


Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	16 March 2023	
Report Title:	Whittlesey Southern Relief Road SOBC	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

1.1 This report relates to the Whittlesey Southern Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). Members are requested to:

- Appoint a Project Board including setting its remit, its terms of reference and membership
- Note the procurement exercise to select a contractor to deliver the SOBC project. Approval of delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage (including transport) is requested to award the contract following completion of the procurement
- Third party funding has been approved from CPCA Market Towns Budget for this work. A Grant Funding Agreement between CPA and FDC is required. Delegated approval to the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage is requested to sign the agreement on behalf of FDC.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 FDC has been awarded £260,000 by CPCA to deliver a Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC project.
- 2.2 It is proposed to set up a Project Board to oversee the governance and delivery of this project. The approach being suggested is already in operation for several CPCA funded projects in Fenland District including Fenland Stations Regeneration and March Area Transport Study. Draft terms of reference are attached at appendix 1 for Cabinet discussion and approval.
- 2.3 A procurement exercise will be required to appoint a contractor to complete the SOBC project. This will be managed and overseen by the Project Board.
- 2.4 A Grant funding agreement will be required between CPCA and FDC for the funding. It should be noted that contained within this agreement is the wording "Confirmation that any capital cost overrun will be met by Fenland District Council".
- 2.5 The project is expected to complete during Spring/Summer 2024.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are requested to:

- Confirm the establishment of the Project Board to oversee the business case project, confirm the boards remit including its terms of reference and membership
- Note the procurement exercise to select a contractor to deliver the SOBC project. Give approval for delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage to award the contract
- Third party funding has been approved from CPCA Market Towns Budget for this work. A Grant Funding Agreement between CPA and FDC is required and that this agreement requires FDC to underwrite any capital overrun.
- Delegate approval to the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage and the Portfolio Holder for Finance to sign the agreement on behalf of FDC.

Wards Affected	All Whittlesey wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Seaton - Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage
Report Originator(s)	Wendy Otter (Transport Development Manager)
Contact Officer(s)	Wendy Otter (Transport Development Manager) Email: wotter@fenland.gov.uk Anna Goodall (Assistant Director) Email: agoodall@fenland.gov.uk
Background Papers	CPCA Board Meeting – 30 November 2022 CMIS > Meetings FDC Cabinet – 9 January 2022 Report and appendices.pdf (fenland.gov.uk) Whittlesey Town Council 2021 – Whittlesey Relief Road Inception Study Whittlesey Relief Road - Whittlesey Town Council

Report:

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In January 2020, FDC Cabinet approved a series of economic masterplans under the title of Growing Fenland. This included a Growing Fenland Whittlesey masterplan setting out a series of projects aimed at improving this historic town. The need for a Whittlesey Southern Relief Road scheme is one element of this masterplan which featured highly in responses to the public consultation work that supported the strategy.
- 1.2 Later in 2020 Whittlesey Town Council commissioned the Whittlesey Relief Road Inception Study. The key findings of this study state that there is a sound strategic case with a few benefit areas and reasonable alignment with local plans and strategies. There is a reasonable prospect of value for money although this may be dependent on development. The report also noted some engineering challenges around flood risk and the railway level crossing. The consultants' overall conclusion is as follows:

“it is therefore concluded there is sufficient evidence to justify scheme progression, and it is recommended that the scheme proceeds to the next stage evaluation, namely, Strategic Outline Business Case.”

- 1.3 Further information about this study including a copy of the report can be found on the Town Council website as follows: [Whittlesey Relief Road - Whittlesey Town Council](#).
- 1.4 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) are supporting the Growing Fenland masterplans financially through their Market Towns Programme. In November 2022, a market towns finance update paper was taken to CPCA Board. This included a proposal for reallocating £255,750 of funding towards a Whittlesey Southern Relief Road SOBC. This was approved subject to a funding application from Fenland District Council in January 2023. The main factors for this CPCA decision being the inclusion of the Whittlesey Relief Road project in the Growing Fenland Masterplan for Whittlesey, the Whittlesey Town Council Relief Road Inception Study and its positive outcome, along with 80% of respondents calling for this study to be progressed as part of CPCA 2022-2023 budget review.

