

CABINET MEETING – 1st June 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

CITY CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND 2011/12

Author(s):

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the report is to:

- i) provide Cabinet with an evaluation of the projects supported by the Council's provision of £1million capital expenditure during 2010/11 to deliver "quick wins" within the city Centre;
- ii) identify lessons learnt through this exercise;
- iii) put forward proposals for expending the additional £1million capital provision for the City Centre for 2011/12

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) accept the evaluation of the 2010/2011 programme
- ii) approve in principle the outline proposal for 2011/2012 as set out in Appendix 1
- iii) agree to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Prosperous City Portfolio holder, be delegated to approve specific projects

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes/No

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

To enhance the City Centre by implementing the proposed programme for the current year and to demonstrate the Council's continued support for businesses within the City Centre

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

The proposals put forward (Appendix1) follow on from a full consideration of options available, consultations with partners and evaluation of the programmes undertaken in 2009/10 and 2010/11

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?
Yes/No**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Prosperity and Economic Development

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

City Centre Improvement Programme 2010/11 and 2011/12

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to

- (i) Provide Cabinet with an outline evaluation of the projects supported by the Council's provision of £1 million capital expenditure during 2009/2010 to deliver "quick wins" within the city centre;
- (ii) Put forward proposals for expending the additional £1 million capital provision for the city centre 2011/12.

2.0 Description of Decision

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) accept the evaluation of the 2010/11 programme;
- ii) approve in principle the outline proposals for 2011/12;
- iii) agree to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Prosperous City Portfolio Holder, be delegated to approve specific projects

3.0 Background

3.1 During 2009/10 the city council provided £1 million capital focused on delivering projects that could provide outputs and outcomes quickly and that would clearly demonstrate its support for the city centre and the businesses that operated within it during the difficult economic climate.

3.2 The key aims were to:

- (i) increase footfall and dwell time within the city centre in order to develop its vibrancy and to benefit local businesses;
- (ii) increase business, visitor and public satisfaction with the city centre (ensuring that the Council's leading role is recognised).

3.3 On the 2 June 2010 Cabinet approved a report evaluating the 2009/10 programme and agreed the programme for 2010/11.

3.4 The Economic Masterplan, launched in October 2010, identified the city centre as a key priority – emphasising its importance in driving the city's whole economy. As a result significant provision has been made in the Capital Strategy to take forward key sites, together with the continuation of the £1 million "quick wins" budget.

4.0 2010/11 City Centre Improvement Programme

4.1 The programme of projects delivered as part of the 2010/11 programme of improvements can be summarised as:

- **Street Scene Improvements** – including further works to High Street West (including new planters and street lighting) and phase I of comprehensive repaving of Market Square. Works in Market Square were suspended so as not to interfere with the important Christmas and New Year trading period with phase 2 recently commenced on site with completion due later in the year.
- **Festivals and Events** – included the completion of enhancements to Christmas lights and extending the Christmas programme through the lighting of Mowbray Park and provision of free and low price activity for families that encouraged movement around the city centre. A coordinated Christmas events programme was also provided with other city centre partners including The Bridges, Sunnyside, Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Empire Theatre and the City Library. Five Farmers Markets were delivered. Mowbray Park was also tested out as a summer performance space for outdoor theatre, which included school children and family audiences.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – including promotion of above festivals and events and a targeted city centre 'Shop Sunderland First' campaign across a variety of media to challenge perceptions of Sunderland and raise awareness of the city centre's retail and leisure offer. A TV advert ran in the north of Tyne Tees for four weeks and was supported by on-line activity linked to the X Factor website receiving 27,357 viewings impressions. In addition there were two radio campaigns, one on Sun FM and another on Metro Radio to target different markets – these were supported by web competitions linked to questionnaires on perceptions and shopping habits. There were on-street billboards, posters and a variety of city dressing around the events including lamppost banners, floor and window vinyls and posters. Print advertising featured in Sunderland Echo, the Star series and Raring to Go. All marketing activity was supported by media relations and City Council media including City News and websites.
- **Business Support** – the successful specialist retail advice, together with associated grants was continued with 23 businesses taking advantage of the support offered. The Best Bar None and Retail Awards went from strength to strength with 20 business taking part in the former (of which 15 premises were accredited) and 167 in the latter (with almost 8,000 people voting for the winners – compared with 1,800 in the previous, inaugural year). Costs were reduced following lessons learnt in

the previous, inaugural, year and as a result of The Bridges becoming active partners in promoting and hosting the Retail Awards. Support to creative businesses continued particularly with the opening of the Creative Cohesion premises in Sunnyside. A number of vacant shop fronts were addressed in Park Lane, Holmeside and Fawcett Street. In line with Cabinet's decision in June 2010, free Sunday and Bank Holiday parking continued through to the New Year, but has now been withdrawn as it was not found to increase footfall and displaced existing parking. Tatham Street car park has been improved to reflect its increased importance following the closure of Tavistock to facilitate the construction of Sunderland Software Centre.

