

Torquay Town Deal and Paignton Future High Street Briefing for Overview & Scrutiny Board

Subject: Update on Torquay Town Deal & Paignton Future High Street Fund programmes

Introduction

As previously reported to Overview & Scrutiny the award of funding for Torquay through the Town Deal and Paignton through Future High Streets Fund means that the Council is working closely with a range of partners to take forward the development and subsequent delivery of these transformational investment programmes and the individual projects contained within.

Progress of the projects and programmes are reported through to the Capital & Growth Board and the Town Deal & Future High Streets Fund steering group internally and to the Town Board for Torquay and currently to a meeting of community partners for Paignton. There is a proposal to move to a Town Board for Paignton as well.

This report provides a summary update for Overview & Scrutiny of progress made in recent months.

The previous report to Overview & Scrutiny flagged early indications of supply chain pressures which are expected to bring cost and time pressures to bear on the Town Deal & Future High Street projects. The cost of materials, supply chain, the extent of other available work across the South West and labour market issues are all making project delivery more difficult. The environment is becoming much more difficult with every passing week while the need for delivery locally becomes more acute. Officers are focused on how we can accelerate procurement to get schemes on site while also exploring other options to ensure that the outcomes the community wants to see can be delivered. These issues are being experienced across the country and are not Torbay specific.

Town Deal

As previously reported Torquay will receive investment of £21.9 million from the Government's Towns Fund.

A Town Board was created to oversee the production of the Investment Plan. The Investment Plan was submitted to Government in July 2020 and is the basis for a Town Deal which will support projects that will allow for transformational investment to be delivered in Torquay.

The Investment Plan has evolved from the vision for Torquay, shared by the Town Board and representatives across Torbay's community, including the Neighbourhood Plan Forum, the Community Development Trust, and Torbay Town Partnership.

The Town Investment Plan focuses on these key areas:

- Delivering a more vibrant town centre through the redevelopment of key town centre sites for mixed uses and public realm schemes
- Improving connectivity to and in Torquay through the delivery of a new rail station at Edginswell and improving connections between the main station and town centre These areas have been chosen for their impact in the short and medium term and ability to be brought forward at pace.
- The Plan also identifies complementary proposals for investment in tourism and cultural projects to improve the quality of Torquay's offer; investment in delivering employment sites; and improvements to connectivity.

Town Investment Plan projects

Funding business cases have now been submitted in respect of all of the town deal projects with Cabinet at its meeting of 16th November agreed to the submission.

Strand Land Assembly (Debenhams)

Progressing with planning application now submitted. 92% of responses to consultation earlier in the year was in favour of the regeneration of the site and 77% supported the scheme. The scheme has been submitted for planning with a committee date expected to be confirmed by 16th September. There are risks relating to the contractor costs and procurement delays.

Harbour Public Realm

The Harbour Public Realm scheme has been predicated on community views garnered through work over several years and creative engagement in 2018 which was complemented by the neighbourhood plan processes and which told us the space needs to be improved;

- Minimise traffic impact, whilst improving connectivity and wayfinding
- Create space for people and animate the space
- Better use of the space, connecting with its natural and historic environment
- Integrate design and material to respond to the heritage context

Scheme is designed and has been put to market earlier in the summer however no responses were received from contractors on the initial procurements. This has stalled progress as we hoped to be on site in autumn and a revised procurement strategy is in place with expressions of interest being week ending 9th September. Assuming this results in EoIs being received a mini competition will be held to allow for a contractor to be appointed in November.

Pavilion

Progress on the cost plan and repair programme is on schedule with scaffold expected to be erected later in the autumn which will allow for external intrusive surveys to begin. Ahead of that internal surveys will be underway to streamline project activities.

