

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 14 September 2011

Allocation of Growth Point Capital Funding

Report of the Strategic Director and Project Taunton Director
(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Cavill)

1. Executive Summary

Growth Point Funding has been received from central Government following our bid for monies to regenerate the town centre and facilitate the growth of Taunton. It has been allocated for this purpose and cannot be used for other things. It was allocated as partnership funding. The two lead partners are Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council, though the Department of Communities and Local Government were given confidence to fund Taunton by the evidence of the partnership approach of the Project Taunton Advisory Board. This report suggests allocation of a further amount of this funding to achieve the aims of Project Taunton.

2. Background

2.1 We received the final tranche of Growth Point Funding during 2010 /11 and the latest allocation for project was made through the Executive report of July 14th 2010 which was followed up by a published decision on September 2nd 2010 when we unexpectedly heard that we had received more capital funding than had been expected. This report requests some further allocation of funding.

3. Proposals

3.1 A table of Growth Point allocated capital funds is attached at Appendix A. there are four items in there that need approval. All other items have already been approved by Scrutiny and Executive and are shown for completeness.

The four items are:

3.2 Consultancy for retail development in Taunton

Retail development proposals have recently come forward for the eastern end of Firepool as well as the proposals for the town centre development.

These two projects are very large indeed and are absolutely fundamental to the success of the regeneration of the town centre and to successful future growth. There are potentially serious conflicts between the two, and it is vital that we take external professional advice from retail experts in order to be in an informed position to decide the way forward. To make the wrong decision or not to understand the implications could be very serious for the Taunton and we are happy that Savills have the national knowledge and expertise to give us the best available advice.. The fee reserved for the town centre scheme is not sufficient to cover Firepool and it is proposed to allow up to £50,000 in the budget. To put this into context the approximate combined investment value of the two schemes is £100m.

As much of the detail of these negotiations is confidential, more information is found in the confidential Appendix B

3.3 Play Equipment at Goodland Gardens

A planning application was submitted in April for a widened walkway providing a better connection for pedestrians between the car park and the town bridge, an improved route across the road by Debenhams, easier access to Goodland Gardens and re-landscaping of the paved area behind Debenhams. Works are due to start in August.

These works and the Castle Green works should increase footfall substantially and Goodland Gardens should become a very attractive venue for families who are already visiting the town centre. It is therefore proposed that £5,000 is allocated to providing some play equipment in Goodland Gardens to enhance the scheme.

3.4 Brewhouse Architectural Design

In 2009 James Middleton-Stewart, ADP architects, Yeovil, produced a scoping study and preliminary plans reflecting the Arts Service Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study, Jan '08, which advised Taunton's town centre theatre and arts centre should remain on its existing site but expand to provide a new 600-700 seat flexible auditorium, a separate film auditorium, gallery to host touring exhibitions etc. The scoping study proposed a phased project and priced it in the region of £10million.

The Brewhouse is a fundamental element of Project Taunton. It sits in a very prominent location between Somerset Square and Coal Orchard, and with the County Cricket Ground, anchors the northern end of the Cultural Quarter. The presence of a major arts provider in an accessible, central location is key to attracting inward investment and visitors.

The CEO and Chairman of Trustees of the Brewhouse in July have positive plans for a fundraising strategy. A Development Officer is now in post and working on the launch of the strategy which will coincide with The

Brewhouse's 35th anniversary in March 2012. Their aim is to have an outline planning application which will add credibility to the launch of their campaign.

In order to lend support to the launch it is proposed to part fund (50%) the work required to support an outline planning application for the above project. The total cost is £14,000 and therefore a contribution of £7,000 is proposed.

3.5 Delivery of Castle Green, Goodland Gardens and High Street masterplanning

Up until now the Project Taunton team has had the services of a member of staff from the South West Regional Development Agency with expertise in the procurement and delivery of high profile capital projects. He is qualified as a Chartered Quantity Surveyor and his procurement expertise has been in the Public Sector for several years. His help on these projects has been extremely valuable. Unfortunately due to the closure of the RDA in the near future he is being made redundant in the Autumn. Because of his extensive knowledge, history and inupt into these projects it would be sensible for him to continue to project manage the period of works through to completion. This would provide a safeguard to the projects and ensure that the works are completed to acceptable standards and timing. To employ a new consultant at this stage could prove to be an expensive mistake, and the Project Taunton Delivery Team does not have the time or resources to take on this additional work without prejudicing other large, complicated and important projects. The additional cost of this will be up to £10,000.

4. **Finance Comments**

- 4.1 There is sufficient capacity within the Growth Point capital allocation to make these allocations.

5. **Legal Comments**

- 5.1 There are no significant legal issues relating to the allocation of this funding.

6. **Links to Corporate Aims**

- 6.1 These projects all link to the Corporate Aim Regeneration.

7. **Environmental Implications**

- 7.1 The environmental implications of these projects either have or will be picked up during the planning process.

8. Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 The play equipment in Goodland Gardens, alongside the new design, should encourage more families to use this area and deter some of the current users.

9. Equalities Impact

- 9.1 Equalities impacts will be (or have been) assessed during the planning process for these projects.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1 Risk management will be undertaken for all construction stages of these projects. A full risk assessment of the design of the new play equipment will be undertaken prior to its instalment. The funding for extra project management of the construction period of Castle Green and the improvements to the High Street are there to reduce the risks of these projects being delivered in a timely way, on budget and to the correct quality.

11. Partnership Implications

- 11.1 Project Taunton is a partnership project and these schemes can only be taken forward with other partners' full involvement.
- 11.2 The Project Taunton Advisory Board, in their partnership capacity, has recommended that further Growth Point money be allocated to these schemes.

12. Corporate Scrutiny

- 12.1 Corporate Scrutiny had concerns about the funding for the retail consultant and there was considerable debate about this issue. There was also concern about the brief and it was therefore agreed that the brief would be approved by the Chair of the Project Taunton Steering Group. There were no further comments.

13. Recommendations

That the Executive approves the allocation of Growth Point Funding as follows:

1. £50,000 for expert advice on retail development in Taunton
2. £5,000 for play equipment in Goodland Gardens
3. £10,000 for project management for the construction period of Castle Green
4. £7,000 towards the outline planning application for an extended Brewhouse.

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Appendix A

Project Taunton Capital Funds - 1 Aug 2011

Ref.	Item	2011/2012			Uncommitted £000	
		Income £000	Committed £000	Remaining as at 31.07.11 £000		
1	Capital funds c/fwd	7,708				
2	Longrun Farm/Meadows		625	135		
3	Castle Green pre-construction		251	-35		
4	Castle Green construction		2,250	2,250		
5	Urban extension planning		850	199		
6	charging points for electric vehicles		30	0		
7	NIDR		975	157		
8	Town Centre Retail		150	84		
9	Firepool		1,327	747		
10	Consultancy for JLP		50	50		Steering Group approval sought
11	Coal Orchard architecture and marketing		20	12		
12	Goodland Gardens		300	281		
13	Goodland Gardens Play Equipment		5	5		Steering Group approval sought
14	High Street		150	143		
15	Station Masterplanning		15	15		
16	Signage		25	24		
17	Somerset Square: Kingfishers Nest		30	-6		
18	Eco Towns		90	90		
19	Consultancy		10	10		Steering Group approval sought
20	Brewhouse architectural design		7	7		Steering Group approval sought
	Total	7,708	7,160	4,168	548	