2 Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC

- 2.1 The Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC project needs to ensure that appropriate governance is in place to manage and monitor the project from its inception. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve these arrangements prior to the commencement of the SOBC. In line with other CPCA funded projects such

as the Fenland Stations work and the March Area Transport Strategy it is proposed to set up a Project Board. Appendix one includes the draft terms of reference for the group including proposed meetings, aims and objectives and membership. Cabinet is asked to confirm the proposed Project Board to deliver the governance and the draft terms of reference for this group. Day to day working arrangements will follow existing FDC processes for project delivery.

- 2.2 FDC will appoint a specialist contractor to deliver the SOBC project. the contractor will complete all technical work including a Department for Transport compliant SOBC. The chosen contractor will attend and take an active role in the Project Board meetings. A procurement exercise is required to be undertaken in accordance with FDC procurement regulations. Cabinet is asked to give approval for delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage (including transport) to award the contract.
- 2.3 Allowing for procurement and the delivery of all technical and business aspects of the project. The Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC is expected to be complete in Spring/Summer 2024.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In January 2022 Cabinet approved the Growing Fenland Masterplan for Whittlesey which includes the Whittlesey Relief Road. The subsequent Whittlesey Town Council inception study showed that there are benefits and a value for money case for any scheme. The public are supporting a relief road project for the town through the Growing Fenland masterplan consultation and wider CPCA consultation processes. CPCA has awarded FDC £260,000 to complete at SOBC project for this scheme in line with the above. It is therefore considered that this approach and the funding should be approved by Cabinet along with related governance processes.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Please refer to paragraphs 2.1 and 2.3 above which confirm public consultation in support of this SOBC project.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Alternative options have not considered. However, Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority and CPCA as the Local Transport Authority have programmes to develop transport proposals across all modes of transport. A new Transport Strategy for Fenland District is being adopted during February and March 2023 and covers all modes of transport. Walking and cycling proposals for Whittlesey are included within the new district transport strategy, the Fenland Walking, Cycling and Mobility Aid Strategy and the County Council emerging Active Travel Strategy. Fenland District Council is also working with CPCA and others to develop plans to significantly improve Whittlesey railway station. A multi modal approach to address transport issues in Whittlesey is already in place with a sound policy basis.

- 5.2 Proposals for a Whittlesey relief road are at an early stage. A key component of this project is to consider alternative ways to address the key issues that need resolving. Alternative options must be considered to satisfy funding requirements and therefore they will form part of this SOBC.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal Implications

- 6.2 A legal grant funding agreement will be put in place between CPCA and FDC for the £260,000 funding. FDC will be required to regularly report delivery and performance that will be monitored by the Project Board and CPCA.
- 6.3 A procurement exercise will take place to appoint a contractor to complete the SOBC project. This process will be in accordance with FDC procurement regulations. The work and progress of the contractor will be directed and monitored by FDC and the Whittlesey Relief Road Study Project Board.

6.4 Financial Implications

- 6.5 As stated above, £260,000 third party funding has been awarded to FDC by the CPCA to complete the Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC project. This funding is expected to deliver the SOBC project and related FDC staff costs. The funding will be managed through FDC financial management processes along with CPCA and Project Board approval. It should further be noted that contained within the funding agreement is the statement "Confirmation that any capital cost overrun will be met by Fenland District Council".

6.6 Equality Implications

- 6.7 Growing Fenland Whittlesey, that this SOBC project is part of, is concerned with improving the economic and social performance of the town. Existing transport challenges in and around Whittlesey cause disruption and congestion. This project is one component of the transport strategy for Whittlesey which has a multi modal approach. Proposals for transport projects to assist all members of the community are being taken forward and considered as part of a wide range of policies and strategies. Please also refer to paragraph 6.1 above.

APPENDIX 1 – Whittlesey Relief Road Study Project Board draft terms of reference

1. Background – What is the Whittlesey Relief Road Project SOBC?

Introduction

FDC and our partners have been working on a project to consider a relief road for the Market Town of Whittlesey. Whittlesey is an historic market town with some narrow streets and important old buildings. There is also a major road (A605) through its centre and an industrial estate to the south. The town economy relies significantly on road traffic with large vehicles needing to access all parts of the town. The railway level crossings around the town are in prominent locations and with increasing amounts of barrier downtime congestion on the local road network increases. The transport challenges in Whittlesey need to be addressed.

