

CABINET REFERRALS (PART 1)

20 April 2021

8.1 CA/027/21 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD PLACE STRATEGY

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That Council approves a budget of £500K to be drawn down from the Dacorum Development Reserve as required to fund the work to develop the Place Strategy.

Corporate Objectives

The proposed Hemel Place Strategy, and specific work for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, will address all Corporate Objectives.

Monitoring Officer

The Place Strategy will not be a statutory local plan document but it will help to guide future development principles and place-making for the town. The Strategy may help to inform and develop future local plan documents which will need to follow the required statutory procedures at the appropriate time.

S.151 Officer

A breakdown of the indicative costs comprising the requested budget of £500k is attached as a Part 2 appendix to this report. There is sufficient balance within the Dacorum Development Reserve to meet these costs and, subject to Council approval of Recommendations 6 and 7, the funding can be drawn down as required once the procurement exercises are complete and the actual figures are known.

Advice

James Doe – There are a lot of things coming together for Hemel Hempstead at this time and the existing Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy is in need of a refresh but other critical projects such as Hemel Garden Communities and Two Waters and Apsley Master Plan are really starting to take off with a number of key sites coming forward. Very important Trends around how people will live and work in the future post-Covid will need to be looked at, as well as fundamental structural changes in economy.

The report proposes Cabinet to consider the establishment of Hemel Hempstead Place Strategy to pull all different strands together, drawing upon work already approved under the growth and infrastructure strategy and the Hemel garden community spatial vision, this applies to whole of the town.

To coordinate action across the town and transformative approach across the town. Section 3 of report outlines things it would cover. There is a need for climate change to be underpinned.

Looking at the strategy around the Town Centre, the next main part needs to be an early piece of work and considering the impact on retailing post-Covid. We need to tackle key

sites within the town centre. See appendices for information on addressing key changes and how to make town centre successful, vibrant and ambitious in the future. Looking at all aspect of life and economy within the town centre such as urban design, need for transport, community and wellbeing issues, as there has been a considerable rise in new residential properties within town centre.

In terms of taking work forward, this will be a major piece of work and needs a lead consultant, specialising in urban futures and ability to fully assess economics of commercial development to pull together all strands as discussed above. We are asking Cabinet to agree to the procurement process to have things moving forward with view to having a full consultancy team in place for June/July this year.

Section 6 of the Report – covers this, for such a Strategy to be successful, it is dependent on an extensive amount of engagement with residents, land owners, developers and business. Consultancy called Thinking Place will look into this aspect. There is a Part II element on cost plan for this work.

Cllr Alan Anderson – supports it and considers it is fundamentally important to do it and whilst extensive investment is required, still needs to be done. In summary happy to support.

Mark Gaynor – Timing of this is crucial and needs to take opportunity to be proactive on economic recovery. Will be a different town centre and need to attract people in, need to have new attractions coming in and systems will make it easier to make that happen. If the Council is on board, private investment will be willing to come on board and hopefully attract potential investment. It is crucial to have vision which is sellable.

Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Happy to support and need to be ahead of the game, this should not be done on the cheap and is a major issue for Dacorum as a whole, not just Hemel. Dacorum has been known for innovation in the past and so need to make sure that we are taking residents with us and not seen as being done to them or wasting money. Important to check with residents and businesses along the process. This is exciting and should be viewed that way.

James Doe – Agrees with need for engagement and this being a platform for investment is crucial. Need to be on the same level as others doing this. Having a Town Centre fit for purpose in the long term. The Town Centre is something we need to keep on top of. This is about taking us onto the next step and needs appropriate resourcing.

Cllr Andrew Williams – Aware that this focusses on Hemel Town Centre and not forgetting that there are other Town Centres in Dacorum, however it is necessary given the situation the Town Centre finds itself in. Not forgetting the impact on retail, this will be different in different places and Hemel Town Centre is different to other centres. Others are largely in Conservation Areas with listed buildings and constraints which would not be possible to undertake this type of project. Consideration of bringing forward an independent Chair on this project.

Claire Hamilton – Creating the right environment for investment. We will foster an environment of excitement in this project and trust in the Council as a good partner, good to do business with and a good curator of the Town Centre. If we can get these conditions right, then it will install confidence and therefore investment will come.

James Doe – other centres are not being forgotten just need a different approach as different constraints to consider.

22 June 2021

8.2 CA/037/21 TRANSFORMATION PHASE 2 BUSINESS CASE

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. A draw down of £361k from the Management of Change reserve to fund the General Fund elements of the programme.
2. A reduction of £305k in the HRA contribution to capital to fund the HRA elements of the programme

Advice

Cllr Tindall stated that he had not seen the sight of any consultation with Ward Councillors and wondered whether this had been missed. LR stated that they would be included as part of Stakeholders along with residents.

Cllr Griffiths stated that this was an exciting project and was right for continuing along the path. There has been staff engagement throughout and without it the project would fall over.

Cllr Griffiths asked for confirmation of staff feedback.

LR – Yes there has been formally and informally and the staff have been very engaged and the consultants have expressed how interesting it has been being allowed to contribute. Comms has been incredibly important at keeping people informed.

Recommendations Agreed.

8.3 CA/039/21 LEISURE CONTRACT (PART 2)

See Part 2 Cabinet Referrals for full details

8.4 CA/040/21 WATER CHARGES (PART 2)

See Part 2 Cabinet Referrals for full details

8.5 CA/041/21 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That Council approve the following supplementary capital budgets in financial year 2021/22:

- £95k for Fire Door improvement works at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre
- £50k for Hemel Hempstead swimming pool dosing equipment

Advice

Cllr Elliot stated that we have been very engaged and proactive with our businesses and it was probably the best to expect given the past year or so.

JD – There has been a lot of pressure and uncertainty over Covid. We keep monitoring the situation going forward but as a starting point it is as good as we could get it, given the circumstances.

Cllr Griffiths wanted to congratulate and thank the staff for being alert and keeping up the good work and being able to put the right amount aside.

Cllr Williams stated that we have had challenges throughout the pandemic but have remained strong in financially challenging situations. It has cost us a significant chunk of our reserves to get through the last year and Council are still not operating on full cylinders in terms of income and have continued to face pressures. Looking at this outturn for 2021, it has been an exceptionally good result overall given Covid but we must not take our eye off the fact that there are still challenges ahead.

JD – The reason we have got as close as we have is because of input from all services and this will give ourselves the best opportunities going forward.