

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

05 July 2022

Report of the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE ASSET REVIEW PHASE 1 REPORT

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Cabinet have asked officers to review the Council's land and property assets in Tonbridge town centre to determine how they can best be utilised.

1.1.2 It was felt that the starting point for this work should be to establish exactly what Members would like to see delivered through the review, in short, to identify the scope, aims and objectives – phase 1.

1.1.3 Due to the specialist nature of this work, it was agreed that a company be engaged to assist the Council undertake the review. Several procurement routes were explored, including Scape's Place Shaping framework, of which Mace were the appointed consultants. Several meetings were held with Mace, who impressed with their experience and proposed approach to the review.

1.1.4 Mace subsequently submitted a formal proposal for the delivery of the first phase of the review and in January 2022 an Urgent Decision was taken to appoint them (Decision No. D220003URG).

1.2 Phase 1 Report

1.2.1 Mace have led the first phase of the review, which has included a tour of the town, information gathering, face-to-face and virtual workshops with Members and meetings with external stakeholders.

1.2.2 Mace have now submitted their phase 1 report, which can be found at **Annex 1**. Mace will be attending Cabinet to present the report and answer any questions Members may have.

1.2.3 Ahead of Cabinet, an all-Member briefing has been arranged for 30th June, which will take place in the Council Chamber, but will be available for Members to join remotely.

1.2.4 The report is split into three parts:

- Context – analysis of the town and identifying ‘character areas’
- Project Objectives – outcome of the workshops, setting out the top 10 strategic objectives for the town centre
- Recommendations – outcome of the workshops, identifying which areas of the town should be prioritised and recommended next steps to progress the review

1.2.5 The Leisure Trust have also been consulted on the report, being that the Angel Centre is an important asset within the town centre.

1.3 Next Steps

1.3.1 On page 39, the report sets out the initial workstreams across all of the opportunity areas. This demonstrates the breadth of work required if all areas are to be progressed. The Council does not currently have an identified budget sufficient to allow the progression of all workstreams concurrently and therefore on page 41 Mace recommends certain actions are undertaken first.

1.3.2 Cabinet will note that even though this is a prioritised list, a number of the workstreams identified will still constitute substantial projects in their own right. In addition to this prioritised list there are the numerous other workstreams set out on page 39 that will also require progressing at some point.

1.3.3 Whilst phase 1 has been managed by officers from across the Council alongside other competing priorities, developing this major programme of work is likely to require additional staff resource if the current momentum is to be maintained.

1.3.4 If Cabinet wish to progress the review in line with Mace’s recommendations, it is recommended that each workstream is scoped to establish which the Council will be able to take forward on their own, which will require support and which will need to be undertaken by a specialist company, such as Mace.

1.3.5 Once this scoping exercise has been undertaken it is recommended Mace are asked to provide a fee proposal for supporting the Council through the priorities identified.

1.3.6 It is also recommended that as part of this exercise, current staff resources are assessed and a proposal brought back to Cabinet detailing whether additional resources are required to progress the project.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The matters set out in this briefing note are considered routine or uncontroversial. If Mace are to be instructed to assist the Council in delivering the next phase of the review, they would be appointed under Scape's Place Shaping framework with all relevant framework terms and conditions applying.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The cost of Mace's phase 1 work is being met from the Business Rates Retention Pilot fund in the current financial year.
- 1.5.2 In terms of phase 2 funding, the Economic Regeneration Manager has included within the draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund project list, under the Communities and Place priority, revenue funding to put toward specialist advice associated with progressing this piece of work. At this early stage we cannot confirm whether this funding will be enough to deliver all of the actions identified.
- 1.5.3 As stated at 1.3.6 above, if it is felt additional staff resources are required, funding options will be brought forward for consideration.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 It is believed there are limited risks associated with progressing with the next phase of the review. Later on, Members will need to determine their approach to risk in terms of the Council's involvement in developments which may come forward.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:
- 1.9.2 Cabinet provides any comments on and/or notes Mace's Phase 1 report, and;
- 1.9.3 The Head of Administrative & Property Services be asked to undertake a scoping exercise of the next steps recommended in the report, in liaison with other Council services, and;

- 1.9.4 Delegated authority be given to the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, to seek a fee proposal from Mace for progressing the next stage of the review (Phase 2A) upon completion of the scoping exercise, and;
- 1.9.5 Upon receipt of the fee proposal, if the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, consider the proposal to offer value for money then Mace be appointed, on the basis appropriate budget provision can be identified

Background papers:

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Nil

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