

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 20 MAY 2020 TO COUNCIL ON 9 JULY 2020

CAB130: FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND - KING'S LYNN

The Chair invited Assistant Director, Duncan Hall to present the report which detailed the proposals to be submitted to the Government under the Future High Streets Fund for King's Lynn. Work on the submission had continued after the Corona Virus outbreak which had affected the working arrangements of all involved. The report explained that the deadline for submission of the bid to the Government was 5 June 2020.

The fund was aimed at providing support to town centres to enable them to be sustainable for the future. The total cost of the programme was estimated at circa £36m with an initial grant request of £23.4m, and included a new library and multi service hub; a new car park, refurbishment of the Guildhall complex and improved use of the Custom House; improved digital signage; replacement of the building projection system; and South Gate highway diversion and strategic landscaping.

The Regeneration Programmes Manager gave an explanation of the proposals for the South Gates bid and informed Members that more detailed figures would be worked up if the bid was accepted.

Assistant Director D Hall gave some details on the Community Hub proposal which would be led by the County Council which would include a new library and other community related facilities.

Councillor Middleton as responsible Cabinet Member supported the proposals which were aimed to improve the current facilities for the area, which was even more important with the pressures arising from the current pandemic.

Under standing order 34, Councillor Morley supported the proposals and suggested some ways to present the case particularly to emphasise the benefits for the socio economic situation for the area. The Chair agreed that the bid needed to demonstrate the benefits for the area, acknowledging that the Council was in competition with so many other Council's for available funding.

Under standing order, 34 Councillor Kemp made observations regarding the existing library building which she would have preferred to see the money spent on improving, and on the proposals put forward for the new library. She considered that the area in front of the proposed library should be included in the bid and commented that if they weren't already involved, the UEA and Health side should be involved.

The Chair drew attention to the Borough Council's support of the bid by the fact it was being brought forward by the Borough working with the County Council. He acknowledged that if the bid was successful, the County Council would have to decide on a new use for the current building.

Under standing order 34, Councillor de Whalley registered his concern for the future of the existing library building and suggested that its future could be confirmed in the bid. He confirmed he wanted to see the Guildhall and Custom House future confirmed but considered that the scrutiny panel should have considered the bid.

The Chair confirmed that in the current circumstances and with the deadline date set by the Government, the processes had been hampered. He appreciated that panels would normally form part of the process, as Regeneration and Development had input earlier in the process, and encouraged onward scrutiny of the proposals if successful.

Under standing order 34, Councillor Ryves commented on the costings of the South Gates proposals, which in response it was explained that the type of works proposed was costly, but the figures given were ball park projections at this stage. Councillor Ryves suggested that the maritime heritage could be included in the bid, to which it was explained there was a maximum amount that could be bid for, and much work had been carried out along the quay in recent years, but it was also costly to do so.

Under standing order 34, Councillor Joyce asked if the costing for the South Gates were sufficient, and that the traffic along London Road needed to be monitored.

Councillor Lawrence supported the proposals, and also asked that the bid should include the provision for the Council to be able to call a halt if after the end of the pandemic and budgets had been reviewed it was deemed not affordable.

The Chair confirmed that this would be included in the bid. Councillor Blunt supported the proposals drawing attention to their link with delivering elements of the King's Lynn Transport Strategy.

Councillor Nockolds welcomed the Bid as a huge opportunity for the area, improving one of the key entrances to the town, and having knock on effects on other businesses and leisure facilities. With regard to the question raised by Councillor de Whalley regarding the Custom House, Councillor Mrs Nockolds reminded Members that it had been planned the building to open at Easter and remain open throughout the summer, but with the restrictions now in place this had not been possible.

Councillor Devereux congratulated officers on the preparation of the documents, commenting that the proposals supported many of the Council's objectives, but particularly on an environmental front for the car park proposals and the traffic flow for the town. Councillor Gidney in supporting the proposals commented that they may need to be adjusted when the financial future was clearer.

Councillor Dark spoke in support of the proposals.

Councillor Middleton confirmed that the County Council were discussion the future use of the current library building. He responded to the point raised by Councillor Ryves explaining that not everything could be included in the bids, and also that the finances would be monitored and discussions held with relevant Government Departments as all authorities were concerned about the financial future.

NB – The resolved elements below have been enacted.

RESOLVED: 1) That the submission of projects to the FHSF as detailed in section 3-7 of the report be agreed.

2) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business Development to finalise the submission to Government. 3) That officers be instructed to continue to work with Norfolk County Council to progress the proposals for the multi service hub and Southgates area including finalising any legal and funding agreements required. 4) That recruitment commence, where appropriate, of key programme posts in preparation for the award and delivery of the FHSF and Town Deal programmes.

RECOMMENDED: That Council be requested to agree to revise the existing capital programme as detailed in section 13, subject to a caveat on the council's ability to finance projects following an evaluation of the impact of Coronavirus on the budget position 1016

Reason for Decision

To allow the Council to apply for a major grant funding stream in line with the corporate strategy to support the vibrancy and viability of King's Lynn's town centre and contribute to the Recovery Plan in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.