

Appendices:

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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Opening of Abington Street between Wellington Street and St Giles Terrace to traffic
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	11 December 2013
Key Decision:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Directorate:	Regeneration Enterprise and Planning
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Tim Hadland
Ward(s)	Castle

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek authority to include within the capital programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 the necessary capital funding to undertake the opening of Abington Street between Wellington Street and St Giles Terrace to traffic, as part of progressing the regeneration of Northampton Town Centre.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the inclusion within the Council's capital programme a total of £3m for the purposes of opening Abington Street to traffic with works commencing within the current financial year. This is spending is forecast to be profiled as £150,000 in 2013/14 and £2,850,000 in 2014/15.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning to enter into a contract with Northamptonshire County Council for the scheme design and implementation of the works.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 Abington Street is the dominant retail pitch for outdoor shopping in Northampton town centre. The pedestrianised nature of the shopping street mixed with the presence of key national retailers such as H&M, BHS, Waterstones and Marks & Spencer reinforce Abington Street's status as a prime location for retailing.
- 3.1.2 The Town Centre Shopping Survey (June 2013) assesses the health of shopping frontages designated through the Northampton Central Area Action Plan. The results of the survey show there is a decline in the percentage of A1 retail frontage moving northwards up Abington Street towards Abington Square.
- 3.1.3 There are some key anchor stores on the northern end of Abington Street, which are responsible for generating a significant amount of the areas footfall. Although the number of vacant units is not out of the ordinary, there are a few vacant units in prominent locations, with large floorplates, such as the former Multi York furniture shop.
- 3.1.4 The Central Area Action Plan identifies Abington Street as a key priority for public realm improvements in the town centre. The street was closed to traffic and pedestrianised in the early 1990's following an experimental period of vehicle prohibition. The area is surfaced with modular brick paving and the materials have not weathered well and have tired look which does nothing to support the overall appearance of the area.
- 3.1.5 The Council recently upgraded the seating, litter bins, introduced tree planters and with the County Council undertook a limited de-cluttering programme.
- 3.1.6 The proposal to reopen Abington Street to vehicles will allow one way traffic movement commencing at the junction of St Giles Terrace and Dychurch Lane, north along St Giles Terrace, west along Abington Street and north along Wellington Street to join the existing highway network and will help bring new activity to the area.
- 3.1.7 The proposal includes public realm improvements, with the priority given to the Abington Street section between Lower Mounts and Wellington Street. Improvements are also proposed for St Giles Terrace and Wellington Street. Additional car parking will also be provided along Abington Street as well as providing disabled parking bays and loading bays to maintain service arrangements with retailers.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The Francis Crick sculpture which is currently positioned in the centre of the proposal will require relocating. This cost is to be managed within the overall budget. It is hoped that this will be relocated to the new campus of the University of Northampton and initial discussions have taken place.
- 3.2.2 The proposal will require a Traffic Regulation Order to allow vehicles to access the area as well as regulating parking and loading. The process which includes a consultation period will be managed by Northamptonshire County Council and the process has started.
- 3.2.3 The utility services diversions and the construction of the new highway and public realm could be disruptive to shoppers and the retailers. Careful management of the contractor and extensive consultation will be undertaken to help to minimise the inconvenience.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 The Council could choose to support the opening of Abington Street. The early commencement would though lead to capital costs being incurred at an earlier stage. (Recommended)
- 3.3.2 The Council could choose to retain the existing street layout.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The proposal is consistent with the report presented to and approved by the 17th July Cabinet entitled Northampton town centre: The Next Steps.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The addition of £3 million will be incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme. This scheme is planned to be funded from the Council's capital resources including capital receipts and prudential borrowing. The borrowing commitments will lead to new revenue liabilities of up to £0.3m per annum assuming the asset has a life of 20 years.
- 4.2.2 There is the risk that the costs of the works may exceed the £3 million estimated. This would be expected to be managed within the overall capital resources agreed by Council for the Capital programme. However, if there was not room in the overall capital resources it would necessitate an additional inclusion of further expenditure within the capital programme, with likely further revenue cost consequences of servicing debt.
- 4.2.3 The contract with Northamptonshire County Council will be a procured on lump sum basis to help minimise the financial risk to the Council. There may still though be a need to instruct variations on site, given the complexity of the project. The actual costs may therefore still vary from that initially agreed.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 Traffic Regulation Orders to regulate vehicle movement, parking and loading will be undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council.

4.4 Equality and Health

4.4.1 The design of the new public realm will take into account the needs of various sections of the community.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Northamptonshire Highways.

4.5.2 Town Centre Operations

4.5.3 Grosvenor Centre Manager

4.5.4 Northampton Town Centre BID

4.5.5 A draft scheme was posted on the Council's website for public comment between 10th September and 9th October 2013

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 The opening of Abington Street to traffic will help to support the Town Centre regeneration and consistent with the priorities of the Northampton Alive Programme.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 There are none.

5. Background Papers

None

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