

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 5.1
15 SEPTEMBER 2008	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member responsible:	Councillor G Murphy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and Economic Development)	
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PETERBOROUGH PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Community Development Scrutiny Panel	Deadline date : 8 October 2008
That Cabinet is asked to agree the Peterborough Public Realm Strategy as the Authority's overall strategy for improvements to the public realm of Peterborough city centre, and recommend the approach to full Council.	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following Community Development Scrutiny Panel (18 June 2008).

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council a Public Realm Strategy for the city centre of Peterborough. If agreed by Council, the Peterborough Public Realm Strategy will become part of the Council's Major Policy Framework as a strategy to improve/redevelop an area of the city.
- 2.2 A copy of the Public Realm Strategy is attached at Annex A and has been placed in each of the Group Rooms.
- 2.3 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.9 of part 3 of the Constitution 'To commission reviews by and determine any changes of policy proposed by the Scrutiny Committee and Panels making recommendations to Council about proposed changes to the Council's major policy and budget framework'.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If Yes, date for relevant Council Meeting	8 October 2008
		Date for submission to Government Dept	N/A

4. PETERBOROUGH PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

Introduction

- 4.1 A key objective, and priority, of the City Council and its partner organisation, Opportunity Peterborough, is to regenerate the city centre of Peterborough – to create a vibrant, mixed-use centre that is alive during the day and at night. A fundamental element of that objective is to improve the public realm – the streets, paths, roads, squares, spaces and riverbanks that are essential to the character of the place.
- 4.2 In 2007, the Council and Opportunity Peterborough commissioned a local consultancy, LDA Design, to produce a strategy for improvements to the public realm. Following publication of the consultants' recommended strategy, Opportunity Peterborough led a period of public consultation. The results of that consultation have been taken into account, and the Public Realm Strategy is now presented to Cabinet for recommendation to Council.
- 4.3 It is stressed that the document now presented to Cabinet is, indeed, a strategy. It analyses the character of different areas within the city centre, establishes design principles, themes and overall concepts, but it does not, in itself, commit any party to a particular scheme. It does not, in itself, commit any expenditure nor carry a budget.
- 4.4 If the Strategy is agreed, individual schemes and projects will be brought forward by Opportunity Peterborough, the Council and/or other interested parties over the course of the coming years and each one will be subject to its own approval process, as appropriate. In agreeing the strategy, therefore, the Council would be committing itself to certain principles, but not to any specific individual scheme.

The Strategy

- 4.5 The strategy examines the background and context to the city centre's public realm; sets out strategic aims and objectives; identifies different character areas and the design principles that should apply to each one; establishes principles for the use of materials and detailing; and makes proposals for management and maintenance.
- 4.6 The **vision** is for a well-connected network of beautiful streets and spaces. These will be the lifeblood of a sustainable city centre where people live, work and play; a public realm which is alive during the day and evening. New pieces of city will be seamlessly knitted into the fabric of the existing city centre forming clear, legible, active and attractive walking and cycling routes. The public realm will have a strong sense of it being 'distinctively Peterborough', stitching together all the key buildings and spaces that enrich its character and using materials and design languages that relate strongly to the place.
- 4.7 There are 10 principles underlying the strategy:
- Principle 1 - The re-attachment of the railway station to the historic core
 - Principle 2 - The re-attachment of the river to the city centre
 - Principle 3 - A fine grain - small units and many doors
 - Principle 4 - A vibrant place in the evening as well as in the day
 - Principle 5 – Residents in the city centre
 - Principle 6 – A city centre designed for cyclists and walkers
 - Principle 7 – Places to sit and places to eat
 - Principle 8 – Public spaces as informal arenas
 - Principle 9 – Public spaces as arenas for festivals and events
 - Principle 10 – A public realm that is distinctively Peterborough
- 4.8 The Strategy identifies an underlying conceptual framework of a Stone Axis which connects many of the city's most impressive stone buildings in an east-west direction from the Museum to the Cathedral; and a Green Axis which extends in a north-south direction

from Central Park to the river. These align with the emerging concepts of a Heritage Axis and an Arts and Cultural Axis in the City Centre Area Action Plan.

- 4.9 Six different character areas are identified – the Historic Core, Riverside (including Rivergate and Fengate), Midgate, Queensgate and North Westgate, the Station Quarter (including the Hospital Quarter), and the City Centre Residential Area. For each one, design objectives, principles and components are put forward. A high priority is given to implementation of schemes to improve Cathedral Square, Bridge Street, Long Causeway, Cowgate and Westgate, including the creation of an attractive new public space (St John's Square) on the site of the existing Corn Exchange building (Norwich Union House). Concept design sketches indicate possible design solutions based on the principles of the Strategy.
- 4.10 Landscape architecture and engineering practices will create the detailed designs for Cathedral Square and the area surrounding St John the Baptist Church, using principles within the Strategy, which will be the subject of further public consultation. Cathedral Square should be redesigned so that it becomes a piece of public art in its own right. Transformation of the Square could be completed by the summer of 2009.
- 4.11 The Strategy makes proposals for paving and other surfacing materials according to location and function; for drainage and utility services covers; street furniture; lighting; signage; water features; soft landscaping and public art. Issues of maintenance and management are addressed.
- 4.12 It will be important that the design and implementation of all works follows the principles of environmental sustainability, as this will help to achieve a 'distinctively Peterborough' public realm. A further important consideration will be design solutions that are inclusive, with ease of access for all.

