

Initial Scoping on Maidstone Approach Improvement Project

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jennifer Shepherd, Head of Environment and Public Realm
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Bearsted, Boxley, Shepway North and High Street

Executive Summary

The Maidstone Approach Improvement Project is an initiative to pilot improvements to the street scene and landscaping on a key arterial route. The Ashford Road from Willington Street to King Street was chosen as the initial pilot as it offers the greatest opportunity including open spaces, street furniture and range of landownership. With a budget of £74,000 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot, a range of actions and concepts have been identified. These will be presented to the Committee to consider and discuss to enable Officers to further scope the project. The final proposals will be submitted to the Committee for decision in November 2019.

Purpose of Report

Discussion.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

To consider the proposed scope of the Maidstone Approach Improvement Project.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	15 October 2019

Initial Scoping on Maidstone Approach Improvement Project

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The key objective of this project is to improve the appearance of one of Maidstone's arterial routes. The improvements are designed to contribute to achieving two of the Council's Strategic Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i> • <i>A Thriving Place</i> 	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The proposed plans consider the heritage of the Borough through highlighting key areas the Borough and County are known for including being the Garden of England.</p> <p>The landscaping designs focus on enhancing biodiversity which allowing visitors and residents to understand the importance of this. The project will incorporate the Go Green Go Wild initiative into its designs.</p> <p>The report supports the achievements of the Heritage and Biodiversity cross cutting objectives.</p>	Head of Environment and public Realm
Risk Management	<p>This report is for scoping only and therefore exploration of the risks associated with the proposals will be presented to the Committee when the report is presented for decision in November.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Financial	<p>The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.</p> <p>The Policy and Resources Committee have already approved a budget of £74,000 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot to fund this project.</p>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement

Staffing	<i>We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.</i>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Legal	This report is for scoping purposes only and therefore any legal considerations will be included when the report is presented to the Committee for decision in November.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Privacy and Data Protection	This is a report for scoping only and therefore there are no impacts on privacy and data protection.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Public Health	A key feature of the proposals is to increase walking and cycling on this route into the Town Centre. We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Crime and Disorder	There will be no impact.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Procurement	This is a scoping report only. The purchase of all equipment and supplies required for the project will be carried out according to the Procurement Rules.	Head of Environment and Public Realm

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 In June 2019, the Policy and Resources Committee approved a budget of £74,000 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot to fund improvements to one of Maidstone's arterial routes – Ashford Road (Willington Street to King Street).

2.2 The Maidstone Approach Improvement Project will incorporate street scene and landscaping improvements to deliver a number of objectives:

- Improve the visual appearance of the Ashford Road for visitors to Maidstone

- Support the Council's Strategic Objectives for **A Thriving Place** and a **Safe, Clean and Green** environment
- Highlighting the heritage of the Borough
- Enhancing biodiversity along one of Maidstone's busy arterial routes
- Encouraging walking and cycling into the Town Centre

2.3 Initial discussions have been held with Kent Highways and Soft Estates who are supportive of the proposals. The presentation was also given at the Depot Open Day in September and was received positively by the Members who attended.

2.4 The following key actions have been identified:

- Deep clean – removal of detritus from along Mote Park wall
- Cut back of vegetation and removal of self-sown saplings growing along the wall
- New bus shelter at junction with New Cut Road
- New bollards
- Improved appearance of railings
- Planting of bulbs to increase colour
- Shaping of wild areas to enhance biodiversity and enable habitat development
- Planting of new trees
- New signage including heritage board and "Welcome to Maidstone" sign
- New street name plates
- Creation of heritage features with interpretation board
- Repainting street lights

2.5 During the meeting a presentation will be given to outline some of the proposals for the planting schemes, the heritage features and signage. This includes the concept of using silhouettes to create focal points such as bicycles through the ages, the Iguanodon which forms part of the Borough's Crest and Kent orchards and hop growing.

2.6 A permit has been approved by Kent Highways for traffic management to be in place the week commencing 21 October when the clearance and some of the standard street scene work will take place.

- 2.7 The Committee is asked to consider the proposals for the improvements, which will enable officers to further scope the project prior to bringing final proposals to the Committee in November for decision.
-

3. RISK

- 2.8 As this report is solely to scope the Maidstone Approach Improvement Project prior to Committee decision in November, the only risk at this stage is that any suggestions may not be able to be delivered within budget.
- 2.9 A budget of £74,000 has been set for the project and the proposals set before the Committee can be delivered within budget. However, any significant changes to the proposals could also affect the budget and therefore there is a risk they would not be deliverable.
- 2.10 A full risk assessment of the project will be carried out and presented as part of the report in November to enable the Committee to make an informed decision.
-

4. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 4.1 This report is intended to consult with the Committee on the proposals and this will be incorporated into the report for decision in November.
- 4.2 Ward Members and key stakeholders are being consulted throughout the project.