

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	30 January 2023	
Report Title:	March Future High Street Fund Project - Grant Funding Agreement with CCC for project delivery	

## 1 Purpose / Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the March Future High Street Fund (FHSF) Market place, Riverside and Broad Street workstreams and also seek Cabinet approval to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council allowing the project to proceed with the next step within the delivery phase - construction of the riverside and Broad Street elements of the project.

## 2 Key issues

- 2.1 This project is following a process that started in 2019 with the Growing Fenland report which highlighted community wishes to see;
  - Improvements to the appearance and appeal of the high street
  - Improved traffic flow and reduced congestion through the town centre
  - Improved visibility and use of the riverbank behind the toilet block
- 2.2 Following a Member-led bid development process, that included consultation with March Town Council and the local community, in December 2020 DLUHC announced that March had been offered a grant of £6,447,129 giving total funding available to the project of £8,447,129 (£6,447,129 DLUHC + £2,000,000 CPCA grant). In March 2021 Cabinet agreed to accept the funding from both DLUHC and CPCA.
- 2.3 The Future High Street funded aspect of Broad Street is completing the public realm works only. All road works and the roundabout form part of the March Area Transport Study project - although for effective delivery both projects are being delivered together. The MAT's aspect of the project is funded by CPCA at an addition cost of c.£4.2m
- 2.4 The project is being managed in a close collaborative partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Major Infrastructure Team and in conjunction with the March Area Transport Strategy (MATS) project. As the project impacts on CCC assets and the CCC team has the expertise to manage projects of this magnitude, this collaborative approach was anticipated within the bid documents.
- 2.5 The project is progressing on budget and on time;
  - a) March market place refurbishment has commenced.
  - b) The design of Broad Street and the riverside is completed and a tender process has been undertaken to secure a contractor to develop the FHSF and MATS work within Broad Street.
  - c) Cadent Gas and Anglian Water are to start mains gas and mains water utility improvement work within Broad Street and Darthill Road on 13 February.
  - d) The main contractor is expected to start works in Broad Street in mid-May.

## 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the progress of the project as detailed in the report.

- 3.2 That Cabinet authorises the S151 officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to allow the Broad Street construction contract to be let. The construction contract will be between CCC and the Contractor, with the GFA allowing FDC to pay CCC from the FHSF fund grant for the contractors works.

<b>Wards Affected</b>	March Wards	
<b>Forward Plan Reference</b>	KEY/03DEC21/01	
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Chris Boden	Leader of the Council
	Cllr Chris Seaton	Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage
	Cllr Jan French	Deputy Leader of the Council
<b>Report Originator</b>	Phil Hughes	Head of Service
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Paul Medd	Chief Executive
	Simon Machen	Corporate Growth and Regeneration Advisor
	Jo Blackmore	Head of Corporate Support
<b>Background Papers</b>	Previous Cabinet Papers regarding March Future High Street Project	

## **4 Project Update Summary**

Work has been progressing well in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Major Infrastructure Team. The delivery timetable for the main construction works remains on track.

### **4.1 Member Steering Group**

The Member Steering Group, led by Cllr Seaton, has been fully engaged in decision making around direction and scope of the project with regular update meetings taking place to give guidance and direction to the project team. The regular nature of the meetings has been important in ensuring that the project continues on programme with the delivery programme for the major infrastructure works running to a tight deadline, with limited scope for slippage.

In addition to updating March Town Council Members who sit within the Steering Group, Council officers have also attended March Town Council regularly to update Town Council Members in person regarding the project.

### **4.2 Riverside and Broad Street progress**

FDC and CCC have agreed processes and responsibilities relating to the project with the partnership working productively in a close collaborative manner. These two workstreams, alongside the March Area Transport Strategy funded road and roundabout alterations, are large, complex infrastructure projects.

Design work was completed in autumn 2022, with a tender package then developed.

