

TC/3919/20

Oswestry Town Council

Report from the Town Clerk to the Council – Wednesday 26th August 2020

High Street Action Zone Funding

Purpose

To set out the Town Council's allocation to the High Street Heritage Action Zone Project.

Introduction

The Council has regularly reaffirmed its commitment to the HAZ including this minute on 14th October 2019 (Finance and General Purposes Committee):

It was **resolved** the Council would, in principle, consider committing up to £500,000 from the Smithfield capital receipt to match fund HAZ projects subject to final ratification and agreement by Council. This is to be a key priority for the Town Council and will enable the Town Clerk to go forward with ongoing discussions.

The whole programme has been subject to delays for a number of reasons, not least the covid pandemic.

The successful bid was made by Shropshire Council, in partnership with the Future Oswestry Group.

The budget allocated to the scheme has been a negotiation between partners with Oswestry Town Council in principal contribution of £500,000 being used to match fund that from Historic England.

This report asks Council to confirm the allocation against the different elements of the programme.

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Summary of the Scheme

The funding will be used to deliver a repair scheme for key strategic buildings, look at converting empty buildings with mixture a of uses including workspace, retail and restaurants on the ground floor, with residential units above.

There will be permanent enhancements to the historic environment including key shop fronts and a residential conversions programme for the upper floors of shop units to provide a number of new homes within the town, plus increased spend and an enhanced town centre experience.

Allocation of the Oswestry Town Council Contribution

The negotiations with Historic England have resulted in the following schemes being supported by Oswestry Town Council.

Shopfront	Historic England	£135,000.00	£350,000.00
	Match Oswestry TC cash	£75,000.00	
	Match Private Contributions	£140,000.00	

Public Realm	Historic England	£125,000.00	£250,000.00
	Match Oswestry TC cash	£125,000.00	

Flagship	Historic England	£170,418.00	£520,418.00
	Match Oswestry TC cash	£150,000.00	
	Match (Private/public tbc)	£200,000.00	

Shropshire Council are providing a financial contribution to the scheme

Members will note that £350,000 of funding from Oswestry Town Council has been allocated to date. Further discussions and decisions will be required through this four-year programme.

Council are asked to note and approve the allocation of the Oswestry Town Council contribution.

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Decision Making

Elected Members will wish to have a significant input into the public realm projects and the flagship project. Whilst some initial thoughts have been considered, a full feasibility study will be required and the Town Council will be involved in the development and the decision making around the flagship and the public realm projects.

The extract from the HAZ application form includes the following:

One proposal is for a flagship project potentially for supported business pop up uses, with wrap-around business support.

With support from the Marches Growth Hub, this programme will help to support independent small local businesses who currently either work from home and haven't been able to make the transition from table top to a workspace or who need some additional support to grow and move on from a market stall to a unit. This is also about providing connections between businesses, encourage supply chains and Business to Business support opportunities. Dependant on the unit, we would also look to have some flexible workspace to provide a business community space with some meeting room space as well. This could prove transformational for businesses in Oswestry.

The shopfront scheme presents an opportunity to improve the appearance of the town centre with a potential 14 premises benefiting from a 60% contribution towards improvements. This is an application driven scheme with eligibility defined (in the main) by Historic England.

Applications will be assessed by Officers primarily based on a technical appraisal. Historic England input will be required but it is important that Oswestry Town Council have a role in scrutinising recommendations and the decision-making process.

This requires further work and a further consideration by this Council.

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Summary

Council are asked to agree the allocation of the Oswestry Town Council contribution to the HAZ programme and request a further report prior to the launch of the Shopfront scheme to agree Oswestry Town Council input into the decision making process.

Arren Roberts

Town Clerk