

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)****SURREY**

DATE: 4 MARCH 2015
LEAD OFFICER: ROD SHAW, PRINCIPAL CONSERVATION OFFICER, MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS: CHURCH STREET, LEATHERHEAD

DIVISION: LEATHERHEAD AND FETCHAM EAST

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Mole Valley District Council has agreed to allocate £511,000 to develop a master plan for Leatherhead town centre and procure a master planning partner to take the project forward. This has been supplemented by funding from the Coast to Capital Local Economic Partnership (LEP) for a master planning exercise that will provide guidance on the future development in Leatherhead. In the short term, however, in advance of this major piece of work, officers have been discussion with local Members and stakeholders regarding the potential for achieving short term improvements to the public realm. Following this consultation, there is a proposal to use funding available now to undertake a series of short term improvements to the public realm focussed on Church Street but including other parts of the town in the short term.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to agree that:

- (i) Support is given to designing and implementing a programme of short term measures for environmental enhancements in Leatherhead town centre, as outlined in this report, working with officers from Mole Valley District Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Section 106 and LEP Growth Deal funding is available from the District Council for environmental enhancements in Leatherhead town centre. Despite the onset of the master planning exercise for Leatherhead that will assist in establishing a long term vision for the town, it is considered that both councils will wish to demonstrate a commitment to a better future for Leatherhead in the short term by investing immediately available funds in ways that will upgrade the public realm.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

1.1

A bid to the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership LEP was submitted by Mole Valley District Council. The bid has the working title of 'Transform Leatherhead'. Underlying the bid is a recognition that Leatherhead has an important

part to play in the economic future of the Coast to Capital LEP but that it needs to overcome barriers to growth in order to fulfil its potential. It is recognised in particular that the town centre has under-performed and that the reasons for this require a fundamental rethink of issues from roads and transportation to the quality and design of the public realm. Many of these issues are central to this Council's role as the highway authority.

1.2

In recognition of the quality and persuasiveness of the bid, the LEP provided further limited funds to build capacity amongst local partners with a view to developing a master plan for Leatherhead which would set out deliverable projects that would be attractive to both the public and private sectors. This in turn would be based on a vision for Leatherhead developed within the community.

1.3

The commitment of Mole Valley District Council to transform Leatherhead town centre and the recent appointment of a master plan partner together with the success of the LEP bid have created a momentum within the community. The timetable is such that the work to produce the master plan, including the consultation that will be a vital part of the process, will be undertaken during 2015 with a final master plan submitted in 2016. In the meantime, both councils would like to demonstrate their commitment to the town centre by undertaking short term improvements to the public realm.

1.4

Funding is available through Section 106 contributions towards environmental improvements. In consultation with community groups and local Members it was decided that Church Street should be focus of attention. The importance of Church Street as one of the principal gateways into the town and as a part of the commercial heart of the town, providing the location for the town theatre and museum, is widely recognised. The public realm has not received significant public investment since the early 1980s.

1.5

Various approaches to the future design and layout of the street have been discussed with local Members and organisations. However, without a vision for the town that would set clear design principles for Church Street, it is difficult to make longer term decisions. The master plan will help in this respect, but there is a desire to make improvements quickly. The Transform Leatherhead reference groups comprising District and County Members, local organisations and representatives of the business community have agreed that short term improvements could be funded from the available funds in a way that will not limit future decisions but could significantly enhance the fabric of the street. In addition, other projects within the town centre have also been identified if funds allow additional work to be undertaken. The list of projects appear below. At this stage they are not prioritised. This Committee's agreement to the approach is required both because the responsibility for what happens in the public realm lies with the County Council as the Highway Authority and because officers of the authority will need to work with colleagues in the District Council in order to deliver the enhancements.

1.6

The list of possible projects can be viewed as a guide to the type of work that would be undertaken. It has been discussed with the Transform Leatherhead Members Reference Group and Community Reference Group. These groups have had a chance to input into it. The emphasis is on tackling obvious eyesores and defects, removing clutter and taking a comprehensive look at signage. Church Street is the primary focus, but with wider town projects also identified.