5.0 Overview

- 5.1 In summary, the 2010/11 programme was fully delivered as approved and within budget. There was some under spend, as some events were delivered at lower cost than anticipated and some planned carry over into 2011/12, largely through the phasing of street scene works to avoid the Christmas/New year period.
- 5.2 Street scene improvements have been well received, with the Britain in Bloom judges commenting on the quality of the High Street West planters, which may have contributed to the city winning the 'Best Large City' category of the 2010 national competition. The installation of bespoke "Sunderland" street seats and litter bins and general decluttering has made the cleaning of areas using mechanical sweepers and pavement washers much easier. The old street furniture created litter traps whilst the new seat and bins are much more accessible. The area around the bins has been replaced with resin bound gravel and the sealed grout paving has resulted in noticeable improvements and reduced the amount of inaccessible litter (eg: cigarette butts) and weeds that could previously lodge in tree grates and between paving.
- 5.3 The programme of festivals and events were well received. Despite the extreme bad weather, Mowbray Park proved a huge success, with a number of letters in the Echo and sent direct to the City Council. Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens visitor figures for 24 November 2010 to 6 January 2011 were 27,142 up by 3,740 on the previous year's figures.

The Bridges Shopping Centre reported a 12% increase in trade in the run-up to Christmas. The 3D Cinema and Santa Experience (funded jointly between the City Council and the Bridges and located in Market Square) attracted 4,824 visitors comprising 1,667 adults, 1,399 children and 439 family of four passes.

- 5.4 Initial evaluation of the marketing and promotional activity shows positive results with around 931,000 adults seeing the TV advert at least once (63.8% of potential audience) and 374,000 adults seeing the advert more than four times – research shows that behaviour change

increases with viewings. Approx 2,500 people completed on-line radio questionnaires providing valuable insight data. The Metro Radio ad campaign reached 36% of the target adult 15+ main shopper listener between 20/12/10 and 9/1/11 which is positive.

- 5.5 The programme of business support measures were largely well received. It is considered that their importance is not only in enhancing the trading success of the businesses actively engaged and drawing attention to the importance of good customer service (Retail and Best Bar None Awards) but also in enhancing the credibility and increased trust between the Council and city centre businesses. It is believed that partnership working improved during 2010 in the city centre – demonstrated, not only by the examples above, but also through achieving for the first time a joint message for the city regarding Christmas that included a joint Switch On event with The Bridges.
- 5.6 Despite the success in delivering the city centre “quick wins” programme, it would be remiss not to point out that during the budget consultation with Community Spirit and others, 39% of respondents felt the city centre had become worse in the past twelve months. Only 18% thought that the city centre had improved with 43% stating that it had remained the same. Key concerns were the quality of the retail offer and the need to improve/develop major sites with Vaux, Holmeside, and the High Street referred to the most. Other adverse comments included concerns of cleanliness, cost of car parking, empty shops and the evening drinking culture.
- 5.7 Notwithstanding the concerns and reduced business confidence as a result of the national economic downturn, the associated delays in bringing forward development of key sites, together with the dynamic nature of city centres in general, it is considered that progress is being made. The Bridges is fully occupied, reported record trading figures over Christmas and has announced a £15 million extension. The council has now secured ownership of the former Vaux site which will enhance the chances of bringing it to market for business development. The establishment of the City Centre Area Response Team, with its dedicated manager, will see further improvements in street scene cleanliness and maintenance.

6.0 Lessons Learnt

- 6.1 Again, as with the 2009/10 programme, lessons have been learnt from implementing the 2010/11 programme.
- 6.2 The Head of Street Scene has taken steps to address the variations between estimated and final highways operational costs. The new structure for the service which went live on 1 March 2011 removes the client/contractor split which caused many of the issues. In addition processes have been redefined around the IT systems which should better coordinate technical and legal activity for issues such as complicated and costly Traffic Regulation Orders.

- 6.3 Whilst, following the issue being identified in 2009, some further work was undertaken to work alongside city centre businesses in terms of planning and communicating Christmas activity, the short lead in time was again a barrier. Planning for the 2011 Christmas programme has already started.
- 6.4 In 2010 part of the Christmas programme was delivered by a specialist third party provider – this proved both cost effective and successful and lessons learnt through the commissioning process should shorten the procedure for 2011. The Christmas programme in Sunniside was developed by supporting local traders rather than the City Council delivering the events itself – this proved not only a success but also more cost effective and such an approach is to be developed further across all activity.

