


Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	20 January 2022	
Report Title:	March, Future High Street Fund progress update, procurement and governance report	

1 Purpose / Summary

- The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the March Future High Street Fund (FHSF) project. This paper summarises progress to date, as well seeking Cabinet approval to proceed with the next steps within the procurement and governance processes.

2 Key issues

- The government is committed to helping local high streets evolve and adapt to the changing high street experience. They created the Future High Street Fund with over £1 billion of funding available.
- 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.
- 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 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 our bid documents.
- The project is progressing on budget and on time. Little funding has been spent at this point as the project is in the design and planning stage. Larger sums will be spent at construction stage, with the first of these in the market place in summer 2022.

3 Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the positive progress of the project as detailed in the report.
2. That Cabinet authorises the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage to work with officers to enter into a memorandum of understanding with CCC to continue the collaborative partnership that already exists, taking the project through to its completion in 2023.
3. That Cabinet authorises the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage to work with officers to enter into an agreement with a CCC Joint Procurement Service Framework supplier to develop final designs and the open tender procurement package for the Broad Street public realm and Riverside workstreams, as approved by the Member Steering Group and Project Board.
4. That Cabinet authorises the Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage to work with officers to expedite the most efficient way of procuring and entering into an agreement with a supplier to develop designs for the Market Place workstream as well as

the construction of the final design, as approved by the Member Steering Group and Project Board.

Wards Affected	March Wards
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/03DEC21/01
Portfolio Holder	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
Report Originator	Phil Hughes - Acting Assistant Director
Contact Officer	Paul Medd - Chief Executive Simon Machen - Corporate Growth and Regeneration Advisor Phil Hughes - Acting Assistant Director Jo Blackmore - Executive Officer
Background Papers	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 challenging but 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. Some of these have taken place in the town itself to ensure that Members and the Project Team are clear on what is being proposed and what may or may not work in the area. 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.

4.2 Working in Partnership with CCC Major Infrastructure Design Team

Working in collaboration with CCC to develop and project manage the project was an expectation from the very start and is contained within FDC's original bid document to DLUHC. This is both necessary and desirable as CCC owns and is responsible for all of the road that is being altered in Broad Street, as well as the pavement, and will also be responsible for the bulk of the public realm space in 'new' Broad Street. Further, the CCC team has the capacity and skills necessary to work with FDC on the management of a large infrastructure project that has many complex issues associated with it. FDC's engineering team will also be involved in the project with regular meetings planned with CCC.

Reference to Cabinet Recommendation 2

4.2.1 CCC's costs of working together with the FDC team have been included within the project estimates for Broad Street, Riverside and Market Place but are not applicable in the Acre and Vacant units workstreams.

4.2.2 FDC will continue to work closely in collaboration with the CCC team. The cost of this support is approximately £300,000 p.a. and is an anticipated and budgeted for cost for a project relating to works of around £6m in overall value.

4.3 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. The planning and assessment phases are particularly detailed to ensure that what is finally designed and goes out to open tender is what the client (i.e. FDC Members) aspire to, and is deliverable within budget and timeframe.

Following production of an artist's impression for the Riverside area, outline feasibility designs for all elements were agreed with FDC Members. Atkins, FDC's chosen preliminary design agency, submitted a fee proposal which was reviewed by officers and the company have subsequently been engaged and appointed to undertake the preliminary design and investigation works. Atkins first site visits to undertake this work started in December 2021 with topographical surveys.

Reference to Cabinet Recommendation 3

4.3.1 Following the satisfactory completion of the preliminary design works, a supplier will be procured, via the CCC Joint Procurement Service Framework, to develop final designs and the

open tender procurement package for the Broad Street public realm and Riverside workstreams. The value of this work is anticipated to be in the region of £250,000, but the value may vary to a lower level depending on the outcomes of the ongoing preliminary design work. This sum is budgeted for in the overall project costs.

In order to provide up to date information to the design agency, FDC has held meetings with Stagecoach regarding the re-routing of busses that currently make U-turns in Broad Street. Stagecoach is pleased with the double bus stop arrangement in each direction and is now engaged with the design process, with further meetings planned. A perfect solution may not be possible as a U-turn will no longer be possible in Broad Street.

Following discussions with CCC new, as well as the current locations, have been identified for both loading and taxi ranks as part of the scheme. The proposals include two new taxi ranks located at the north and south of the town with the inclusion of time limited loading / unloading included toward the south of Broad Street, at the junction of Greys Lane.

