

Report to Cabinet

23 November 2023

By the Cabinet Member for Local Economy and Place



**Horsham
District
Council**

DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Queen Street Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements

Executive Summary

This report outlines work to the Horsham District Council owned land in front of the Queen Street and Queensway parade of shops, to deter vehicles from parking on the land. It also incorporates the removal of deteriorating planter boxes in exchange for trees being planted along with additional bollards.

The proposals have been developed in response to Councillor concerns following numerous on-going complaints from residents about cars and take-away food scooters parking on the pavement in the immediate area.

The purpose of this report is to approve the project which is included in the Annual Plan. Although unbudgeted, funds of £70,000 can be vired from alternative capital project budgets that will not be spent. A proposed schedule of works has been costed by a reputable contractor to determine this budget.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Approve the works described in this report; and
- ii) Delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to agree contractual terms and award the contract to the winning contractor.

Reasons for Recommendations

- (i) To improve infrastructure to stop vehicles from driving on the pedestrian area in around the parade of shops
- (ii) To install sustainable green landscaping by changing out large planter boxes with planted trees.

Background Papers

1. Results of consultation with local businesses, residents, Town Centre and Local Economy & Place PDAGs.

Wards affected: Denne

Contact: Elizabeth Williams, Property Management Team Leader, 01403215150.

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Horsham District Council owns land outside the parade of shops at 4-32 Queen Street. The HDC land is bordered by Highway Authority managed footpaths with short stay parking allowed on Queensway. Currently there is a variety of infrastructure on the land including bollards, large planter boxes, signs and paving variation.
- 1.2 The principal issue comes from cars and scooters using the area to park while they get takeaways or employees using scooters to collect food for delivery. This makes the area unsafe for pedestrians and causes damage to the pedestrian area.
- 1.3 As one of the main entrance points to Horsham it is unattractive with a cluttered mixture of redundant promotional signs and deteriorating planter boxes that are costly to maintain.
- 1.4 The proposed works will move existing bollards to the edge of the Highway Authority footpaths to stop cars entering the pedestrianised area. Planter boxes will be changed out for trees making the green infrastructure more sustainable with a reduced ongoing maintenance requirement.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 These works align with inspiring greener futures and creating safer routes for walking Council Plan priority.

3 Details

- 3.1 To declutter the area the proposed work includes the removal of six redundant planter boxes, two promotional signs and uneven paving.
- 3.2 Eleven existing bollards will be relocated to the edge of the carriageway on Queen Street.
- 3.3 Seven new trees will be installed in tree pits forming a leafy edge to the pedestrian area as well as forming a further barrier for cars.
- 3.4 An application for a Traffic Regulation Order was submitted to West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) to make provision for a scooter bay and to change the hours of operation of the parking bays on Queensway but was rejected. With the absence of a scooter bay they may remain parking in front of the Pizza shop but cars will not be able to enter the area.
- 3.5 The focus of these works is to make the area safer and deter vehicles from parking on the land. Where possible items have been reused such as the bollards and paving slabs by the pedestrian crossing.

Fig 1 – photo of existing layout



4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Following Cabinet, construction plans and schedules will be finalised and a selection of contractors requested to price the work.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 Consultation with the Town Centre PDAG meeting took place on 20 September 2022 and on 25 January 2023. Prior to the January PDAG meeting Members were asked for their views and comments on various options which had also been distributed to local businesses and residents in a questionnaire and plan format.
- 5.2 The proposals were also considered at the Local Economy & Place PDAG on 3rd July 2023 and most recently on 11th September 2023, when Members were updated on the outcome of the TRO application.
- 5.3 Members were supportive of the proposed work at both meetings and agreed with the consultation outcome attached in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 The Horsham District Council Monitoring Officer and the Director of Resources have been consulted to ensure legal and financial probity.
- 5.5 Consultation has taken place with Cabinet Member, Ruth Fletcher and West Sussex County Councillor, John Milne both of whom are supportive.
- 5.6 Consultation with West Sussex Highway Authority has taken place. An application was made to WSCC on the proposed changes to the parking order on Queensway and for the provision of a scooter parking bay but was rejected.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The proposed works have been determined from consultation with local businesses, residents and the Highway Authority. Elements rejected include retaining planter boxes due additional maintenance being required, siting bollards on the outer edge of the footpath as this would reduce the width for pedestrians and retaining promotional signs which are not kept updated.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The financial consequences include expenditure of £70,000 which can be vired from existing related budgets that will not be spent. There will be no net effect to the 2023/24 capital programme.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a general power of competence for local authorities. It gives local authorities the same power to act that an individual generally has and provides that the power may be used in innovative ways. Accordingly, as the registered proprietor of the subject parcel of Queen Street, the Council may carry out such works as are required to ensure the safety of pedestrians and otherwise.
- 8.2 Otherwise, the legal documentation required to give effect to the subject works will be undertaken by the Council's Legal Services Team.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Disagreement by the proprietors of the takeaway restaurants may take place, however this is mitigated by parking controls that are currently in place.
- 9.2 If the measures are not put in place pedestrians are at risk of interaction with the vehicles that park illegally.
- 9.3 There is a risk that the works exceed the budget, due to continuing increases in the costs of works and materials. This will be mitigated by the procurement process and value engineering the costs down if necessary.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 A works estimate indicates the work to be in the region of £70,000. This requires three written quotations to be obtained and which will be reviewed by at least two of the Council's officers with requisite expertise.
- 10.2 A shortlist of contractors will be asked to quote on the work. These will be selected on their experience and positive references.

11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 11.1 A consultation of local businesses and residents was undertaken in December 2022. The results are included in the appendix of this report with the proposed works including the preferred elements.

11.2 The proposed work provides for a more clutter free environment for visually impaired pedestrians.

11.3 The contract for works will include a requirement of equal opportunity.

12 Environmental Implications

12.1 The proposed work will remove unsustainable planter boxes with trees placed in the ground sequestering carbon and providing a location for birds to occupy.

13 Other Considerations

13.1 It is not considered that the approval of these works will have any further additional impacts including those in relation to GDPR/Data Protection or Crime & Disorder.

