

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR RESOURCES, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMISSIONING) & EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT, AND IT

2 – 11 NOVEMBER 2021

RED LION SQUARE, STAMFORD

COMMENTS FROM THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On 25 October 2021, the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee considered a report in relation to the Red Lion Square, Stamford paving project and the proposed procurement route and unanimously supported the Recommendations to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Resources, Communications and Commissioning) and the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT.

The following points were highlighted:

- Members requested clarity in relation to the risk figure (predominantly construction risk) of £453,000 described in the report. Officers explained that a quality risk assessment produced this value; key elements included in this was the potential for utility diversions. There currently was a C3 quotation which was a process with utility companies. Initial discussions with these did not indicate the need for diversions. Confirmation of this was anticipated in the coming three to four weeks and would see figures dropping significantly. Additional elements accounted for in that same risk figure were weather conditions; material price increases, which was being mitigated in advance by entering a contract with EUROVIA and placing orders early for costs to be fixed; and also, availability of contractors and professional staff, which was looked at being mitigated in similar ways by entering contracts with contractors early.
- Members requested clarity in relation to the £260,000 cost estimate on fees. Officers summarised that the figure included designer fees (including designing and supervising consultancy), project management fees, supervision fees, as well as lower figures relating to engaging with planners and obtaining legal advice.
- Assurance was sought in relation to the works being completed on a timely manner, within the presented cost estimates and with guaranteed workmanship. Officers stated that designing and supervising consultancy served as a testing regime that also ensured the quality of workmanship. Certainty of time could not be guaranteed due to unforeseen circumstances such as weather (e.g., flooding), utility damage, lack of materials or delayed delivery of these. These were expected in any construction projects however as the scheme was moving forward greater definition was being input in relation to timescales. Assurance was given that the works programme was reflecting and scrutinising that. Lastly, robust costs and estimates were put into this report; the significant amounts around risk were to ensure staying in line with the budget. A direct correlation between costs and unforeseen circumstances was drawn which may affect the works programme significantly.

Assurance was provided that the Executive Portfolio holders remained informed as the scheme developed, and works were carried out.

- Concerns were raised by Members over the balance drawn between health and safety risks in other areas and improving the aesthetic appearance of this square. Officers affirmed that without regular maintenance there was a significant safety concern at this site; there had been isolations, including pedestrian crossing points, where sets were pulled out which left holes behind. Measures had been taken to address these issues however, degradation was growing in greater frequency and was presenting a significant safety concern. Assurance was given that the existing aesthetics were maintained.
- It was queried whether a potential success of this scheme would make a case for other similar schemes for areas across the county with cobbled streets. Officers clarified that schemes emerged anywhere in the county which relied on steer from Members and available resources in place as to be taken forward; that was irrespective to the success of this particular scheme.
- Members noted that the stones at the footpath and those of the highway were a different type of stone and asked if the stones proposed to be laid were a match. Assurance was given that Officers had met with the supplier of the cobbles and ensured that the look, texture and size were similar to the existing and aesthetically sympathetic towards each other. Approval from Heritage England was also sought.
- Assurance was provided that marketers and local businesses, the Civic Society and various other organisations were consulted to ensure that business was not disrupted, and impact was minimised.
- A Member emphasised the importance of being clear on what happened to the old cobbles that were being removed and received assurance that these were being stored in highway depots for being repurposed in maintenance needs elsewhere across the county.