and traffic flows on these three key streets in the town centre. The three locations intersect each other and are all within the historic heart of the town, within the conservation area.

2.2 The Place-making objectives, as set out in the Hertford Urban Design Strategy, are to:

- Reduce the number of cars in the area and reduce pedestrian / vehicle conflict.
- Create a unified public realm to strengthen the east west link of Maidenhead Street, Salisbury Square and Railway Street.
- Create a focus for Hertford and enlarge the focal point around Salisbury Square with high quality public realm and retail units.
- Improve wayfinding with a focus on signposting, retail areas cultural and historic assets, such as the museum and the River Lea.
- Improve the management of Maidenhead Street, reinforce the pedestrianisation order and restrict servicing.
- Make the most of the Town's heritage and character. Enhancing the setting of Bull Plain and redefining as a public space.

2.3 HCC (through their consultants, Opus) have indicated that work to improve these three streets is a significant scheme, which would take 18-24 months and cost in the region of £1m. Significant consultation will be required to develop the scheme. In the current climate, HCC has also made it clear that whilst very supportive in principle, there is no highways funding available for this type of work.

- 2.4 The option we therefore face is to put the proposals on hold, pending funding from HCC, or to look for other sources of funding. Hertford is the second largest town in East Herts, and whilst buoyant, does not deliver what might be expected of a town of its historic importance and demographic make-up. It is a town that has significant potential to punch well above its weight. Implementing the recommendations in the design strategy will be critical for Hertford's future success.
- 2.5 To enable the project to proceed it is therefore recommended that East Herts Council commit to funding 50% of the £1m (using unallocated capital funds). Hertford Town Council have already committed £100,000 to Maidenhead Street improvements and are considering whether more funding can be directed towards this wider project. The councils are also investigating whether it would be possible to access Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding.
- 2.6 An update on funding secured/likely will be provided at the meeting.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on the financial and corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

The final report can be found at:

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s32498/Hertford%20Town%20Centre%20UDS%20%20ERP%20B%20strategy.pdf>

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