The work has been tendered and 2 tenderers have submitted bids. CCC is currently evaluating those bids. The bids are within the budget available and the quality of the bids is very high.

It is worth noting that there will not be any significant north or south bound lane closures (as occurred during the recent water and gas main issues) during the construction phase. The phasing of the works will be such that a lane north and south will be open for the majority of the work. However, there will be significant signage in place throughout the town to allow the community to better plan their trips as increased congestion remains unavoidable.

### **4.3 Governance requirements for the construction phase of Broad Street and Riverside**

The bulk of money to be spent on Riverside and Broad Street will be in the construction phase that will begin in May 2023.

The Combined Authority (CPCA) is working through governance processes regarding the MATS funding for the Broad Street road works. A final business case has been developed and it is anticipated that the funding, already set aside, will be approved as the business case meets CPCA's funding requirements.

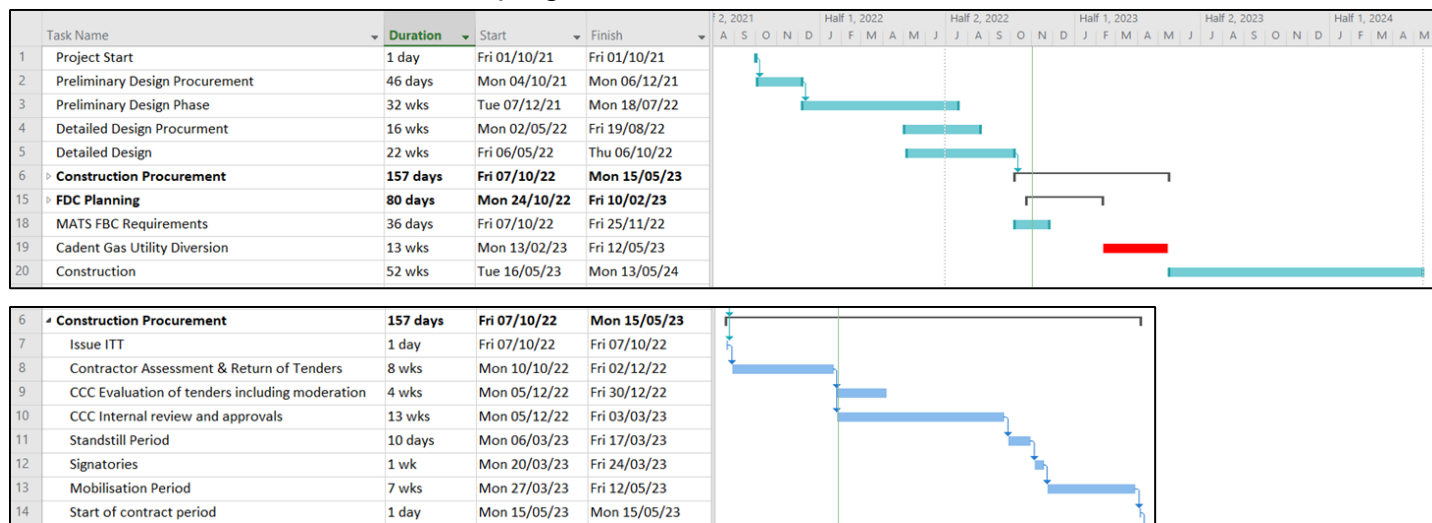
CCC will then enter into mirror Grant Funding Agreements with both the CPCA and FDC. These agreements will allow funding for the Broad Street and Riverside works to flow from CPCA and FDC to CCC in order for CCC to pay the main contractor for the works. The contract for the works in Broad Street will be between CCC and the main contractor. To protect all parties a GFA is required.

Please note that CPCA is funding the MATS road works including the roundabout. FDC is funding the public realm improvement works.

This report asks Cabinet to authorise the S151 officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council to allow the Broad Street construction contract to be let. Until such an arrangement is in place, contracts with the main contractor cannot be signed.

