

## Joint Cabinet and Cabinet (Resources) Panel

29 July 2020

<b>Report title</b>	City Centre Public Realm - Phases 1 and 3 Progress and Approvals for Project Delivery.	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Steve Evans City Environment	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	St Peters	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment	
<b>Originating service</b>	Transportation	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Ruth Taylor Tel Email	Senior Regeneration Officer 01902 555635 Ruth.Taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	City Environment Leadership Team	1 July 2020

### Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Director for City Environment, to approve the award of the main works contract for City Centre Public Realm phase 1 (Victoria Street) and phase 3 (North Street) at a total estimated contract value within expected funding limits, upon completion of the evaluation process and subject to grant funding being secured.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Finance and City Environment in consultation with the Director of Finance and Director of City Environment to approve the creation of any supplementary budgets for the two phases of the project.

### Recommendation for noting:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is asked to note:

1. The progress with the design and delivery of the scheme.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The report outlines the progress with the design and delivery of the City Centre Public Realm improvement projects (formally Westside Link) and seeks approval to actions to move the project to the next stage in advance of securing funding from Central Government sources.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The City Centre Public Realm project is a programme of transformational schemes designed to repurpose Wolverhampton City Centre by creating a high quality pedestrian environment, improved pedestrian and cycling connectivity within the city core and creation of new public spaces capable of hosting large scale events and activities in support of the “Events City” concept. The strategic objective of the project is to reinvigorate and drive economic investment into the city core by increasing footfall and visitor spend.
- 2.2 Outcome of the extensive public and stakeholder engagement on phase 1 (Victoria Street) and phase 2 (Queen Square) was reported back to Cabinet in April 2019. As no objections were received in respect of phase 1 progress has continued on the detailed design of this phase of the project.
- 2.3 Phase 2 however did receive some objections and as such it was agreed that further options should be looked at as part of the overall options appraisal. An informal Member Reference Group was set up to oversee discussions with external stakeholders and ensure that the appraisal of the options was given sufficient scrutiny before a decision was made on the proposed preferred option for delivery. As a result, phase 2 is outside of the scope of this report.
- 2.4 Phase 3 which incorporates North Street and adjoining streets around the Civic and Wulfrun Halls will create a much improved customer experience which includes a safe, usable events area in front of both entrances, which includes antiterrorism compliant measures at the heart of the design. Much work is required to understand the operational requirements of the Council's approved operator of the Halls and some work has already been undertaken to ensure that surrounding occupiers access arrangements are maintained. Phase 3 was initially intended to be brought forward at a later date and was not part of the initial round of consultation. However, to ensure alignment of works, phase 3 is being designed ahead of schedule to ensure that the programme of works for this scheme and the Civic Halls refurbishment programme can be delivered in a coordinated approach in order to meet the scheduled opening of the halls.
- 2.5 Both phases 1 and 3 are the subject of the Future High Street Bid which was submitted to the Government on 5 June 2020. The outcome of the bid is expected in September 2020. Details of the bid are contained within the Financial Implications section of the report.

### **3.0 Progress and next steps**

- 3.1 Phase 1 (Victoria Street) has now been detail designed and Early Contractor Involvement is nearing completion with target cost soon to be available for scrutiny and discussion. Target costs will need to be agreed and the contractor appointed prior to commencement of a start on site. It is therefore necessary for Delegated Authority to be granted to the Cabinet Member for City Environment in consultation with the Director for City Environment, to approve the award of the main works contract when the evaluation process is complete and the approval for grant funding is subsequently secured.
- 3.2 Whilst phase 1 (Victoria Street) will be directly delivered by the approved contractor, phase 3 will be detail designed up to Early Contractor Involvement, however, the Civic Halls contractor Wilmott Dixon will then be responsible for the costing and delivery of the scheme thereafter. Approvals and reporting for which will be dealt with at the appropriate time. Detailed design of the space and streets has already begun and is anticipated to be complete by November in advance of full project costing by the contractor.
- 3.3 Whilst the City Centre Public Realm designs were being progressed, in May, the Government announced measures to prioritise public safety and encourage more walking and cycling as part of a response to the Covid 19 pandemic. In the City centre this has necessitated the temporary redesigning of some of our public spaces in order to facilitate social distancing and for the safe operation of buses around the city. This has taken the form of repurposing the roadway to create more space for walking and cycling by creating temporary cycle routes, and widened footways. In order to achieve this the creation of one way traffic flows and pedestrianisation of streets were required.
- 3.4 As the rationale and outcomes for the City Centre Public Realm phases mirrored those required for this emergency response, it was felt appropriate that the works designed for the permanent scheme be delivered on a temporary basis. This included the pedestrianisation of the north part of Victoria Street and the one way movement of vehicles in Lichfield Street, Queen Square and Darlington Street, creating a much improved and safer pedestrian and cycling environment.
- 3.5 The temporary works proposals also benefitted from the fact that there was already an established dialogue with Transport for the West Midlands, National Express, and other stakeholders in the City Centre such as the Wolverhampton Business Improvement District in respect of the details of the scheme.

### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 Significant work has already been undertaken to identify the most appropriate option and sequencing for delivery, which has been reported through Cabinet and Scrutiny and for which the Informal Member Reference Group has responsibility.

## **5.0 Reasons for decision**

- 5.1 The preferred option for delivery has already been agreed and is the subject of an external funding bid.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The design stages for phase 1 and 3 have so far been funded by a combination of Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership funding and the Council's Highways and Regeneration Reserves.
- 6.2 Phases 1 and 3 constitute a significant element of the Council's Future High Street Fund bid, with allocations of £11.6 million and £4.2 million respectively, which represents the total future spend on the project. The Council's contribution to the design work so far has been included in the bid. A decision on the outcome of the bid is expected in September and it is the intension that phase 1 will be in a "shovel ready" state to begin as soon as possible after approval. Phase 3 will also be at detailed design for the Civic Halls team to then progress to early contractor involvement and target costing, for delivery within the agreed programme.
- 6.3 Other sources of external Central Government funding to deliver all or part of the project are also being pursued should the Future High Street Fund allocation not be forthcoming or be insufficient to deliver the project in its entirety. The Council will only award the contract once the necessary funding has been secured so there will be no net impact on Council resources. Delegated approval is therefore sought to create fully funded capital budgets as required. The detail the final funding package will be included in the Individual Executive Decision Notice.
- 6.4 Any grant funding will be subject to specific terms and conditions with which the Council will have to comply.  
[RT/07072020/U]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Council will be required to enter into a legal grant agreement in respect of the anticipated Future High Street Fund. Details of which will be forthcoming under separate cover.
- 7.2 Any Traffic Regulation Orders for the control of traffic or parking will be subject to statutory legal procedures and further public consultation.
- 7.3 Authorisation has already been given to the advertising of Traffic Regulations Orders related to the scheme and authority delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Environment to approve the sealing and implementation of the Orders subject to the appropriate approvals being in place.
- 7.4 The Contract award will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Constitution and relevant legislation.  
[TS/23062020/Q]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is being continuously informed by ongoing consultation with individual interest groups to ensure that the design and implementation proposals provide appropriate measures to ensure accessibility for all.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental implications**

- 9.1 The City Centre Public Realm project more so than ever, offers a clear and targeted response to the challenges the high street will face by creating the environment for change brought about by changes in consumer and visitor behaviour to enjoy activities around events rather than high street shopping and more particularly walking and cycling over car borne travel as we have become to appreciate the benefits for the environment, health and climate change.

## **10.0 Health and Wellbeing implications**

- 10.1 The Connected Places Strategy, which identified the City Centre Public Realm (Westside Link) Project as an early project for delivery, plays an important role in the delivery of the Council's Health and wellbeing agenda.

## **11.0 Covid 19 Implications**

- 11.1 As detailed in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.4 the delivery of certain elements of the Westside Link project has already had significant positive implications to the City's emergency transport response to the Covid 19 measures introduced by Central Government. Going forward the delivery of the full permanent scheme for phase 1 and 3 will further strengthen these positive outcomes of increased walking, cycling and public safety.

## **12.0 Human resources implications**

- 12.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## **13.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 13.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications arising from this report.

## **14.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 14.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 6 November 2018 – [Westside Link Proposal Phases 1 and 2](#)
- 14.2 Cabinet, 10 April 2019 – [Westside Link Public Realm Proposals – Outcome of Consultation for Phases 1 and 2 and Potential Delivery Programme for phase 1.](#)

## **15.0 Appendices**

- 15.1 Appendix 1 – Westside Link phasing plan