

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council 27 April 2020

Future High Street Fund Bid

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Mike Rigby

Report Author: Kate Murdoch, Strategy Specialist

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report (All headings to be in Arial 12 Bold)

- 1.1 The Council is due to submit the Taunton High Street Fund business case to MHCLG on 30th April 2020. In order to support the funding bid the Council is required to confirm co-funding is legally committed, subject only to formal confirmation of a grant award from the Future High Streets Fund.
- 1.2 This paper seeks member approval for the Community Infrastructure Levy allocations to support the key projects identified in the final Future High Street Fund bid.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Approval of Community Infrastructure Levy allocations to support the delivery of Council projects within the Future High Street Fund bid (as per Table 2 below)
- 2.2 Approval is sought subject to Government grant being awarded through the Future High Street Fund and subject to sufficient CIL funds being available in the funding years outlined in Table 2.

3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

- 3.1 The approval of Community Infrastructure Levy allocations are sought to provide a legal commitment to match funding on the basis that the Future High Street Fund bid is successful. If the bid is unsuccessful or a reduced grant is awarded the Community Infrastructure Levy allocations may be reviewed.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 In July 2019 MHCLG announced Taunton, along with 49 other towns across the country, as successful to go through to the detailed business case development stage for the Future High Street Fund. Council officers, with the support of consultants, have been working to develop the detailed business case submission, which is due to be submitted on 30th April 2020.

- 4.2 The original Taunton Future High Street Fund Expression of Interest (EOI) included a £25m Government funding ask to support the delivery of the following projects:
1. Coal Orchard development
 2. Town centre pedestrian and cycle improvements
 3. Firepool development
 4. Revolving Investment Fund to unlock town centre sites for development
 5. Taunton Public Space Improvement Project
 6. Brewhouse Theatre enhancement
- 4.3 Whilst Councils can bid for up to £25m from the Future High Street Fund, the MHCLG guidance is clear that this is a competitive bidding process and, if successful, most areas will receive approximately £5m-£10m.
- 4.4 In light of the updated MHCLG High Street Fund guidance and the work on the developing business case, the projects outlined in Table 1 are proposed as the most appropriate for inclusion in the final business case. This now has a reduced funding ask of £20.2m.
- 4.5 In order to ensure alignment with the Future High Street Fund objectives, the majority of the investment sought will be to support the delivery of key town centre sites (Firepool and Coal Orchard). These projects seek to increase residential density and improve the cultural and leisure offer with a view to increasing footfall and dwell time in the town centre.
- 4.6 Funding is also sought for the provision of additional cycle parking in the town centre and the creation of a new pedestrian & cycle route running from the Railway Station, through Firepool and Coal Orchard linking to St James Street, North Street and High Street to Vivary Park. This was a key project identified in the draft Taunton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and seeks to increase cycling and walking thereby reducing traffic in the town centre.

Table 1: Taunton Future High Street Ask

Future High Street Fund bid projects	Total FHSF ask
Coal Orchard Development	£2,200,000
Firepool Development	
Firepool infrastructure, public realm and enabling works	£7,910,000
Performance Venue (approx 1,500 capacity)	£9,000,000
Taunton Town Centre Cycle and Pedestrian Improvements	
Firepool Boulevard linking to station and river crossing	£1,090,000
River crossing through Coal Orchard	
St James Street - High Street - Vivary Park	
Town centre cycle parking infrastructure	
Total FHSF ask	£20,200,000

4.7 To support the delivery of key projects in the Future High Street Fund bid, the Council is required to identify match funding streams. At present the match funding streams in the final business case will include New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy and Council borrowing. This paper only seeks member approval for the Community Infrastructure Levy allocations to support the Future High Street bid, outlined in Table 2 below. The remaining match funding streams have been sought through the specific project proposals for Coal Orchard¹, Firepool² and the Taunton town centre flood works³.

Table 2: Community Infrastructure Levy allocations to support Future High Street Fund bid:

	2022/23	2023/24
Taunton town centre cycle and pedestrian improvements to include:		
Firepool Boulevard linking to station and river crossing	£500,000	£500,000
River crossing through Coal Orchard		
Improvements to St James Street, North Street, High Street		
Improvements to pedestrian crossing at High Street/Vivary Park		
Town Centre cycle parking infrastructure		
New performance venue at Firepool		£500,000

5 Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 The Future High Street Fund bid links with many of the Corporate Strategy objectives including:

- Facilitating the delivery of Firepool
- Supporting the enhancement of arts and cultural provision in the district
- Supporting town centres in the district to meet the challenge of changing shopping habits
- Seeking additional funding for new strategic infrastructure and regeneration projects from Government which support or enable existing communities in our district
- Meeting the challenge of Government completely withdrawing the Council's grant funding
- Ensuring our land and property assets support the achievement of the Council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives)

¹ <https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=325&MId=2504&Ver=4>

² <https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=325&MId=2284&Ver=4>

³

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy allocations outlined in Table 2, fall within the CIL allocations approved by Full Council in the Council's General Revenue and Capital Budget, on 19th February 2020⁴. Member approval is now sought to commit these CIL allocations to the specific projects identified in Table 2 above, subject to sufficient CIL funds being available.
- 6.2 These Community Infrastructure Levy allocations are required to demonstrate match funding is legally committed to support the Future High Street Fund bid. Approval is sought subject to Government grant being awarded through the Future High Street Fund. If Future High Street Fund grant is not successful or if a smaller amount of grant funding is awarded, a review of the High Street Fund project list will be undertaken and reported for member approval.

7 Legal Implications (if any)

- 7.1 None. Any legal implications have been considered as part of the member approval process for the specific projects within the High Street Fund bid.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

- 8.1 These have been considered as part of the member approval process for the specific projects within the High Street Fund bid (i.e Coal Orchard and Firepool proposals).

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

- 9.1 None

10 Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

- 10.1 None

11 Social Value Implications (if any)

- 11.1 None

12 Partnership Implications (if any)

- 12.1 Officers are working with Somerset County Council colleagues on the proposed cycle and pedestrian improvements in the funding bid.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

- 13.1 None

14 Asset Management Implications (if any)

- 14.1 These have been considered as part of the member approval process for Coal Orchard and Firepool.

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15 Data Protection Implications (if any)

15.1 None

16 Consultation Implications (if any)

16.1 Key stakeholders in Taunton were invited to a workshop in February 2019 to input into proposals for inclusion in the Expression of Interest. Specific consultation and community engagement has been undertaken for the Coal Orchard and Firepool proposals.

16.2 The proposed cycle and pedestrian improvements were identified as a priority project in the draft Taunton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The Taunton Area Cycling Campaign have input into the draft LCWIP and will continue to be engaged in the design process. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, the workshop for this had to be cancelled but the draft design proposals will be circulated to key partners via email for them to provide comments/input.

17 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

None – due to Covid 19 this was not reported to Scrutiny.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: **Once only** **Ad-hoc** **Quarterly**
 Twice-yearly **Annually**

Contact Officers

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