Church Street

- Creative lighting scheme for The Theatre entrance to enhance and draw attention to the entrance and add colour and interest to the street.
- Ease the ramp access through the vehicular barrier to prevent grounding.
- Undertake feasibility work and ground investigations to establish best options for the future location and design of vehicle barrier
- Remove and/or replant over-mature trees in planters to allow more light into the street and open up views through Church Street.
- Review signage at junction of The Crescent/Church Street to reduce the cluttered and confusing feel and provide more of a welcome.
- Work with the Leatherhead Museum to enhance their presence in the street.
- Signage and street furniture review to reduce clutter so that its buildings, spaces and landmarks can be seen and appreciated more easily. Seek a more elegant solution to the signage at the vehicular barrier.
- Remove large tree outside Englishman's Castle and repair paving and improve street furniture
- Review street furniture to provide consistent style for bollards and cycle stands in particular
- Replace existing globe lighting outside The Theatre with updated and improved lighting.
- Repair damaged brick paving details.
- Consider seasonal planting opportunities in consultation with the Residents' Association to add colour and interest to the street.

Town Centre Generally

- Create uniformity of street furniture including more practical litter bins. Would include more elegant traffic sign solutions in locations such as at the North Street cross-over.
- Improved signage to and from the car parks including smart phone QR options and links to car parking locations on the website.
- Improved Leret Way entrance to the Swan centre to make it more inviting and welcoming.
- Offer a reasonably priced pigeon spike service to owners and occupiers.

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- Renovate town notice boards in car parks.
- Carry out further repair of the slate cladding to the High Street ramp.
- Remove and replace damaged street signs, e.g. in The Crescent.
- Look at planting possibilities with the Residents' Association
- Replaced missing fingerposts in North Street and outside The Institute.
- Repaint bollards in North Street and utility cabinets elsewhere.
- Improve signage at the Epsom Road end of High Street
- Remove or replace guardrail from Station Road subject to safety considerations.

2. ANALYSIS:

2.1

The projects listed above address significant issues associated with the quality and design of public infrastructure. They address problems that can be dealt with without pre-empting structural changes that may arise from the master planning process. In most cases they can be implemented within existing powers and functions. Some will be led by District Council staff, whilst others will involve significant input from County Council officers. The list may be amended in the course of the development and costing of the enhancement programme and in consultation with the Transform Leatherhead reference groups. However, the objective is to implement as much of it as possible.

3. OPTIONS:

3.1

There are two general options in relation to the principle of the approach to public realm enhancements. Option 1 is to look at more structural change in Church Street and to focus the funding there. The danger with this option is that work to redesign the street might be overtaken by strategic decisions made in the master planning process. This might be seen as a waste of resources.

3.2

Option 2 would be to take the approach recommended in this report, namely to undertake enhancements that do not pre-empt later changes but would lead to the implementation of a series of small scale enhancement that together would have an immediate impact of the quality of the public realm. Implementation would be easier

to achieve than change involving significant redesign and the list of projects can be flexible to reflect the budget available.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

4.1

Consultation has taken place with local Members and local groups and organisations via the Transform Leatherhead reference groups. The Groups have endorsed the approach being recommended as Option 2.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1

A sum of approximately £325,000 is currently available from the District Council's funding for environmental improvements in Leatherhead. This is made up of Section 106 payments. A grant of £200,000 from 2016 has been offered via the LEP for projects that will enhance Church Street, which is one of the main access point to the Town Centre..

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1

Consideration will need to be given to issues relating to the needs of disabled people when designing the projects identified in this report. However, since the recommendation is not to undertake major structural change to the public highway, the implications are unlikely to be significant.

7. LOCALISM:

7.1

The background to this report sets out the community basis on which decisions are being made and the fact that there has been input into the list of project via the Transform Leatherhead reference groups. Liaison will continue to take place during the planning and implementation of projects.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising

	from this report
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8.1 Crime and Disorder implications

Although there are no major crime and disorder implications, the upgrading of the public realm could encourage a more responsible attitude towards the care and use of public spaces.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1

The Transform Leatherhead initiative offers an exciting opportunity to address a variety of issues affecting the economic development and general health of Leatherhead town centre. In the meantime, there are resources that can be deployed to address some immediate public realm and environmental enhancement issues. A list of potential projects has been agreed with the Transform Leatherhead reference groups, including local Members, as a way forward in the short term. The Committee is asked to agree this approach, encapsulated in the list of projects set out in this report, and to provide officer resources to enable projects to be implemented.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

10.1

If the Committee approves the recommendation, officers will meet to prioritise projects and to begin the design work and set out a delivery programme. The Transform Leatherhead reference groups will be meeting monthly and reports on progress will be prepared for these meetings. Further reports to this Committee will arise from the development work and master planning process and short term enhancements can be included in progress reports.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

District officers, highways officers, Councillors Hall and Townsend and local Members from the Leatherhead area, including Ashted, Fetcham and Bookham.

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

None