Edginswell Station

Network Rail are due to appoint the contractor who they will work alongside during the design on 3rd Sept 2022. Ecological site surveys have commenced on site and there is good engagement from Network Rail and Great Western Railway which has been positively received from the DfT

Wider town centre regeneration

There has been a workshop, in July, facilitated by the Towns Fund Delivery Partners (TFDP). The TFDP was a partnership of consultants paid for by Government to help Town Deal places progress through their investment plans and learn from good practice. Given the need, set out in the Town Investment Plan and Torquay Town Centre Masterplan (2015) and Torquay Neighbourhood Plan, to introduce different uses to the town centre the workshop resulted in a report to shape options for the shorter- and longer-term transformation of the upper end of Torquay town centre. The interim report will be presented to Town Board on 23rd September and presented to Cabinet following that.

Future High Streets Fund

In July 2020 Torbay Council submitted, on behalf of the community, its bid to the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) programme. The bid value was £19.2 million for the transformation of Paignton town centre through seven projects.

The 'Preferred Option' of projects covered 3 infrastructure projects (Paignton Flood Defence scheme, Paignton Station Square and Torbay Road), an enhanced culture offer by bringing Paignton Picture House into use, comprehensive re-development of Crossways and Victoria Centre together with two major properties on Paignton Station Square.

On 26th December 2020 Government announced the list of successful places and allocated £13,363,248 for Paignton's regeneration.

While Future High Streets Funds areas are not required to have a comparable group to the Town Board the Council has established more frequent meetings with a representative group including members along with community partnership, neighbourhood forum and business representatives. This group has helped in particular highlight issues in respect of the Coastal Defence and Torbay Road/Station Square projects which have resulted in revised designs for the Coastal Defence and the inclusion of a pedestrian trial for Torbay Road.

Station Square and Torbay Road

The temporary scheme for Torbay Road trialling the pedestrianisation will be live from October with works delivered later this month, expected to be on site week commencing 19th September. To raise awareness of the scheme and wider Paignton projects a newsletter has been created to ensure that the flow of information out to the community is improving. Sign up for the newsletter is via the Council website.

As noted above representations from the community partners have led to the introduction of pedestrianisation within the scheme, following two separate consultation events one organised by the Council and one by the community partners and both of which were supportive of the principle which will be tested through the trial period. The trial period will last over the winter with feedback sought from community partners, businesses and residents. The full cost of the Torbay Road scheme exceeds the currently available budget meaning that phasing of the work may be required

if an alternative funding proposal cannot be made.

Station Square has experienced some programme slippage following consultation and is now at stage 4 technical design and that should be complete by the end of September.

Victoria Centre

A memorandum of understanding has been drafted between the Council and the Torbay & South Devon NHS Trust in respect of key worker accommodation needs, the project team will be working with the NHS Trust's advisers to develop design options and commercial structures that allow for this to progress.

The Paignton parking study has been received in final draft and provides clarity over the challenges that the transformation of the town may present for car parking. It is clear from the study that at periods of high demand there is a requirement for the parking capacity to remain at a similar level to its current capacity and this means that parking capacity displaced from the Victoria Centre site will need to be met in different ways. Now that the Council has the parking study it will use that over the autumn to develop a future parking strategy to allow for the needs to be met while also delivering the Future High Street programme objectives. Although there are concerns from the community partners over the loss of car parking, for instance through the planned demolition of Garfield Road car park, officers advice is that pausing work on the site to allow for the strategy to be developed will exacerbate the challenges around cost referred to earlier so this work will run concurrently to the development of options.

Over the summer there has been further discussion with Lidl in respect of their ongoing occupation of the Victoria Centre and their intentions, the FHSF bid assumed that the Council would get this space back to support delivery of the scheme.

Paignton Picture House

Paignton Picture House Trust leading on project; programme is on track.

Crossways

Demolition is planned for Oct / Nov 22 (dependant on demolition contractor procurement). Since the last meeting Brownfield Land Release Fund grant of £1.4M has been applied for to cover the demolition costs.

Final requirements review is being carried out to enable us to freeze the designs and allow for detailed costings to be generated.

Coastal Defence Scheme

Third phase of public consultation commenced 19th August and will run until 11th September. Following this consultation process the final preferred option will be identified and a date for the submission of the detailed planning application will be agreed. The key risks for the project will be project budget and programme.