Costs and Risks

- 4.13 The Strategy itself does not commit the Council or any other party to any expenditure, but there will be costs associated with each separate project. Budget estimates based upon the strategy have identified that the overall cost for the five phases of public realm implementation is expected to reach £11 - £13M. Compared to other public realms, such as the Streets and Spaces Scheme in Leicester at a cost of £16M for a similar sized area, Peterborough could be considered good value for money. So far, funding streams for the capital projects have been identified as predominantly GAF 3 (£4M), although there is the potential for strong partnership funding from EEDA, the Arts Council and the Council's growth fund. Once the project becomes live, the continuing management and maintenance requirements will be a revenue cost to the Council and the implications (i.e. whether there are revenue savings or revenue costs compared to the current situation) will need to be considered on a scheme-by-scheme basis.
- 4.14 There will be scope to negotiate for funds through planning obligations, where a proposed city centre development would have some impact on the public realm including, in particular changes to pedestrian, cycle or vehicular movements, or as part of the pooling of s106 monies, should an appropriate way of achieving this be agreed. However, there can be no certainty over the level of funding from this source, as it depends on the level of developer activity in the centre over the coming years.
- 4.15 The main risks to the project include unforeseen issues over statutory undertakers/utilities equipment and materials sourcing issues. Both have been addressed within the Strategy and will be taken forward in the implementation phase. Mitigation of these risks is possible through forward planning, having a clear delivery plan and undertaking comprehensive survey work.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Strategy was considered by Community Development Scrutiny Panel on 18 June 2008. Following discussions and questions, the Panel noted the report, agreed that it wished to be engaged with the project as it progressed and welcomed the opportunity to consider detailed designs and timescales in due course.
- 5.2 Throughout the project, consultation with stakeholders has occurred. To support and advise on the development of the Strategy, a delivery team consisting of PCC officers, Opportunity Peterborough staff and the consultants was engaged. From December to January consultation on the issues and opportunities for Peterborough was carried out as part of the evidence gathering stage of the project. Full public and stakeholder consultation on the strategy took place in May, and this included meetings with key bodies, such as the Peterborough Civic Society, Local Access Forum, St John the Baptist Church, the Peterborough Cycling Forum etc., as well as a public session at Queensgate. A presentation with question and answer session was held for a wide range of stakeholders, including local businesses, developers, environmental groups etc.
- 5.3 Attached at Annex B are the results of the public questionnaire on the Strategy. Attached at Annex C is a list of comments made along with responses. The great majority of the comments relate to potential individual schemes or the way in which public spaces could be used following implementation, and so do not necessitate any change to the overall strategy.
- 5.4 The Council Departments with a key interest in the fabric of the city centre public realm have been given a further separate opportunity to comment on the Strategy and no concerns have been raised. The Director of Environment and Community Services comments that sustainability needs to run through the scheme, from the type of materials used, to how it is lit and public art opportunities. The work should showcase our environment credentials so that it is clear to visitors. There should be lots of interesting and iconic public art. The corridors to and from the new Cathedral Square need to be upgraded as part of the scheme. This should include attractive, safe feeling corridors guiding walkers from car parks and the bus station to the heart of the city. If fountains are to be incorporated, we need to take into account water usage/wastage and power use. Comments from the Head of Culture have been incorporated into this report.
- 5.5 The city centre area extends across four wards (Central, East, West and Fletton). Councillors from these wards have been invited to comment on this report but no comments have been received.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 It is anticipated that Cabinet will recommend the Strategy to Council for approval. Schemes for enhancement of the public realm in accordance with the overall Strategy will then be progressed on an individual basis.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Strategy is recommended for approval as part of the package of measures which contribute to two of the Council's strategic priorities – to plan and deliver a safe, attractive and environmentally friendly city; and to make Peterborough a better place in which to live and work. It will contribute to the priority outcome of the Sustainable Community Strategy – Creating a safe, vibrant city centre and sustainable neighbourhood centres. Improvements to the public realm have also been demonstrated to contribute to the economic growth of cities, with measurable impact on surrounding property values.¹

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

¹ CABE 'Paved with gold – the real value of street design' June 2007

- 8.1 The alternative option is not to produce and approve a Public Realm Strategy. This was rejected because, if there was no strategy, the state of the public realm would continue to deteriorate; the quality of the environment in comparison to that of neighbouring cities would deter shoppers, tourists, visitors and businesses; individual works in the public realm would be carried out in an ad hoc fashion, producing an incoherent city centre; and the potential to capture contributions to public realm improvements through planning obligations would be reduced.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Public Realm Strategy will have implications for all sectors of society who use or would like to use publicly accessible places in the city centre. Consultations have taken place with organisations representing people with disabilities and with the Council's Access Officer, and this engagement will continue through specific delivery.
- 9.2 Legal Implications: There are no immediate legal implications flowing from the Peterborough Public Realm Strategy. However, the individual plans and detailed schemes will need to meet all legal requirements in terms of sustainable development, obtaining planning permissions, and managing any land transfers and contracts. It is envisaged that detailed legal analysis of each individual scheme will be required at an early stage, to include an analysis of title, legal restrictions and covenants, legal rights to be retained or established, planning status and the planning application procedures, contracts and agreements required to establish the schemes.
- 9.3 Financial Implications: There are no immediate financial implications flowing from the approval of the Peterborough Public Realm Strategy. The detailed financial implications of the projects contained within it will be assessed as individual schemes develop, and these will be incorporated into the Council's Capital and Revenue financial planning processes.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

Peterborough Public Realm Strategy, LDA Design, May 2008

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