

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 DECEMBER 2017

7

Report Title	CAPITAL PROJECT MONITORING
Purpose of Report	To inform the Committee of progress on capital projects within its remit.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to note the project updates within the report.
Consultation and Feedback	Details are contained within the body of the report.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>The 2017/18 £20.6m capital programme assumed a funding position based on the budget profiles set out in the February 2017 MTFP. If projects are delayed, or are not able to achieve the desired outcomes and do not progress, then the capital budget would remain unspent and would not be reallocated to additional projects without consideration by the Council as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process. Any increase in expenditure in excess of the agreed budget must be reported separately.</p> <p>In January 2018 the Strategy and Resources Committee will recommend a new capital budget to Council that takes into account what is affordable given the capital resources available, together with any revenue implications arising.</p> <p>Graham Bailey – Principal Accountant Tel 01453 754133 Email graham.bailey@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Legal Implications	<p>This report is for information purposes only. There are no specific decisions required. Legal advice on each capital project will be provided as appropriate and required. Any strategic risks pertinent to the programmes should be referred to in the Strategic Risk Register. R28.11CD30.11</p> <p>Craig Hallett, Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754364 Email: craig.hallett@stroud.gov.uk</p>
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Options	The report is for information only. Any decision to re define projects outside of the scope of the capital programme would need to be recommended to Strategy and Resources Committee.
Performance Management Follow Up	Update reports are to be supplied to this committee on a regular basis.
Background Papers/ Appendices	None

Introduction

1. The following report provides an executive summary of each of the Capital Projects within the remit of the Environment Committee.
2. The purpose of this report is both to advise the Committee of progress with the capital projects and to recommend decisions to members. Members will see that the two projects agreed at the last meeting to be discontinued, Ebley Hydro and the Stroud Valleys Initiative, have been removed from the update. The financial consequences of this change are covered in the budget update report.

Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan

3. The Council has allocated a sum of £300,000 to a Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan and Committee agreed the scope of the Plan at the meeting on 29/6/17.
4. Following endorsement of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the RDPE Growth Programme, Rural Tourism Infrastructure fund, relating to the Dursley and Uley Greenway, a full application was completed and submitted to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). As noted at the last Committee, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) undertook to produce a sectionalised view of the Greenway route, to provide an idea of obstacles/costs etc related to individual sections. Unfortunately this information, which was to inform the full application, was not forthcoming. The RPA have queried the lack of evidential cost information and the decision has now been taken to withdraw the application.
5. A further meeting will be held with representatives from GCC to bottom out the level of resource and commitment GCC can provide to support the Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan and its contingent routes, including the Greenway and the full application could be restored to the process. The intention is to map out the routes with packages of necessary works to the point at which they could go out to tender.
6. A small amount of funding has been agreed with both Stroud and Stonehouse Town Councils as potential match for their bids to the GWR Customer & Communities Improvement Fund. Both bids relate to improving cycling access/parking/signage at the respective stations.
7. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust have submitted an EOI to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) call under the Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency strand. Although the project focuses on improving biodiversity, delivered in three clusters of market towns

across the County, in the Stroud cluster the project will take place along the Nailsworth to Stonehouse corridor, using the cycle path as the catalyst to improve biodiversity and green infrastructure along and beside the route. This would include improvements to the cycle path and it is on that basis that support has been offered to the GWT at the early stage of their bid.

Wallbridge Gateway Site

8. On 13th October 2016 Strategy and Resources committee resolved: 'That the Head of Asset Management progresses discussions with Stroud Town Council, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and Ecotricity on the design, costs and funding of a landscaping scheme for the land at Wallbridge and implements a scheme in consultation with those parties and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Community Services and Licensing Committee and Environment Committees'
9. Budget contributions were confirmed as Stroud District Council (SDC) - £90K, Stroud Town Council (STC) - £10K, Ecotricity - £90K. Land transfer has taken place from GCC to SDC for land south of the canal, while the transfer of land to the north of the canal has been delayed pending remedial work/refurbishment of the old brewery wall, currently being completed by Cotswold Canal Trust volunteers.
10. A design brief has been agreed internally and with partners, as above. A meeting was held with STC on the 21 November and the brief will be placed on the SW procurement portal, to procure a landscape architect, within the next two weeks.
11. Consideration is now being given to undertaking ground investigations ahead of any procurement, but this is unlikely to take place until work on the brewery wall has been completed.

Canal Regeneration

12. The Council has allocated £3m as matched funding towards a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to be submitted by the 30th November. The Council will be the lead partner in this bid, working closely with the Cotswold Canals Trust (CCT). The outcome of this bid is likely to be known in 2018. A successful bid would enable restoration of a 4 mile length of canal West of Stonehouse to Saul Junction; connecting Stroud to the national waterway network. The bid could not be made until the present restoration (between Stonehouse and Bowbridge) had been deemed to be complete. This was due to be checked on 18th October, when an HLF monitoring team was due to sail on *Wookey Hole* (the canal maintenance boat) from Bowbridge Lock into Stonehouse Ocean. This was postponed due to poor progress at Wallbridge Lower Lock but successfully took place on the 10th November.
13. Some volunteer-led work has already been undertaken in advance of the bid – primarily channel clearance west of the A38 at Whitminster, with more planned this winter. CCT has recently opened a new Visitor Centre at Bond's Mill, where overhanging trees will be cut back this winter. Waterway Recovery Group volunteers are currently constructing a new bypass at Dock Lock. A 150m stretch of towpath between Pike Bridge and Dock Lock has been upgraded by visiting teams from Ecotricity and National Grid, together with our own volunteers.

14. Alongside these, several pieces of work have been commissioned which will have the effects of both enhancing the bid and removing perceived risk. These include a heritage assessment, flood risk assessment, economic and social output projections and an outline planning application in respect of the 'missing mile'.

Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement

15. Council has agreed an annual budget of £250k for the period of four years 2016/17 to 2020/21, for a capital programme of vehicle replacements for services covered by the Multi Service Contract.
16. The Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) produced by Ubico, and agreed by officers in June 2016, is revisited each year to identify necessary changes to the fleet. These changes are determined by operational needs and the remaining useful life and economic cost of maintaining individual vehicles; in an effort to maximise productive use of fleet resources and improve service efficiencies, vehicles that have become surplus to requirements are sold and income reinvested within the fleet; the vehicle fleet currently comprises of an agreed mix of new and used vehicles.
17. Officers have undertaken the first review of the VRP with Ubico. The financing of certain vehicles will be moved from ongoing hire to long term purchases; these changes will result in corresponding revenue savings. A number of vehicles have become surplus to requirements and will be sold; income from sales has been allocated to providing replacements within the fleet. The review outcome identified a need to pull forward a capital spend of £84k from the budgeted profile.
18. The decision by Strategy and Resources in October 2017 to approve the increased capital has now been confirmed with Ubico. A further meeting has taken place in respect of the council's Fleet requirements with Ubico. A number of purchase options are currently being considered; the council's preferred option is to be finalised over the coming weeks and the necessary Officer approval sought. It is hoped that the necessary vehicles will be purchased and in use by the end of the financial year but this will be dependent on the purchase option.

Market Town Centres Initiative Fund

19. The Council has allocated a budget of £50,000pa for 4 years totalling £200,000 to support capital projects within town centres, subject to match funding coming from the host town council. The design of the 'offer' has yet to be progressed following the recommendations of the 'Future of Town Centres' report at the last committee. The fund is intended to include the five towns, Stroud, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge. It is intended that that in the first instance town councils be asked to submit outline expressions of interest so that interest can be gauged and assist in designing the offer.