

SUBJECT: PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO PROGRESS USK (& WOODSIDE) TOWN IMPROVEMENT MASTER PLAN

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision

DATE: 12th DECEMBER 2018

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Usk, Llanbadoc

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council to jointly fund, with Usk Town Council (and potentially a contribution from Llanbadoc Community Council), professional and technical support to facilitate the production of a Town Improvement Master Plan.
- 1.2 The Master Plan will serve to collate ideas and identify funding opportunities to improve the public spaces in Usk and will be informed and prioritised by feedback from the recent community questionnaire undertaken by Usk Town Council (UTC).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That £25,000 be made available to match the financial contribution from Usk Town Council (and potentially Llanbadoc Community Council) to create a joint budget of circa £50,000 to fund the development of a Town Improvement Master Plan.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Some years ago Bridge Street, Usk was classed as an 'Air Quality management Area' and as a result a plan was developed to reduce emissions. The plan sought, amongst other things, to reduce the number of large vehicles using Bridge Street as a through route, unfortunately however the plan identified that reducing large vehicle journeys via Traffic Orders was fraught with problems given the volume of essential local journeys made by these vehicles.
- 3.2 In addition to the air quality issue it is acknowledged that Bridge Street is not conducive to pedestrian movement with narrow pavements and large vehicles causing concern to many people walking in the street. Therefore, after extensive analysis of Traffic Order options, the Council took a decision to investigate how large vehicles could be deterred by design rather than Order, consequently an initial workshop looking at the 'shared space' concept which generated significant interest amongst local members of Usk and Llanbadoc.
- 3.3 In addition, to the ongoing issues surrounding traffic, parking etc. UTC has recently undertaken a survey of local residents to ascertain what is important to them. Discussions have highlighted various issues that residents are interested in ranging from retail, employment and leisure opportunities as well as car parking and traffic.
- 3.4 This report identifies an opportunity for the Council to work with UTC (and potentially Llanbadoc Community Council) to develop ideas to improve the public realm thereby improving the management of traffic, parking etc. and ideally addressing the other priorities that have come forward from the UTC Town Plan questionnaire such as concerns regarding large vehicles and traffic columns generally through Usk, which have previously been well rehearsed, along with issues regarding air quality, pedestrian safety and bridge strikes. Added to this are the challenges faced by retail and commerce within the town, including

the lack of parking, employment, public transport, leisure facilities and development opportunities.

3.6 Until now the research and development of options have largely been undertaken by the Council’s Highway Officers in conjunction with Gwent Police, UTC and Llanbadoc CC along with HGV monitoring by a private company. However to prepare, organise and manage a comprehensive study (in conjunction with the Usk TC Town Plan) requires a focused resource to enable progression from ‘good ideas and feedback’ to a structured Master Plan to include an option appraisal, funding opportunity analysis, time scales, etc.

3.7 In the current economic climate, the Council does not have existing staff resources available to commit to the whole project however as UTC are indicating a willingness to contribute to costs (subject to confirmation) then a £50,000 budget would be considered sufficient to fund research, workshops, outline design options and funding opportunities and produce a Town Improvement Master Plan to enable progression.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 Summarised below for Members’ consideration from Future Generations Evaluation located in Appendix A:

The Assessment demonstrates that the proposed Town Master Plan will comply with the well-being five ways of working and supports the well-being goals.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Risks
Do nothing	None identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of Usk town centre falling into further decline; • Increased risk of continuing and more acute congestion and subsequently declining air quality
Support the Joint Project with UTC and potentially Llanbadoc CC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a strategic Master Plan identifying a structured way forward for the town and all partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master plan is produced and funding cannot be identified so issues cannot be resolved
The Council to lead the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a strategic Master Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Plan lacks joint ownership and therefore has competing priorities; • The Master Plan lies amongst other tasks within the Council’s priorities therefore leading to inevitable delays and subsequently an extended time scale ; • Increased risk of further decline, congestion and pollution

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 An evaluation assessment has been included in Appendix B for future evaluation of whether the decision has been successfully implemented. The decision will be evaluated by Stronger Communities Select Committee, which will make recommendations regarding any proposed changes to Cabinet.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 The control of traffic through Usk and Woodside has been a contentious issue for many years. A great deal of Council Officer and Councillor time has been spent on assessing what might be feasible but no traditional traffic management scheme has been found that offers the control required to satisfactorily manage large vehicles without adversely impacting upon local businesses, retail, trade etc.
- 6.2 Increasingly local feedback demonstrates concern about the health of retail and leisure offers in the town along with parking problems, lack of facilities etc. This investment offers a way of analysing what might be achieved and what funding options might be found; without it existing staff resources would struggle to commit the time necessary to undertake a comprehensive piece of work and identify ideas and options upon which decisions might be based.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The proposal seeks to create a budget of £50,000 which enables a Town Improvement Master Plan and subsequently a template for a regeneration scheme to be developed. It is envisaged that UTC (either with Llanbadoc Community Council or without) will fund £25,000. It will be for UTC (and potentially Llanbadoc CC) to confirm their level of investment but obviously any shortfall will curtail the extent of the project. The Council's contribution will be found from a current underspend from a reserves previously earmarked for another project.

8. CONSULTEES:

Usk TC
Llanbadoc CC
Senior Leadership Team
Cabinet

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

N/A

10. AUTHOR: Roger Hoggins, Head of Operations

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Evaluation Criteria – Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions & Council – Appendix B

Title of Report:	Acquiring Support to develop plans and ideas to Improve Usk (and Woodside)
Date decision was made:	
Report Author:	Roger Hoggins

What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?

Project Management support will be used to develop ideas, schemes and funding options to deliver improvements for Usk Town (and Woodside) and a Town Improvement Master Plan created to deliver on those aspects supported by the councils involved.

What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?

Support from councils for the projects and funding options.
Successful highlighting and potential acquisition of funding to support the various aspects of the project.
The resulting Town Centre Master Plan will be presented to Stronger Communities Select for scrutiny and to consider next steps.

What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?

This decision creates a modest budget to examine what further funding might be drawn in. There are no savings created but is intended to exploit alternative funding opportunities to allow parts of the project to progress.