Following recommendations from the Member Steering Group, the Town Council has been consulted regarding the location of an alternative public toilet facility. This will be included adjacent to the new Riverside area. The creation of the toilet block is outside the financial scope of the Future High Streets Fund, with FDC funding this through capital works. The replacement facility will be in place in December 2022, prior to the demolition of the current toilet block.

FDC's Planning, Conservation and Engineering teams form part of a broader FDC officer group and have been consulted regarding the draft designs, having the opportunity to feed into the project and will remain engaged throughout the project.

4.4 Future procurement and governance requirements

The bulk of money to be spent on Riverside and Broad Street will be in the construction phase in 2023. The tender procurement documentation for this work is highlighted in 4.3.1 above. The method of procurement for the construction phase of Riverside and Broad Street with CCC is yet to be confirmed. Once an approach has been agreed by partners this will inform any passporting to CCC, or otherwise, of the substantial sums of grant funding required for the construction phase.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet later in 2022 highlighting the confirmed approach and putting in place appropriate governance for moving the construction phase procurement and payment for that work forwards.

Note that preliminary designs are now underway, with a final design stage to follow that. Whilst the image below is what designers are working to, be aware that there is no seating featured yet, trees may move and Broad Street pedestrian crossing points will be raised.

The map illustrates the proposed pedestrian routes for the Birmingham City Marathon in the Belfry area. Key features include:

- Streets and Landmarks:** Gray's Lane, Broad Street, Belfry Road, Natwest, Nationwide, USA chicken, Tesco Express, Greggs, Superdrug, Holland & Barrett, Boots Pharmacy, M&Co, WHSmith, Clarks, Belfry, and Belfry Road.
- Proposed Routes:**
 - Gray's Lane:** To be re-aligned. Vehicles to give way to runners. New public realm details to be confirmed.
 - Broad Street:** Proposed single stage zebra crossing, 4.0m width. Proposed 3.0m wide bus stop with 15m entry/exit tapers. Existing utility cabinet, minimum 0.45m clearance to be maintained.
 - Belfry Road:** Proposed single stage zebra crossing, 4.0m width. Proposed 3.0m wide bus stop with 15m entry/exit tapers. Proposed mini roundabout with 2.1m width.
- Other Features:**
 - Existing controlled crossing to remain. Tactile paving to be adjusted to suit new kerbline.
 - March war memorial to remain as existing.
 - March fountain (4.7m width) to be re-positioned within public realm. Final location to be confirmed.
 - Cooperative travel.
 - Existing right turn facility to remain.
 - Proposed two stage zebra crossing to be built into splitter width.
 - Proposed single stage zebra crossing, 3.2m width to match existing signalised crossing.
 - Tail link to be relocated to existing parking layby. Approximately 15m length, 2.0m width.

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4.6 Broad Street - current images

It is very much worth considering what Broad Street currently looks like after considering the draft design above. The project has commissioned aerial photography to ensure a record of the changes to the area are available to evidence the impact that the FHSF improvements will have. In the images below you can see a street dominated by cars that is not an attractive or healthy area to shop in and incredibly difficult should you require the use of a wheelchair.

Consider these images with the draft design; it becomes increasingly apparent what an impact the FHSF project will have in Broad Street - offering shoppers a lovely space to dwell in within the heart of March. This dwell time should improve viability of shops, increase the number of people meeting friends in town and hopefully increase the number of on-street cafes and eateries in the future.

Viability and the future economic success of the town is the crux of the FHSF project, and these images emphasise how positive the future should look for March.





4.7 Riverside

Note that preliminary designs are now underway, with a final design stage to follow that. Whilst the image below is a draft that designers are working to, be aware that the mooring is flush to the riverbank, with building as shown, trees are an illustration and any design has to take account of what is underground, riverbank stability and the topology of the area.



4.8 Market Place Progress

Following consultation with Members, the Market Place element has been revised to a more cost-effective solution which now retains parking capacity whilst also providing a new and high-quality environment for market traders and the public.

Reference to Cabinet recommendation 4

4.8.1 FDC is working in collaboration with CCC highways partners to expedite the most efficient way of procuring a designer to commence preliminary and final design works in the coming weeks, with topographical surveys already undertaken. The cost of this work will be in the region of £60,000 and has been budgeted for in the project cost.

