

Meeting:	Town Centre Project Panel
Date:	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2005
Subject:	Harrow Town Centre Public Realm Strategy
Responsible Officer:	Director of Strategic Planning
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Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development, Housing and Best Value
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part I

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **Decision Required**

To endorse the proposed appointment of a consultant design team to prepare a public realm strategy for Harrow town centre, approve the draft consultants' brief, and consider whether Members should be involved in the selection process.

### **Reason for report**

To ensure the development of a public realm strategy to an agreed brief and timetable

### **Benefits**

Selection of a consultant team with a proven track record in public realm design and delivery should ensure the development of a strategy capable of achieving a high quality and distinctive public realm throughout Harrow town centre.

## **Cost of Proposals**

- A maximum of £25,000 has been allocated to procure the consultant team, to cover the initial design costs and encourage a wide response to the tender
- Consultants are to be appointed by competitive tender, the cost of which is unknown at this stage, but will be contained within the current Capital Programme allocation for Town Centre Environmental Improvements.

## **Risks**

The absence of a consultants' brief, or delay in its adoption, could jeopardise the implementation of the Town Centre Environmental Improvement Programme, adversely affect Harrow's competitive position with neighbouring town centres and prejudice the Council's aspirations to transform Harrow town centre into the premier centre in north west London

## **Implications if recommendations rejected**

The outdated physical appearance of Harrow town centre would not improve, and the opportunity to create a distinctive public realm would be lost, visitor numbers could fall, and Harrow could lose its status as one of London's 10 Metropolitan centres.

## **Section 2: Report**

### **2.1 Brief History**

In July 2004 the Panel received a presentation on a Public Realm Strategy for Harrow town centre from Alsop Architects, building on some of the design principles set out in the draft masterplan for development around Harrow on the Hill station. The Panel noted the design and cost implications outlined in the presentation and agreed in principle to the development of a pilot scheme in Clarendon Road, subject to a further report.

Following a further report in November 2004 on a range of detailed design issues and costs, the Panel recommended that Cabinet approve an environmental improvement scheme in Clarendon Road, subject to provision being made in the 2005/06 Capital Programme.

On 17<sup>th</sup> February 2005, Cabinet approved the Capital Programme for 2005/06 to 2007/08, which provided £1.7m p.a, for a Town Centre Environmental Programme

### **2.2 The Draft Consultants' Brief**

Improving the quality and distinctiveness of the public realm in Harrow town centre is one of the key objectives of the Town Centre Development Strategy, and initial concepts considered previously by the Panel have had

unanimous Member support. Significant provision is included in the approved Capital Programme for this purpose.

Completing the detailed design and engineering aspects of the “Hanging Gardens” pilot scheme in Clarendon Road has highlighted the need for a multi disciplinary consultant team that is able to produce innovative and inspiring designs, but is also capable of translating those designs into workable, engineering solutions. This requires a range of specialist design skills, with appropriate technical support from transport planners, highway designers, civil engineers and cost consultants. In order to ensure that all the appropriate skills are available to take the Harrow strategy forward, and meet procurement requirements, it is recommended that the Panel endorse the proposed appointment of a consultant team through a competitive process.

The attached brief sets out the vision and objectives for the strategy, the services required from the consultant team, the required outputs, and the selection process. The Panel will note that, in line with recommended best practice, the brief indicates that a fee of up to £5000 will be paid to the 3-5 competing teams that the Council is likely to shortlist. By reducing the cost of preparing initial design proposals and minimising risk, this should ensure higher quality submissions and wider interest in the commission from a broader group of design practices. The GLA Architecture and Urbanism Unit, which has responsibility for taking forward the Mayor’s 100 Public Spaces Programme, has agreed to provide technical support, and experienced, independent advisers may be invited to assist in the final selection. This again should increase interest in the tender and ensure a robust selection process. The Panel may wish to consider whether Members should form part of the selection “jury”.

Subject to the approval of the draft brief, the tender process will commence early in the new year and is expected to take approximately 12 weeks to complete. The draft strategy should be available by mid summer and will include a critical appraisal of the Clarendon Road pilot, sketch proposals for all of the principal town centre streets, future management and maintenance regimes and indicative costs. This will enable the improvement programme to be rolled out on a phased basis over the 3 year period covered by the Capital Programme.

### 2.3 Consultation

Full consultation will be undertaken at appropriate stages in the development of the strategy. The submission of proposals for public engagement and consultation with relevant stakeholders is one of the key outputs outlined in the brief

### 2.4 Financial Implications

The costs of the proposals set out in this report will need to be contained within the approved budget."

## 2.5 Legal Implications

The process of consideration and appointment of any consultants will need to have regard to and comply with both the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the European Procurement Regime.

## 2.6 Equalities Impact

Preparation of the Public Realm strategy, following public engagement with a wide range of stakeholder groups, provides the opportunity to promote a more accessible, attractive and diverse town centre better equipped to meet the needs of the local community.

## 2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

The creation of an attractive, well lit and safer environment, embracing Secured by Design principles, will help to reassure town centre users and reduce the fear of crime.

## **Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents**

### **Appendix 1**

Draft Consultants Brief

### **Background Documents:**

- 1 Town Centre Development Strategy. July 2005