

Cabinet

27 August 2015

Tiverton Town Centre update

Cabinet Members Cllr R Stanley / Cllr R Chesterton
Responsible Officer Head of Housing & Property Services

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on the current position in relation to the proposals for the regeneration of Tiverton town centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet note the contents of the report;
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Housing & Property Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development, to agree disposal to Premier Inn for 125 years of part of the multi-storey car park for the provision of a hotel.

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

Financial Implications: None arising directly from this report. However, future projects requiring major financial input would require a detailed business case and if approved would form part of the Capital Programme.

Legal Implications: None to this report.

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 deterioration in commercial activity, a less vibrant centre, with falling income to the Council.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the acquisition by the Council of Market Walk, Tiverton was completed in March 2015. This report informs Members:
 - 1.1.1 on how the scheme is being operated, together with proposals for its future management and use;
 - 1.1.2 on the requirement to prepare a master-planning exercise for the town centre; and
 - 1.1.3 on a number of the project objectives detailed within the approved Project Initiation Document (PID) for the regeneration of the town centre.

2.0 Project objectives currently being progressed

2.1 Production of a master-plan for Tiverton town centre:

2.1.1 Officers have formally signed an Access Agreement with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which enables the procurement of a specialist planning consultant through the HCA Framework Agreement.

2.1.2 A 'scoping' document has been prepared outlining the requirements of the master-plan. This document will be used to invite expressions of interest from organisations in the HCA framework. Responses will be scored and the top four consultants meeting the criteria will then be asked to prepare a fully priced submission.

2.2 Facilitate an improved cinema offering for the town by working in partnership with Merlin Cinemas:

2.2.1 Officers have recently met with the cinema operators who are still keen to work with the Council. The operators are looking to commence project planning with an intended start of work within the next 18 months.

2.3 Develop a business plan to maximise the Council's property portfolio:

2.3.1 Refurbishment and letting of flat above 34 Fore Street completed and let.

2.3.2 Improvements to façade facing Fore Street completed.

2.3.3 Rear aspect of flat access de-littered and timber works replaced and painted

2.3.4 Lighting improved under archway from the market through to Fore Street.

2.3.5 Regular meetings with lettings and managing agent for Market Walk.

2.3.6 Use of vacant shop units – High School display and Community Safety Partnership.

2.3.7 Weed spraying to town centre road and footpaths undertaken in absence of DCC work being carried out.

2.3.8 Appointed specialist consultant to develop a feasibility study for the offer at Market Walk.

2.4 Work with the private sector to bring forward plans for a hotel in the town centre:

2.4.1 Officers are in discussion with Premier Inn for an 85-room hotel on District Council owned land adjacent to the multi-storey car park, Tiverton.

2.4.2 Pre-application advice has been given by the Planning service.

2.4.3 Valuation advice is being sought in order to provide the Council with sufficient comfort that the financial proposal offered is reasonable within the context of the delivery of the scheme against other similar market transactions.

2.5 There are a number of other identified project objectives which have yet to be commenced and will be brought forward as and when appropriate.

3.0 Project Board and Project Plan

3.1 Monthly meetings are held by the Project Working Group to deal with day-to-day management issues regarding the Council's property holdings and to progress the creation of a masterplan. A Project Board, whose responsibility will be to make decisions on the proposed masterplan, keep timescales on track and commitment of resources, will be formed.

3.2 A project plan with agreed timescales will be completed and provided to the Project Board in the form of a highlight report on a two monthly basis. The Project Board will oversee future reports to the Cabinet at least six-monthly or as decisions are required, if sooner.

4.0 Other Council initiatives and schemes

4.1 In addition to the project objectives detailed, there are a number of additional initiatives being undertaken for the town centre regeneration. These include:

4.1.1 The recruitment of a Town Centre Manager (TCM) for Tiverton on a two-year fixed term has been concluded and the TCM will start on 7 September 2015.

4.1.2 A Tiverton shop front face-lift grant scheme is being run by the Council's Community Development & Regeneration team.

4.1.3 Planning permission and listed building consent has been obtained for additional lock-up units within the Pannier Market former 'pig pens' together with a further retail unit.

4.1.4 A working group has been set up which includes representatives from the Town Council, Royal British Legion and Burma Star Association with the aim of improving the town space for war memorials and commemorative services. A specialist urban design consultant is being procured through the HCA Framework Agreement to design a suitable scheme based on Angel Hill.

4.1.5 A scheme to convert the Lowman Green public conveniences into a retail unit has been tendered and a start on site is due in September 2015. Officers are currently in discussion with interested parties to lease the converted building.

4.1.6 Coaches are able to use the designated coach bays at William Street coach park, however some further improvements which will make the access easier to navigate are due to be made in the next two weeks.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 An informal meeting with Tiverton town centre businesses and retailers was held on 12 August 2015 to inform businesses of the aims and aspirations that the Council has for the town centre, together with the progress to date.
- 5.2 It is hoped that this will be the start of more frequent basis with officers and the Town Centre Manager as the project develops.

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Distribution of the report Cllr R Stanley, Cllr R Chesterton, Management Team