

Executive Committee Report

Report of Carol Humphrey, Head of Planning Services

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North Street maintenance and environmental improvement project

Recommendation to Executive

That the Executive is asked to:

(i) request Council on 9 February 2012 to increase the approved capital schemes by £207,600 in 2012/13, to be funded through S106 contributions;

(ii) subject to Council agreeing funding agree the use of the total funding of up to £495,600 available from the Council's Section 106 budgets and capital programme for phased environmental improvements to be developed and implemented within the North Street and the town centre area;

(iii) authorise the Head of Planning Services, in conjunction with the Head of Financial Services, to transfer funds of up to £495,600 to Surrey County Council as the Council's contribution to joint maintenance and environmental improvement schemes (as described in this report and shown in the illustrative phase one plan attached at appendix 1);

(iv) agree that Bridge Street and the High Street including the High Street/Chertsey Street/North Street junction be prioritised for any footway improvements possible through Surrey County Council funding.

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

It is recognised that the quality of Guildford town centre's streetscape and public realm are deteriorating and these phased works will be the first steps to delivering a better, remodelled streetscape in the future.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The improvement of the North Street streetscape is a long standing aim of the Council and following extensive discussion with our Surrey County Council (SCC) partners is coming to fruition. This report highlights a proposed two-phase pavement upgrading project by Surrey County Council and requests approval for funding joint environmental improvement works.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The Council's environmental improvement programme responds to a variety of the Council's core values and key strategic priorities relating to sustainable local environment, safe and vibrant community and dynamic economy

3. Background and Issues

- 3.1 Officers are working in partnership with SCC to agree a scheme which provides a design of paving and street furniture that works with the character of North Street and reflects the high quality heritage materials used nearby.

- 3.2 The economic, social and environmental benefits of improving our built environment quality are manifest, including;

- helping to promote and give identity
- offers choice amongst a wide range of places
- increases the success of local shops and facilities
- makes a site easier to access, increasing land value
- improves security and gives a greater sense of personal security
- encourages walking and cycling, reducing car use and vehicle emissions
- makes parking and transport networks more efficient
- improves access to essential facilities and activities
- attracts people and activity to improve the local economy
- increases involvement in community and cultural activities
- increases use of public space and promotes health, and
- attracts social interaction.

- 3.3 North Street can be busy, vibrant, youthful and entertaining. It can also be dominated by traffic, difficult to navigate as a pedestrian, and has infrastructure inadequate to support pedestrian and shopping activities. Its character is distinct from the High Street and we have an opportunity to take a different approach to streetscape improvements here, in comparison to the heritage based line taken elsewhere in the town centre.

- 3.4 The current environment is failing physically, aesthetically, and becoming a greater health and safety risk, particularly trip hazards from the steps and from damaged paving. Many slabs have been broken by overrunning vehicles, or removed and replaced with tarmac after utilities works. There is also a legacy of mismatched paving, signage and street furniture, most of which is in poor or failing condition.

3.5 SCC's maintenance programme provides an effective way of funding the upgrading of the current street arrangement to a general amenity and safety standard. The Council can ensure the quality of the detailing and finish needed for high profile sites through further financial and design input.

3.6 Working together with SCC officers we have explored the long term aspirations for the street and taken views from service providers, public user groups and local retailers into account. We are developing a programme of short term interventions to sustain current activities and provide temporary infrastructure to support new activities for a more vibrant and inclusive street environment. These will be finalised and implemented in phases

Phases one and two

3.7 The works will be in three phases, beginning this financial year. They are commissioned by SCC as part of its main long term highways contract. This Council will contribute financially to certain agreed elements of the overall works contract. An illustrative plan of the phase one works is attached in appendix 1. The central stepped section of the street has been subject to some detailed design work by SCC and will need to be agreed with officers before implementation (in phase two). The design will protect heritage value, ensure public health and safety, and support existing and new street activity.

3.8 SCC's streetworks contractor, May Gurney, will carry out the phase one works, commencing mid-February – March 2012, for 10-12 weeks. The need for a working methodology that keeps disruption to the market to a minimum is understood and is being discussed with May Gurney.