7.0 City Centre Programme 2011/12

- 7.1 The City Centre is highlighted as a key priority in the Economic Masterplan and through budget consultations.
- 7.2 Notwithstanding the issues in paragraph 4.6 and the need to deliver on key strategic sites (for which further provision is provided for in the MTFP) it is considered important that whilst major redevelopment proposals come to fruition, Sunderland City Council continues to be visibly caring for the city centre and its businesses.
- 7.3 Building upon and learning the lessons from previous programmes, it is considered important that a programme of projects is agreed at the earliest possible date to allow adequate time for project design, procurement and communications.
- 7.4 Outline proposals and indicative spend for 2011/12 is put forward in **Annex One** for consideration. It is proposed that, in order for the programme to be flexible and responsive, the approval of specific projects be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Prosperous City Portfolio holder.

Reason for Decision

- 8.1 To enhance the City Centre by implementing the proposed programme for the current year and to demonstrate the Council's continued support for businesses within the City Centre.

8.0 Alternative Options

- 9.1 The outline proposals put forward (Annex 1) follow on from a full consideration of the options available, consultation with partners and evaluation of the programmes undertaken in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

10.0 Relevant Consultation and Consideration

- 10.1 Consultations have taken place with the relevant Portfolio Holder, officers across the Council and with key partners. The comments made by the Community Spirit, as part of the Budget consultation exercise, have also been taken into account.
- 10.2 **Financial** – funding for the proposals is provided for in the Council's Capital Programme for the Prosperous City and care has been taken to ensure that any ongoing revenue consequences are kept to a minimum and within existing budgets.
- 10.3 **Legal** – there are no known legal imperatives in respect of the proposals put forward.

11.0 Background Papers

- Report to Cabinet 2nd June 2010
- Programme Management Products – programme and Project Office

PROPOSED CITY CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME 2011/12

Budget	£1,000,000
Under spend 2010/11	£ 98,000
TOTAL BUDGET	£1,098,000

PROJECT/OUTLINE PROPOSALS	MAX FUNDING ALLOCATION	COMMENTS
<p>A) STREET SCENE IMPROVEMENTS</p> <p>Indicative priorities/costs include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fawcett Street (£140k) 2. York Street / High Street West (£210k) 3. Blandford Street (£100k) 4. Park Lane / Derwent and Olive Street (£50k) 5. Miscellaneous street furniture / signage (£88k) 	<p>£588,000</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fawcett Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advance highway study and design work for future comprehensive improvements - Possible lay-by to customer service centre. 2. High Street West <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of highway works to York Street following completion of Central car park demolition. - Demolition, surface and gable treatment following strategic property acquisitions. - Relocation of electricity Sub Station adjacent to Former Fire Station (allowing site development) 3. Blandford Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partial declutter to create public space. 4. Park Lane / Derwent and Olive Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removal of canopies/screens from Park Lane - entrance/signage feature for Derwent Street/Olive Street 5. Miscellaneous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Street furniture, seating, litter bins. - Signage and legibility
<p>B) FESTIVALS AND EVENTS</p> <p>Indicative Priorities/costs include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Animated City Centre space with performance and exhibition (£20k) 2. Riverside to City centre trails (£75k) 3. Christmas programme (including further lights enhancements) (£75k) 	<p>£210,000</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate working with Sunderland University 2. Exploring the riverside route and the City Centre to St Peters featuring a new Folk Festival, celebration of the International Airshow. 3. Christmas programme – (including further light installation to Mowbray Park) 4. Music development advice, support and training for promoters and venues. 5. Continuation of successful 2010 programme.

PROJECT/OUTLINE PROPOSALS	MAX FUNDING ALLOCATION	COMMENTS
4. Music Development (£15k) 5. Theatre in Mowbray Park (£5k) 6. Farmers Market (£20k)		6. Continuation of successful 2010 programme.
<p>C) MARKETING AND PROMOTION</p> <p>Indicative priorities/costs include;</p> 1. On street billboards (£3k) 2. City dressing (£20k) 3. TV ad on Tyne Tees including new creative and airtime (£20k) 4. Radio advertising (9k) 5. Perceptions research (£10k) 6. Print advertising (£8k) 7. Design, print, PR and photography (£10k) 8. Events and festivals materials (£20k)	<p>£100,000</p>	a. Raise the profile of Sunderland as a place to shop – spend time and money b. Challenge perceptions of the city centre, its retail and leisure offer c. Waymark and animate the city centre, especially around key events and activities d. Promote the programme of city centre Festivals and Events to encourage people to attend e. Support city centre businesses by encouraging people to shop in Sunderland
<p>D) BUSINESS SUPPORT</p> <p>Indicative Priorities/costs include:</p> 1. Retail and Best Bar None Awards (£30k) 2. Retail support (£110k) 3. Footfall cameras (£60k provisional)	<p>£200,000</p>	1. Continuation of successful awards scheme introduced in 2009 – reduced budget to reflect need to secure more private sector sponsorship. 2. Flexible support package to independent retail businesses (e.g. specialist advice, miscellaneous small grants) 3. Provision of additional footfall cameras to priority locations (provisional – subject to evaluation of existing cameras).
<p>£1,098,000</p>		