4.8.2 The construction phase of this workstream includes a large area of York Stone paving for pedestrians outside of the Town Hall and a wider pedestrian area in this space, alongside improved luminaires in the lights, resurfacing and relining of the car park and other paving improvements surrounding the market place. The draft sketch designs have been approved by the Member Steering Group following on site discussions. The construction phase is anticipated to cost in the region of £500,000.

4.8.3 CCC and FDC officers are working together to expedite the most efficient way of procuring a contractor for construction works, with the expected cost of the construction phase budgeted for in the overall project cost. The expected cost is lower than anticipated, as car parking is being retained, negating the requirement for resurfacing in stone - a material not suitable for a car park.

4.8.3 The project programme anticipates construction works to commence in summer 2022 with an estimated delivery schedule of around 6 weeks. Officers intend to work with market traders over the coming months to identify an alternative location for markets to be held whilst works are undertaken to improve the market place.

4.9 Acre Road workstream

There have been planning applications made regarding some land adjacent to the Acre Road area that FDC was considering for the FHSF workstream. FDC has undertaken valuation work and legal due diligence work regarding the Acre Road area but will pause to see if the FHSF project has encouraged private development to move forwards in Acre Road - without an injection of public sector financial support.

4.10 Vacant Units Activation Grant Scheme

As part of the Future Highstreets package, FDC was also granted funding to deliver a range of grant programmes for vacant and dis-used space in the town centre. Grant set up has progressed significantly with two specific vacant space grants proposed:

- Living Over the Shops Scheme (LOTS)
- Vacant Unit Activation Scheme (VUAS).

Both grants comprise of funding for private owners of up to £25,000 to convert disused space above retail premises into flats or to reinstate vacant units to a more lettable quality respectively.

FDC is learning from other recent grant schemes that have been managed to ensure that the processes are simple for property owners to use. The Vacant Unit Activation fund is set to launch requests for expressions of interest in mid-January 2022. The Living Above the Shops Grant is now scheduled for launch later on in the programme to align with the positive press around the delivery of the marketplace redevelopment.

4.11 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.

A communications plan is in place with an officer group meeting monthly to ensure delivery. This will become increasingly important as we approach significant construction works in 2023. Informing businesses and the local community regarding roadworks in Broad Street will be critical to ensure that the town does not become congested. It is worth noting that there will not be any significant north or south bound lane closures (as occurred during the recent gas main issue). The phasing of the works will be such that a lane north and south will be open for the majority of the work.

5 Financial Implications

The project remains on time and on budget. Changes to the original Market Place and Riverside projects have ensured that the overall Broad Street and Riverside packages remain affordable. FDC is in receipt of funding from DLUHC to cover the period to December 2022. A further memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be agreed with DLUHC in spring 2022, with officers expecting this MoU to confirm the final grant that will cover the main construction costs in 2023.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Grant funders are satisfied with the joint working and procurement approaches that FDC and CCC are taking.
- 6.2 FDC is discussing with the CCC procurement team to ensure that all steps are in line with both organisations' procurement and governance arrangements, with access to all frameworks available to FDC where necessary.
- 6.3 Procurement:

The arrangements with CCC are based on collaborative working and are designed to fall with Regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). This requires the following conditions to be fulfilled:

- The contract establishes or implements a co-operation between the participating contracting authorities with the aim of ensuring that public services they have to perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common.
- The implementation of that co-operation is governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest.
- The participating contracting authorities perform on the open market less than 20% of the activities concerned by the co-operation.

With these conditions fulfilled, the activities funded by CCC as part of the collaborative arrangement will not require to be tendered by FDC. As required by the PCR, the co-operation is based on a co-operative concept, where both authorities commit to contribute towards the co-operative performance of the public service in question. In addition, the funding for CCC's contribution is governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest (i.e. is on a not for profit basis). Each of FDC and CCC have public service objectives in common. In the case of CCC, as noted above, it is the highway authority and much of the work is to be carried out on the highway. FDC's objectives relate to regeneration and improvement of an area within its boundaries.

The arrangements are governed by a memorandum of understanding.

All works and services otherwise to be carried out will be procured using CCC frameworks. CCC and FDC officers are ensuring that FDC is entitled to call off from these frameworks and that the scope of the call offs will be compliant with the frameworks.

6.4 Powers:

FDC will enter into the arrangements with CCC using its powers under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

6.5 Subsidy control:

All contractors and consultants will be appointed via call offs from 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 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.