3.9 In summary the phase one works will involve:

- renewing pavement areas to an agreed specification reflecting SCC's technical requirements whilst providing an uplift in paving quality appropriate to our aspirations for the town centre;
- proactive engagement with all responsible parties - including other services of both councils and service providers such as British Telecom to de-clutter the street by reducing signs and equipment where possible and integrating new signs with street furniture;
- using pavement space and a range of new translocatable street furniture to provide clusters of new seating and benches; and softening planting along the street including by the Library;
- refurbishment or replacement of street furniture to reflect the street yet work with nearby heritage models;
- reinforcement of pedestrian movement by continuing pavement treatment across vehicular crossovers and access roads where possible; and
- installation of new services to support the weekly market and other external events (council owned lighting columns, electrical services and connections and water points).

3.10 Officers have also investigated the options for a pedestrian access to the rear of the Guildford House Gallery. No decision has been taken on this and it does not form a part of the North Street environmental improvements explained in this report. If the proposal is taken forward, this would be as a separate project. The

works intended as part of the North Street improvements would not impede the creation of such an access.

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- 3.11 It is anticipated that the phase two works will be implemented in the 2012/13 financial year, subject to final agreement of the re-design of the steps that separate the parking/market trading area from the pavement in the middle section of North Street.
- 3.12 The works will be advanced to ensure the Council completes expenditure of its environmental improvements in the town centre/North Street budget in line with the various timeframes required within the S106 agreements. Both councils will continue to work together to finalise the works specification for phase one for their commencement in February, and to agree phase two for following phase one.
- 3.13 Design proposals will build upon the design principles of the initial phase one of street works outlined here and will be in line with the Department for Transport advisory document Manual for Streets Two (MfS). By applying the principles of MfS during annual maintenance or as small-scale improvements the works can be carried out quickly. As such, these works provide the first steps to delivering a better, remodelled streetscape in the future.
- 3.14 Officers are working in partnership to agree a scheme that provides a paving and street furniture specification that works with the contemporary character and feel of North Street and its activities, and reflects the high quality heritage materials used nearby.
- 3.15 These works will, to some extent, be temporary. The sub-base works and underground services will remain, and any large elements of street furniture will be capable of relocation elsewhere. This will accommodate future regeneration in the North Street area.
- 3.16 Natural Yorkstone remains a long term aspiration for paving throughout the town centre, however using a pre-cast slab created from Yorkstone aggregate for these works will provide a cost effective alternative to natural Yorkstone.

Future works phase three

- 3.17 In addition to these two initial phases of works, officers are exploring options for providing further joint streetscape enhancements and maintenance within the area. Discussions include the resurfacing of areas of carriageway, the provision of dedicated on street motorcycle parking, the provision of widened pavements, courtesy crossings and gateway features to change the character of the street and reduce the scale and dominance of highway carriageway.
- 3.18 Future phases of the works will be advanced to ensure the Council completes expenditure of its environmental improvements in the town centre/North Street budget in line with the various timeframes required by the S106 agreements.
- 3.19 Officers will ensure that full information about the phase one and two North Street works, and all future environmental improvement works, are shared with lead and

local ward councillors, other services within both councils, local retailers and other interested parties. Letter drops will be used, together with updates during the works.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 A maintenance scheme for the south side of North Street has been approved by Surrey County Council's (SCC) Asset Management Group as a part of its annual maintenance programme, and funding committed in their 2011/2012 programme.
- 4.2 The forthcoming works specification for phases one and two will be advanced to ensure a cost effective scheme that is of appropriate quality for the site.
- 4.3 SCC's approved scheme funds purely the maintenance aspects of the work, including installation of a new sub-base and repaving with an amenity quality pre-cast concrete slab (similar to that used in the Upper High Street). It will also remove redundant street furniture and signs where necessary. This Council will need to fund a Yorkstone aggregate textured concrete paving slab, workmanship required to provide an above standard paving specification and laying pattern, and any works required to upgrade existing, or introduce new street furniture. Increased costs to achieve a higher specification in these works now will assist in minimising maintenance costs in the future.
- 4.4 The majority of the Council's funding will come from a variety of Section 106 agreement contributions from North Street and the immediate town centre vicinity. £435,600 is committed to the works and will be spent in accordance with specific locations or on certain features as required by the various agreements. The existing capital programme includes approval for expenditure of £288,000 (in two schemes), so an increase of £207,600 is required.
- 4.5 Phase two includes proposed works to the area of North Street used by the market traders (phase one will not affect this area). The details of this have yet to be defined and we will do all we can to minimise any impacts during the works. We will clarify the VAT implications, in respect of the partial exemption VAT calculation, once costs for this element of the works are known.
- 4.6 The overall budget available will be managed between this and later phases of the works. Phase three of environmental improvements will be advanced later to ensure the Council's continuing commitment to providing a quality built environment and link with SCC's rolling maintenance programme.
- 4.7 One of the future projects which have been discussed as a priority is the re-design of the High Street/Chertsey Street junction to improve the pedestrian environment. The Council has £60,000 committed within its approved capital schemes programme towards this work (carried forward following the resolution of Environment and Transport Committee 08/12/03).

