

Executive Decision Report

Greyfriars Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby

Decision to be taken on: 28th July 2014

Lead director: Andrew L. Smith

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Castle
- Report author: Sophie Noon, THI Officer
- Author contact details: 29 3034
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

Proposed funding of £500k for the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was set out within phase 2 of the Economic Action Plan approved by the City Mayor in November 2012. The commitment of £50k for development work was approved under delegated authority in 2013 and approval is now sought to release the balance of £450k to deliver the project and to secure external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The release of the £450k will provide the certainty required by the HLF that the Council's funding is available, and will generate external funding of £1.055m for the five-year THI scheme. This is in addition to the development funding previously provided by the HLF of £45k.

In total, the THI will therefore secure funding from the Council and the HLF of £1.6m (£0.5m and £1.1m respectively). This will be used to bring about physical improvements within the historic core of the city to create a vibrant economic and social community.

The scheme will deliver projects that will have a great cumulative impact, raising the profile of the Greyfriars area.

A THI project team will provide specialist guidance and support to property owners, leaseholders, residents and visitors to help them to reverse the socio-economic decline in the area.

Businesses, property owners and leaseholders in the area will be invited to apply for grants to:

- Bring empty floor space back into use
- Restore lost architectural features such as windows
- Repair architectural features and improve the frontage of buildings

Eligible works will include property repairs that use traditional materials and methods, the reinstatement of traditional detailing and frontage improvements.

In addition the THI will:

- Offer specialist training in heritage based skills.
- Encourage activities and events to help explore the history of the area and its occupants.
- Consider a number of street improvements aimed at making the area more pedestrian-friendly as well as making it easier to find parking.

2. Recommendations

That the scheme be approved and added to the capital programme in the sum of £1.6m, to be funded by £0.5m from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan and £1.1m external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

This issue has arisen due to the upcoming deadline for the submission of a Stage 2 Townscape Heritage initiative bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project is currently in development. It is scheduled for delivery once the Stage 2 bid is accepted by the HLF, on the 2nd December 2014.

The commitment of Leicester City Council match funding amounting to £450k is a condition of the HLF and its acceptance of the Stage 2 bid. The commitment to providing these funds is necessary to unlock external funding for the five year scheme.

4. Details of Scrutiny

N/A

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The total estimated scheme cost is £1.6m, to be funded by £0.5m from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan and £1.1m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Advance project development funding of £50k and £45k respectively has been released previously under officers' delegated powers.

– Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

5.2 Legal implications

1. In considering changes to a declared Conservation Area, the Council will need to comply with the procedure for changes to areas (including its duty to publicise and consider representations) under Part II of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

2. With regard to the proposed Heritage Lottery Fund grant, if the Council is to be the “accountable body” for the purpose of this funding, the Council will be required to comply with the terms of the grant funding, including any terms relating to the claw back of unspent funding.

- John McIvor, Regulatory & Property Team, Legal Services

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no climate change implications associated with co-ordinating the bid. If the bid is successful later in the year then the project team should engage the Environment Team to consider how climate change mitigation and adaptation can be considered.

- Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x372251)

5.4 Equality Impact Assessment

5.4 Equality Implications

The initiative falls within the Connecting Leicester strategy for achieving a pedestrian accessible urban environment linking heritage and other prominent sites in the city centre. Aside from the broad promotion of inclusive urban spaces and built environments, there are no other equality implications for this phase of the project.

- Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext. 374147

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

N/A

6. Background information and other papers:

Leicester Economic Action Plan, City Mayor Decision 27th November 2012

7. Summary of appendices:

N/A

8. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes.

9. If a key decision please explain reason

The project involves capital expenditure of over £1m on a scheme not specifically authorised by Council.