

# **JOINT MEETING NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE AND REGENERATION SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD 30 JUNE 2017**

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

**Present:**

Councillor Kevin Cranney (In the Chair)

Councillors: Dave Hunter, Marjorie James, Jim Lindridge, Brenda Loynes,  
Shane Moore, Carl Richardson and Paul Thompson.

Officers: Andrew Carter, Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration  
Tony Hanson, Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhoods  
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

## **1.. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Lawton.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **3. Town Centre Highway Improvements** (*Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods*)

### **Type of decision**

Key Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN 28/16.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for a number of highway schemes in the Town Centre area which were designed to improve pedestrian connectivity. The schemes were part of the Hartlepool Regeneration Masterplan, and linked to the Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ) project which would see major improvements in the Church Street/ Church Square area.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhoods outlined the background to the proposals which were an integral element of the Innovation and Skills Quarter (ISQ) project which would see major improvements in the Church Street/ Church Square area.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Neighbourhoods reported on the proposals outlined within the report which related to

- A689/ Church Square (plan shown at Appendix 1 to the report) – Removal of some of the pedestrian islands to improve crossing facilities. At present people seeking to cross from one corner to another are required to cross 5 or 6 legs of the junction, under signal control, and in the worst case scenario this can take several minutes. Removing some of the islands will shorten this time and simplify the junction for people on foot.
- A689/ Victoria Road (plan shown at Appendix 2 to the report) – Provision of a 'one phase' pedestrian crossing from Church Square to Wilkinson's Corner. The current proposal will support pedestrian access and has been modelled to have a minimal impact on traffic using this part of the network.
- Stockton Street – Removal of the central wall. Introduced around 20 years ago, the wall was originally an environmental improvement on the previous street scene. The proposed removal of the wall, in conjunction with the railings along each side of the road, will make for a much more open, pleasant town centre environment, creating a sense of approach for residents and visitors as you enter the Town Centre.
- Stockton Street (plan shown at Appendix 3 to the report) – Provision of a traffic signal controlled right turn into the multi-storey car park. At present, vehicles travelling into the town centre from the north that wish to access the multi-storey are required to turn left into Church Street, and then filter around Tower Street, to turn right back onto Stockton Street at the Huckelhoven Way junction. By facilitating a right turn directly into the car park this will remove the need for these vehicles to use this part of the network, and the associated unnecessary trips on it, which will be of particular benefit to the very busy Stockton Street/ Huckelhoven Way junction. The multi-storey car park is owned and operated by the Council so any improvements will benefit both the Council and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, and further support the growth and the Town Centre.

It is proposed that the works to Stockton Street would commence once the works to Church Street and Church Square had been completed. The programme and phasing would be confirmed once contractors had been appointed. An indicative programme for Stockton Street had a projected completion date of December 2018.

Members asked a series of questions in relation contingency funding, potential overspends, ongoing maintenance, the Council contribution to the funding of the schemes and the grant funding application for £300,000 of National Productivity Investment Fund which had also been submitted to support the economic growth of this area through the improvements being carried out on the strategic road network.

The Assistant Directors stated that all elements of the proposals had their own contingency element within their own specific funding 'envelope'. It was not intended that should any one part of the scheme overspend, that this would lead to a reduction in the next phase. Each phase of the overall project had been specified with its own cost envelope and the individual phases would be designed to meet those costs and adjusted where necessary depending on the tenders received. If any under spend was accrued in an early phase, then those funds would remain within the overall ISQ programme. Should the National Productivity Investment Fund bid be successful, then that funding would support the overall ISQ project. The overall budget had been approved as part of the Council MTFS.

In relation to the detail of the highways schemes, members raised questions in relation to

- The removal of the central wall in Stockton Street and the measures to ensure vehicles could not complete u-turns across the central reservation or that pedestrians could not cross easily at any point other than the specified crossings.
- The potential for vehicles to u-turn at the turning point into the multi-storey car park to access the old M&S car park.
- Assurance that the crossing point at Wilkinson's corner would be phased in preference to pedestrians and not traffic.
- Did the changes/removal of pedestrian crossings at the end of Church Street mean that the north/south crossing point was at the Transport Interchange.
- Assurance that the traffic lights would be linked in their phasing to ensure traffic moved freely north bound despite the addition of an extra set of lights at the multi-storey car park entrance.
- The installation and shape of tactile paving at crossing points.
- Had consultations with taxi licence holders been carried out individually or collectively through the association.
- Had consideration been given to a bus lane as suggested in some of the consultation responses.

The Assistant Directors indicated that many measures, such as those to prevent u-turns, phasing of lights and crossings would be included in the final designs of the scheme which would be submitted to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in due course. Much of the highway either side of the road already had or would have pedestrian barriers to limit the potential for people to cross at points other than the controlled crossings. Tactile paving at crossing points was also controlled by regulation. It was intended that priority would be given to pedestrians

crossings and the Chair suggested that a count-down timer as used abroad could be considered. The Assistant Director indicated that the changes to pedestrian crossings at the top of Church Street near the A689 had been revised in accordance with pedestrian preferences and following a survey of the most used walking routes.

Details of the consultation responses were not available within the meeting, though the Assistant Directors undertook to share these with Members. It was not known if the taxi drivers' association had made any specific comments and it was also not known if there had been a request from the bus operators for a bus lane along any section of Church Street or Stockton Street, though this was unlikely.

A Member questioned the potential for unforeseen issues such as underground services to affect the duration and costs of works. The Assistant Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration indicated that surveys had been undertaken with ground penetrating radar. There were a number of known issues in Church Square but there had also been a number of cellars identified in Church Street which appeared to have been in-filled prior to the current surface treatments being undertaken. The works were being programmed to start at the New Cleveland of College and Design building and work up Church Street, through Church Square and then onto Stockton Street. It may be the case that the same contractors could be bidding for the work and if a contractor won two successive phases, the movement of the works along the programme may be easier to manage.

In concluding the debate the Chair sought Members approval to the recommendations, which were approved unanimously, and that Members' specific comments in relation to the design elements of the scheme should also be noted and addressed as part of the further report to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on the design of the final scheme.

### **Decision**

1. That the proposed improvements to Church Street, Church Square and Stockton Street as outlined in the report and appended plans be approved, subject to the final design of the highways elements being approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.
2. That if the bid for £300,000 of National Productivity Investment Fund was successful, any under-spend in the overall budget identified in paragraph 7.4 of the report be used for any shortfall in the funding for the various elements of the Innovation and Skills Quarter proposals.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 am.

**P J DEVLIN**  
**CHIEF SOLICITOR**  
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