Funding

- 4.8 The table at appendix 2 provides current outline cost estimates for the three phases of improvements. The Council is working with county officers to prepare the final works specification to phases one and two, which will determine final costs.
- 4.9 SCC appears to have some funding available for footway improvements. It is recommended that any funding available to be spent locally be prioritised to improve footways in Bridge Street and the High Street including the High Street/Chertsey Street junction area to facilitate the project outlined in 4.7. The Executive's agreement is sought for this prioritisation.

Procurement

- 4.10 To enable this Council to retain ownership of the street furniture for use elsewhere when required, the street furniture will be procured directly.
- 4.11 Procurement of future phases of the works will be progressed in line with the Council's procurement rules and, if advantageous, in conjunction with SCC through its contract procurement and its main long-term contractor.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The works will be designed and implemented in accordance with all relevant health and safety regulations, in line with both councils' responsibilities (including SCC as the public highway authority). Works will comply with the Construction, Design and Management (CDM) regulations, as well as the guidance set out in Manual for Streets Two.

6. Human Resource Implications

- 6.1 A close joint working approach is essential to allow the Council to work effectively and efficiently on the public highway.
- 6.2 The current project and future phased works programme require the design and project management input of a diverse range of existing staff of both SCC and this Council. These include landscape architecture/urban design, highways engineering and maintenance officer, asset project management, lighting and electrical engineering, parking management, legal and accountancy advice.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This joint maintenance and environmental improvements programme of works will help to raise the quality of North Street and areas of the wider town centre in the short-medium term, ahead of its longer-term regeneration.

8. Background Papers

Manual for Streets Two, Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, September 2010.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – plan showing phase one North Street environmental improvements
 Appendix 2 – cost estimates for the phased improvements

Appendix 2 – cost estimates for the phased improvements

Phase	SCC item	GBC item	Cost estimates	Notes
Phase 1 (Feb/ March 2012)	Maintenance scheme to improve footway sub-base, resurface footways		£175,000	Funded through SCC footways resurfacing programme
		Supply street furniture	£41,000	Funded through S106 receipts
		Refurbish existing street furniture	£7,500	Funded through S106 receipts
		Upgrade GBC electrical services, water supply and lighting	£40,000	Funded through S106 receipts
		Uplift in paving quality; materials and workmanship	£55,000	Funded through S106 receipts
		Remove redundant BT services	£5,000	Funded through S106 receipts
Phase 2 (April 2012 – March 2013)	Maintenance scheme to resurface stepped section of footway sub-base, recreate steps and resurface footways		£160,000	Funded through SCC footways resurfacing programme
		Uplift in paving quality;	£45,000	Funded through S106 receipts

		materials and workmanship		
		Supply street furniture	£30,000	Funded through S106 receipts
		Refurbish existing street furniture	£4,500	Funded through S106 receipts
		Resurface North Street parking area	TBC	Required to facilitate new step alignment. Funding source tbc.
Phase 3 (timing of future projects subject to agreement and approval)		Design and install artistic gateway feature into North Street street scene	£30,000	£13,339.40 available specifically from Section 106 ID 525 with additional S106 receipts required.
	Resurface carriageway of North Street		TBC	In conjunction with bus station relocation; estimate 2014
	Joint SCC/GBC scheme to improve pedestrian environment and place around Chertsey Street/High Street/North Street junction		£250,000	£60,000 through Council approved capital schemes and S106 receipts. Capital funding is GBC contribution to uplift quality of SCC scheme and works can only be advanced if SCC funding is approved.
	Joint SCC/GBC scheme to provide courtesy crossing, motorcycle parking and improve environment between Library and in Dolphin Square.		£100,000	Outline design circulated to officers for discussion. Council input to be funded through S106 receipts.