In 2020 Whittlesey Town Council commissioned the Whittlesey Relief Road Inception Study. The key findings of this study state that there is a sound strategic case with benefit areas and reasonable alignment with local plans and strategies. There is a reasonable prospect of value for money although this may be dependent on development. The report also noted some engineering challenges around flood risk and the railway level crossing.

The findings of the study are fully supported and FDC considered opportunities to secure funding for the next stage of work for a Whittlesey Relief Road.

Growing Fenland Whittlesey Masterplan

Following a successful pilot scheme undertaken in St Neots, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board committed to provide funding to create a masterplan for growth for each market town within the CPCA area (as recorded in the actions from the CPCA Board meeting held on 28.03.18).

With the aim of bringing jobs, infrastructure and growth to the Fenland area, the masterplans also enable each town to become and remain "vibrant and thriving places" whilst helping to boost the local and regional economy.

A commitment of £50k was made by the CPCA to produce a masterplan for each town in Fenland. The master planning project was given a working title of 'Growing Fenland' which linked the proposed growth of the local economy to our important agricultural heritage. The Whittlesey Growing Fenland Masterplan, which includes a Whittlesey Relief Road was approved in early 2020 and can be found from the following weblink:

[Whittlesey Relief Road - Whittlesey Town Council](#)

Upon completion of the Masterplans, CPCA approved further funding to kick start the delivery and implementation of these Masterplans. In late 2022 as part of a CPCA Market Towns Programme review, an opportunity arose to review the proposals for Whittlesey projects. FDC submitted a successful application to CPCA for the Whittlesey Relief Road

SOBC project. This was approved at the CPCA Board meeting in November 2022 and is available to read as follows [CMIS > Meetings](#)

2. Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC Project Board

Objective:

The Project Boards will provide oversight for the continued development and delivery of the Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC and provide a forum for key issues to be considered and key decisions to be made. It is the vehicle by which the key strategic issues (including financial and legal) can be acknowledged, recorded, and monitored.

Responsibilities:

The remit of the Project Board relates to the design, delivery and implementation of the Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC project. Responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Approval of the Project Brief including its specific aims.
- The project programme from its inception to its conclusion
- Discuss and agree action regarding specific project constraints
- Review and approval of the procurement strategy
- To receive progress reports from the project team, review & confirm achievements at each major project milestone (or end of stage) and approve commencement of the next stage
- Provide direction and support to help resolve key project risks and issues
- To provide input and representation to the defined projects for their respective organisations
- To provide advice on local issues
- To provide their respective organisations' positions on all elements of the project
- To agree community engagement and public consultation strategy.
- Authorise project closure and send project closure notification

Membership:

The core membership of each of the project board will be as follows:

FDC Cabinet Member – Portfolio holder for Transport (Chairperson)

FDC Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance

FDC Cabinet Member – Portfolio holder for Planning

Whittlesey Town Council – two representatives

Cambridgeshire County Council as Local Highway Authority - 1 member

A vice-chairperson should be elected from the membership of the group at the first Project Board meeting. This vice-chairperson is expected to deputise for the Chairperson.

It should be noted that only members listed above, or their nominated substitutes will have voting powers.

It is envisaged that the project board may also make recommendations to Fenland District Council's Cabinet, which would in turn make recommendations to the CPCA Board, the ultimate decision-making body regarding funding.

Officer and Project Support Staff:

The Project Board will be supported by officers from Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (CPCA) Combined Authority. Additional officer support will be brought into meetings as required. E.g., communications officer or specialist consultant. The appointed consultants delivering the SOBC will also attend all the Project Board meetings and help as required. It is also expected that other specialist staff may attend some meetings as necessary such as Network Rail and the lead local flood authority team related to known challenges that will need to be overcome to deliver any project in the future.

Meetings

The Project Boards will meet or hold a meeting or conference call at least every 3 months and at other times as necessary and at key stages of the project.

Each party may substitute attendees on an occasional basis; however, substitutes should be briefed and empowered with the same authority as the usual attendee.

Communications

A Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC Project Board Communications Strategy will also support the terms of reference document. This Strategy will set out protocols for communication in respect of the Whittlesey Relief Road SOBC. Members have a role to adhere to the communications strategy to enable effective implementation of the programme. An initial draft of the strategy will be tabled at the first meeting of the Project Board for approval.