

# Gloucester City Council

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> January 2016</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Strategy for Cladding Buildings in the City Centre</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>Westgate</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
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<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Building Wrap Proposal, Southgate Street</b>		

## 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Overview and Scrutiny of the background with regard to the treatment of unattractive facades in the City Centre and to indicate where work will now focus.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny is asked, subject to any comments the Committee may wish to make to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy, to note the report.

## 3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 In March 2013, Cabinet approved the setting up of a City Centre Investment Fund using £2 million from the Tesco deal at St Oswalds to help support the attractiveness and vitality of the city centre. An amount was allocated for improving the image of a number of unattractive facades in the city centre, typically those dating from the 1960s and 1970s that had become tired and dated and in need of a refresh. However this project should not be seen in isolation but as part of a comprehensive approach to improving the city centre environment, including; property grants for improvement works, the "Regeneration Hitlist" of unattractive sites and buildings, enhancements to the public realm (such as new paving in Kings Walk) and street furniture as well as cultural features such as street art.
- 3.2 To take forward the treatment unattractive facades, an informal officer group was set up and a number of techniques (green walls, cladding etc) were suggested along with target buildings. A simple process was put forward where buildings were scored taking account of their prominence, unattractiveness, cost and deliverability. Of the 7 buildings identified, Kings Walk car park came out top, with Longsmith Street car park, Eastgate shopping centre (Southgate frontage) and Wilkinsons scoring highest and therefore becoming the projects pursued. This was agreed by Cabinet in September 2013.

- 3.3 As the work progressed it became clear that some building owners did not consider this investment as a priority and despite their building scoring highly, e.g. Wilkinson's, would not consider implementing proposals.
- 3.4 Activity therefore focussed on Kings Walk Car Park, (and Kings Walk Link Bridge), Southgate façade of Eastgate Shopping Centre and Longsmith Street Car Park. These all had the benefit of some sort of City Council legal interest. The choice of these buildings and broad treatment was confirmed in a Cabinet Report of June 2014.
- 3.5 The proposal for Longsmith Street was a simple scheme involving trailing plants up wires to create a green wall. However, following discussions with the Head of Regeneration & Economic Development and the successful award of grant to contribute towards the regeneration of the Fleece and Longsmith Street car park, it was deemed not appropriate to progress with this proposal, not least given the length of time it would take for the plants to become established. Several of the vertical rendered sections have been covered with street art commissioned by the Council, which adds interest and colour to the area, and the remainder of the painted areas will be refreshed shortly.
- 3.6 In order to gauge public opinion a number of Computer Generated Images (CGI) were produced for Kings Walk by Astam, a local architectural practice, giving an indication as to what it could look like with various cladding options. Associated with this was the link bridge where a mirrored option was put forward as it was thought this would best 'hide' what is quite an unattractive structure, while also creating a modern and interesting landmark. Work progressed in the background with the Southgate Street proposal (above Paddy Power and B&M) where a cost effective option of a 'building wrap' was considered.
- 3.7 With regard to Kings Walk and the link bridge, a number of options were consulted on. Cladding has been used successfully, by the private sector and at some cost, on a number of buildings in the city such as the former Duck, Son & Pinker (now Julian Charles) in Southgate Street and is proposed to be used on others such as the former Job Centre in Southgate Street. Samples of a "Chameleon" cladding panel, which change colour depending on the angle from which they are viewed, were obtained. It became clear that from some angles the panels looked very dark and would therefore seem oppressive. A sample panel of a suitable type was fabricated and mounted to give the public a really good impression of what the cladding could look like.
- 3.8 Legal matters were also considered and it became apparent that for the Link Bridge and Paddy Power/ B&M this would not be straightforward due to the number of leases, sub leases and advertisement rights that had to be negotiated. For Paddy Power/B&M for example there were 3 subleases and each organisation involved either did not return correspondence or required their own legal agreement and potentially sign off from their own structural engineers, all of which came with a charge. There was also a change of ownership as 'Lone Star' bought the Eastgate complex.
- 3.9 An outcome of the consultation was that it had become clear that there was concern about the impact of the cladding. Information from the preliminary work on the Link

Bridge also saw increasing costs and the legal issues around sub-leases and advertisement rights were also complicating matters.

- 3.10 Within the context of the above and associated risk it was concluded to put on hold work on any re-cladding proposal for Kings Walk and the Link Bridge and pursue a more cost effective option using painting and lighting in order to 'lift' the building. It is considered that this could come on stream in the spring of 2016. This could still involve the removal of the Kings Walk canopy and the work to the windows that was part of the preliminary work. However Kings Walk shopping centre has been put up for sale by Aviva and until there is clarity over the new owners and their aspirations a clear delivery programme will be challenging.
- 3.11 The building wrap on Southgate Street, (please see Appendix 1), is still being pursued as a cost effective solution. Planning permission will be sought once legal issues have been resolved.
- 3.12 In summary, a lot of work has been undertaken to deliver the façade improvements. Complex legal issues and changes in ownership, during the last 18 months in both of our primary shopping centres have either been, or are in the process of coming under, new ownership. However, in that time schemes have been progressed, consultation undertaken and interim solutions delivered e.g. Kings Walk has been cleaned and painted and Longsmith Street has seen street art added.
- 3.13 As with all things in the built environment, particularly within a heritage city such as Gloucester, delivery is challenging and fraught with risk. It is only as detailed work is progressed are those issues understood as well as their impact on delivery. Nonetheless, this work to improve the city centre environment will deliver long-term benefit and the patience and persistence to deliver these projects will ultimately be worthwhile.

#### **4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations**

- 4.1 There is little scope for ABCD in the delivery of these schemes though the proposals have been extensively consulted upon.

#### **5.0 Alternative Options Considered**

- 5.1 A number of options were put forward at the outset. Most were dismissed as being too expensive or difficult due to ownership issues.

#### **6.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 Scrutiny committee have asked for report on the City Centre Investment Scheme. The recommendation asks them to note the contents of the report.

## **7.0 Future Work and Conclusions**

- 7.1 Work will progress on the building wrap and a more modest scheme for Kings Walk. Members may need to decide on which scheme if any to develop to spend any balance left over after the above.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 All works will be funded through the City Centre Investment Fund budget.  
(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report).

## **9.0 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 All legal issues associated with the delivery of the programme are being addressed with One Legal.  
(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report).

## **10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

- 10.1 The primary risk is cost overrun. However this will be addressed through project budget planning including the allocation of a contingency sum to meet any potential unforeseen costs.

## **11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):**

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

## **12.0 Other Corporate Implications**

### Community Safety

- 12.1 None

### Sustainability

- 12.2 None

### Staffing & Trade Union

- 12.3 None

**Background Documents:** None