

EXTRA-ORDINARY COUNCIL

Date: Monday, 18 September 2023

Title: Witney High Street & Market Square Enhancements

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

Oxfordshire County Council is currently engaging with residents and local stakeholders regarding ‘**A scheme to deliver street improvements that support and maintain the new traffic arrangement**’ in Witney High Street and Market Square.

It has been awarded £1.98m for the scheme, funded from Active Travel England, and comes with scope to improve the way the area is used as well as how residents travel through it.

From the Oxfordshire County Council website: ***About the improvements,***

‘Our vision is for Witney High Street and Market Square to be a healthy, attractive and historically rich environment that complements the character and vibrancy of the market town whilst managing the impacts of climate change through improved opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

To deliver the vision, we are proposing five key objectives to be achieved by the project:

- *Enhance public spaces while protecting the town’s history and character.*
- *Support local businesses and the markets.*
- *Make it easier and more enjoyable to walk, wheel and cycle.*
- *Upgrade access to public transport.*
- *Improve safety for all users.*

The scheme is at an early stage and a design is yet to be developed. We are seeking the views of Witney residents and businesses to help shape the designs by finding out what is important to the local community. This information will be used to develop proposals which we will consult on next year.’

Current Situation

Members are invited to consider feedback from Witney Town Council (as a Corporate Body). This does not preclude Councillors submitting their own feedback to the engagement in a personal capacity.

Agreement on specific design features may not be possible, but key response themes should be related to the five key objectives of the project above, if appropriate. Questions from the County Council’s online engagement survey are attached as an appendix to this report.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Members should consider the environmental impact of any work in the High Street and Market Square areas and balance this against the aims of the project.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The Town Council is supportive of this community engagement and Members have been engaged with the electorate on this issue intently for some time. A debate on the subject shows it is fully committed to the process on behalf of its residents. A submission would highlight any key shaping ideas and items which would most benefit all affected.

Financial implication

- There are no known implications at this time.
- The introduction of any public realm enhancements, including planting and additional street infrastructure is likely to result in additional future maintenance costs for the Town Council.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report and consider:

1. Enhancements it would like to see in order for Oxfordshire County Council 'to deliver street improvements and maintain the new traffic arrangement' in the High Street & Market Square.