

Tiverton Town Centre Development Update

Cabinet Member Cllrs Clive Eginton, Ray Stanley and Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer Head of Housing and Property Services

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on the current position regarding the acquisition of Market Walk, Tiverton and future proposals for the regeneration of the town centre being considered.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) **That Cabinet note the report and agree the Tiverton Town Centre regeneration project initiation document attached at Appendix 2.**
- 2) **That Cabinet approve the appointment of consultants to complete a master-planning exercise as detailed in paragraph 3.5 of this report.**

Relationship to Corporate Plan: A thriving economy is one of the Council's key priorities within the Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications: The preparation of a comprehensive master-planning exercise would be in the region of £40,000 and it would be necessary to fund this through economic regeneration funding included within the Capital Programme. The cost of any reports needed to support and inform this process would be in addition to this figure. In the longer term, surplus income from the acquisition of Market Walk would be ring fenced for future economic and regeneration purposes.

Legal Implications: Legal implications will arise from various property transactions but are anticipated to be managed with existing resource.

Risk Assessment: A full risk assessment will be undertaken as the projects in the scheme are developed. Failure to support a regeneration of Tiverton Town Centre could lead to a deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre with falling income to the Council.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Members will be aware that some initial investigation work has been done to look at regeneration project in the Tiverton Town Centre. This report looks to provide Members with an update on the acquisition of Market Walk, Tiverton and future proposals being considered for the regeneration of Tiverton Town Centre.

1.2 The Council's current core strategy sets out the Council's aims for the future of Tiverton and its town centre: 'Tiverton will continue to develop in a balanced way as a medium sized market town serving a rural hinterland in the eastern part of Mid Devon'.

- 1.3 Members are reminded that a Tiverton Town Centre retail analysis was commissioned in December 2013, a Tiverton Town Centre feasibility study completed in March 2014, together with subsequent reports that form the basis for retail regeneration. An initial study undertaken by an external consultant on behalf of the Council is attached at Appendix 1. This study starts to identify constraints and opportunities. It is to be regarded as an early stage background paper only. A further comprehensive master-planning exercise is proposed (see section 3.0). It is through the master-planning process that proposals for regeneration and opportunities for site focussed redevelopment will be considered.
- 1.4 At the present time, development values in Tiverton will prevent a private sector developer making strategic investment in the town centre. Local authorities are, however, seen as having a responsibility for ensuring the economic vitality of the town centre. It is therefore essential that the vitality and viability of the town centre be protected where possible through proactive management of the town centre and, in the case of Market Walk, strategic investments.
- 1.5 Strengthening the town centre is not a one off initiative; it is a continuous process which needs to go on in the long term and may span a number of years.

2.0 **Project Initiation Document (PID)**

- 2.1 A project group made up of officers and members has been set up to define the Tiverton Regeneration Project in order to form the basis for its management and benchmark for assessment of the projects overall success.
- 2.2 A full copy of the Project Initiation Document (PID) setting out the project objectives is included in Appendix 2. The PID confirms the scope and aims of the project which will guide the project planning for the future. The project objectives are repeated below:
- 2.2.1 Produce a master-plan for Tiverton town centre that is agreed by the District Council after consultation with the Tiverton Town Council, Tiverton Traders Association and other interested parties.
- 2.2.2 Improve the range and quality of retailers and food and beverage operators operating within the town centre of Tiverton.
- 2.2.3 Bring forward a business plan for the Pannier Market which provides for:
- Additional income of £50k per annum
 - Additional days' trading
 - Covered walkway for shoppers
 - Wider diversity of events and themed markets
- 2.2.4 Facilitate an improved cinema offering for the town by working in partnership with Merlin Cinemas.
- 2.2.5 Improve the car parking facilities for visitors to the town through access improvements, signage and physical links to the town centre.

- 2.2.6 Build on the town's historic areas and heritage assets to contribute to this project, applying for grant funding where opportunities arise.
- 2.2.7 Develop a business plan to maximise the Council's property portfolio and bring forward new commercial development on land identified in the master-plan.
- 2.2.8 Encourage additional choice of low cost supermarket shopping within the town centre.
- 2.2.9 Include longer term consideration for the New Hall and Town Hall in any future master-plan.
- 2.2.10 Promote the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID) by April 2017.
- 2.2.11 Work with the private sector to bring forward plans for a hotel in the town centre.

