



Policy and Resources Committee – 13 February 2012

Funding for the Higham Ferrers and Thrapston Master Plans

Purpose of report

To update Councillors on the revised approach and resultant changes to the funding profile for the Higham Ferrers Master Plan. Also to seek approval for the release of a maximum of £50,000 to enable consultants to be commissioned to undertake a master planning exercise for Thrapston. Both Master Plans will explore community priorities for the future improvement and development of the respective town.

Attachment(s)

A - Higham Ferrers Funding Bid

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that master planning exercises have been carried out in Rushden Town Centre and Raunds. These have led to clear identification of community priorities for improvement and development, including an action plan for delivery. Oundle are proceeding with their Community Plan and draft Town Design Statement which are expected to be completed in 2012. Public consultation on the draft Master Plan for Irthlingborough is expected to start in the next four weeks.
- 1.2 As Members will be aware the planning framework is currently in a state of evolution. Having Master Plans for each of our Market Towns will help inform the review of the Core Spatial Strategy and also provide valuable information for the following activities:
 - a) helping the town or parish council focus its resources or activities
 - b) providing evidence for the preparation of funding bids
 - c) informing the allocation of any monies devolved to town or parish councils from the New Homes Bonus
 - d) identifying any local infrastructure requirements for inclusion in the Local Infrastructure Plan or the Community Infrastructure Levy process
- 1.3 It is not clear at this stage what elements of the Master Plans may require further input from ENC in relation to the production of Neighbourhood Plans or whether other planning tools, such as the Town Design Statement proposed by Oundle, may meet community requirements.

2.0 Higham Ferrers

- 2.1 In March 2012 this Committee noted the request from Higham Ferrers Council for funding for consultants to prepare a Master Plan for the town and agreed that, if Officers' attempts to seek external funding for the Master Plan proved unsuccessful by end of June 2011, up to £50,000 be released from the revenue reserve for regeneration to enable the work to take place in 2011/12.
- 2.2 Officers' attempts to secure external funding proved unsuccessful. In addition, work did not start as expected in the summer of 2011 due to capacity issues at Higham Ferrers as a result of the retirement of their clerk. Following his replacement by a Clerk with experience of producing similar Community Plans, and further conversations with officers, Higham Town Council now wishes to follow the example of Oundle Town Council and manage the production of its Master Plan..

- 2.3 However, like Oundle, the Town Council has requested financial support to undertake certain aspects of the work, including a specialist transport and parking study (similar to that carried out in Oundle), meeting consultation costs and a contribution to back-filling of the Clerk's role to enable her to project manage the post. Details of the estimated costs can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.4 The Town Council has started its planning process with an open day on 28 January which attracted about 200 people. They would therefore like to structure the financial support as follows:
2011/12 - £2,000
2012/13 - £16,510

3.0 Thrapston

- 3.1 After several meetings with officers and careful consideration of its capacity, Thrapston Town Council agreed at its meeting on 24 January 2012 to request funding from ENC to enable Consultants to carry out a master plan for the town. If successful a brief would be developed jointly with the Town Council in the next few weeks with an aim to appoint the consultants in April and completing the work in 2012/13
- 3.2 It is estimated that the cost of employing consultants to carry out this work will be £50,000, which is a similar cost to the master planning exercises at Raunds, Irthlingborough and Rushden Town Centre.

4.0 Equality and diversity

- 4.1 There are no equality and diversity impacts resulting directly from this report. It is however important that when any consultation is carried out, such as that necessary for town/parish master plans, there are mechanisms to ensure that different groups are able to participate in the process.

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Risk management

- 6.1 No significant risks have been identified relating to this report. However, funding has been set aside to support other town plans in the district and failure to support similar arrangements for Higham Ferrers or Thrapston could be considered unfair and result in damage to the district council's relationship with the town council.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 This report reduces the immediate draw on council resources in relation to the Higham Ferrers Master Plan from an anticipated £50,000 in 2011/12 to £2,000 in 2011/12 and £16,510 in 2012/13
- 7.2 A new allocation of a maximum of £50,000 is sought for the employment of consultants to undertake a Master Plan for Thrapston
- 7.3 In the light of the council's financial position as outlined in other reports on this agenda, it is proposed that only the 2011/12 £2,000 requested by Higham Ferrers is drawn from reserves and the payments of £16,510 and £50,000 requested for 2012/13 become the first draw on the £180,000 proposed for community projects from New Homes Bonus in 2012/13.

8.0 Corporate outcomes

- 8.1 Masterplanning contributes to the achievement of the following corporate outcomes:
- **Good quality of life** – Master Plans can help understanding of what people value about their local area and what should be improved.
 - **Effective partnership working** –the Master Plan process can help revitalise and reinforce the relationship between communities, the Town Council and the District Council, and other partners.
 - **Strong community leadership** – through provision of opportunities for people to have their say on the development of their local area and actively take part in improvements.

9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 Members are recommended to resolve to recommend to Council:
1. Note the revised request from Higham Ferrers Council for funding to enable the Town Council to prepare a Master Plan for the town and agree the release of £2,000 in 2011/12 and £16,510 in 2012/13.
 2. Agree the release of £50,000 for the preparation of a Master Plan for Thrapston in 2012/13.

(Reason – Development of these plans will provide timely information to inform the review of the local planning framework.)

Legal	Power: Local Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976				
	Other considerations: Draft Localism Bill 2010				
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Sharn Matthews, Executive Director, smatthews@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 02/02/ 2012					
CFO		MO		CX	

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HIGHAM FERRERS TOWN PLAN

Detail	Cost
Consultants for Transport Assessment	10,000
Questionnaire – Printing and Freepost Return	2,000
Publicity Costs (Banners, poster, newsletter, website)	2,000
Extra Staff Hours	1,260
Hall Hire for Workshops	750
Refreshments for Workshops	500
Printing of Draft Action Plan	2,000
TOTAL	£18,510

Consultants for Transport Assessment.

£10,000

Printing/Delivery and Return of Questionnaire £5,000

Based on Oundle Questionnaire (A4 Full colour- 16 pages) - £1,600 (to be produced by the ENC print unit)

Freepost Return (based on Oundle survey response rate) £400

Publicity Costs-

Banners- £200

Posters- £300

Newsletter - £1,000

Website- £200

Extra hours for Administrative Support

In the office the Town Council has 1 full time member of staff (Town Clerk) and 1 Administrative Assistant who works 20 hours a week. The Town Clerk is managing the project, but in order to deliver the project in conjunction with other day to day work extra administrative support is needed to carry out the following duties:-

- Organise meetings and provide secretariat
- Liaise with printers and oversee delivery and receipt of questionnaire
- Day input of questionnaires returns
- Other ancillary duties
- Attend and organise workshops
- Jan – August – 140 hours@ £9 - £1,260

Hall Hire

This is for workshops at the Bede House (administered by the Church) as Town Hall does not have disabled access to Town Hall Chamber

6 Sessions of 5 hours@£25 per hour- £750

Refreshments-

For Workshops £500