It is recommended that FDC should seek to minimise its exposure to risk for any costs overruns which are outside of its control.

#### 4.4 Broad Street and Riverside program

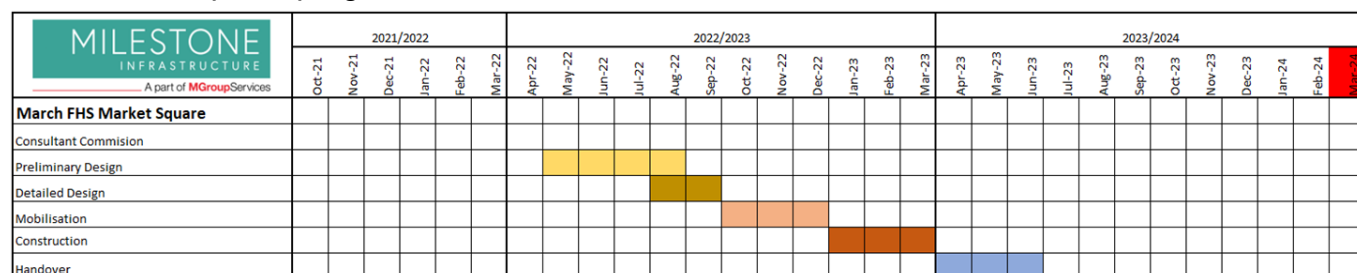


#### 4.5 Market Place Progress

Following the final design works for the market place and subsequent Member Steering Group sign off, construction works have commenced this month. Initially the work was planned for late 2022 but, following consultation with market traders, their preferred timeframe was early 2023 when trade is generally lighter. The works are expected to take between 10 and 12 weeks, completing on 23 March at the latest.

To ensure that the market can continue during this time, the market has been relocated onto City Road car park. Early indications are that this relocation is working well with both traders and local residents happy with this temporary arrangement.

#### 4.6 Market place programme



#### 4.7 Web Pages and Communications Plan

In order to keep the community up to date with all progress across the Future Highstreets Fund, a number of web pages with information relating to the workstreams is available on FDC's website; [March Future High Streets Fund - Fenland District Council](#)

These pages will be kept up to date with news and project updates to ensure a consistent stream of information from FDC to the general public. There is also a Frequently Asked Questions page which should assist in answering general questions about the programme.

FDC's comms team are also continuing to add social media posts regarding the project.

Cadent Gas will carry out a community engagement session at the leisure centre during week beginning 23 January concerning their works commencing on 13 February.

#### 4.8 Public Toilets

It should be noted that replacement public toilets will be developed by FDC outside of this project. These will be situated on Gray's Lane - as decided by the Member Steering Group. Work is underway to design the replacement toilets that will consist of 2 fully accessible public toilets and a [Changing Places](#) facility. If the time gap between the new toilet building works and the demolition of the current toilets is significant, temporary arrangements will be put in place ensuring that toilets remain available in the town.

### 5 Financial Implications

The project remains on time and on budget. Changes to the original Riverside projects have ensured that the revised and Steering Group approved Broad Street and Riverside packages remain affordable. FDC is in receipt of funding from DLUHC to cover the market place and Broad Street works. Funding was brought forwards to ensure that when FDC signed a GFA allowing the main contractor to be appointed, funds from Government were already in the Council's account.

### 6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The GFA will commit FDC to pay CCC according to a contract between CCC and the main contractor. The works are within budget and the contingency remains intact.
- 6.2 FDC has all funding required for the project from Government in place.
- 6.3 Subsidy control:

The main contractor will be appointed via a compliantly procured frameworks and so should not be paid any more than market rates. On that basis they will not be receiving a specific economic advantage and so will not be receiving a subsidy.

CCC will be receiving funds to manage the projects which it will use to carry out its public functions or for purposes ancillary to its public functions. On this basis it will not be behaving as an economic actor and so will not be receiving any subsidy.