3.0 **Master-planning**

- 3.1 Key to delivery of a regeneration project is the development of a masterplan to guide the process. A masterplan is a comprehensive plan that acts as a blueprint for the development of an area: setting out principles for the way in which it will come forward on a comprehensive basis, coordinating policy and planning requirements. Once this master-plan is prepared and adopted it will set out the firm direction for the project and provide the basis for detailed consultation with all interested parties.
- 3.2 The Council's adopted Local Plan already identifies and allocates 4 sites within Tiverton town centre with redevelopment opportunities at William Street, Phoenix Lane, Bampton Street and St Andrew's Street. The proposed submission of the Local Plan Review 2013 – 2033 proposes to allocate land at St Andrew's Street and Phoenix Lane for redevelopment. The proposed allocation at Phoenix Lane (Policy TIV12) is as a high quality shopping, leisure and residential area with accessible public space. The policy establishes that comprehensive master-planning of the development would be expected.
- 3.3 Appendix 3 identifies the full extent of the study area for the Tiverton Town Regeneration project and officers suggest that a comprehensive master-plan be produced for the area detailed. This will require at least two stages of public consultation for the subsequent adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. This document will need to be in place as a basis for the determination of any future planning applications.
- 3.4 A comprehensive master-planning exercise takes time and resources, however, done properly it enables the successful delivery of improvements in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Without a master-plan ad-hoc opportunities which presented themselves could either be overlooked or valuable time wasted by considering them when they may not meet any of the longer term objectives.

- 3.5 Officers do not currently have the resources or capacity to carry out a masterplanning exercise. Therefore in order to proceed with the project, an external consultant would need to be engaged to carry out this exercise. It is anticipated that the masterplanning exercise itself will be carried out in two phases, detailed below. The anticipated cost would be in the region of £40,000. The cost of any additional reports to support and inform the masterplanning process would be in addition to this figure. The suggested geographical area of the master-plan area is as attached at Appendix 3.

Phase 1- initial scoping and consultation

- 3.6 A report will be prepared setting out the subject, scope and potential content of the master-plan. This will include reviewing the evidence base i.e. retail studies, heritage studies etc and will include time for a 6 week public and stakeholder consultation. The delivery timeframe for this is expected to be approximately 3-4 months.

Phase 2 - drafting of the master-plan, consultation and adoption

- 3.7 This will include preparation of a draft master-plan document including any further evidence and make this available on the website. This would include 6 weeks of public and stakeholder consultation. Post consultation amendment and subsequent adoption by Cabinet and Full Council. The delivery timeframe for this is expected to be approximately 6 months.
- 3.8 Following the adoption of the master-plan as a supplementary planning document, the project will move into the delivery phase in accordance with a timescale.

4.0 Market Walk, Tiverton

- 4.1 Unfortunately the drafting and agreement of the legal contract for the acquisition of Market Walk has been somewhat protracted and has taken more time than expected. It is however proposed that completion of the purchase of Market Walk will take place on 27 March 2015.
- 4.2 Officers have met with the managing agents with a view to retain their services as a transitional arrangement and have instructed letting agents to market the vacant units in line with the Red Book valuation that has previously been carried out.

5.0 Town Centre Manager

- 5.1 The role of a town centre manager is complex, multi-faceted and requires flexibility. The role will depend on the various partners' goals and aspirations and indeed the particular town centre. Key to successful town centre management is developing the partnership, realising projects and leading the implementation of action plans. The town centre manager is a full time advocate and champion for the town and must be seen as neutral or independent of the interests of any individual party.

- 5.2 Appendix 4 is intended to be a guide that indicates the inter-relationships involved and how 'partners' and decision makers wishing to improve their town centre have influence.
- 5.3 Experience shows that town centre managers are often recruited from outside the immediate area and therefore successful recruitment varies considerably on experience and the exact nature of the role.
- 5.4 The role of town centre manager is in the process of being evaluated and recruited.

Contact for more Information: Nick Sanderson - 01884 234960
(nsanderson@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Ray Stanley, Management Team