

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Executive Director - Place

To: Full Council: 24 September 2020

Author/s: Simon Wood / Cassie Ruffell

Subject: Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone Grant

Purpose: To accept grant approval of £380,000 from Historic England as partnership funding to support the Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone over the four-year period 2020-2024

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the grant of £380,000 from Historic England to support the Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone be accepted
- 2) That the Executive Director of Place be given delegated authority to sign the contract with Historic England on behalf of the Council
- 3) That the Executive Director of Place be given delegated authority to manage the scheme and allocate grants in accordance with the terms of the contract and in consultation, where appropriate, with Historic England
- 4) That the Executive Director of Place be given authority to appoint on a temporary contract a Project Manager to oversee the scheme.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Breckland's Corporate Plan 2019-2023 supports and promotes activities that ensure 'our five market towns and their surrounding areas are great places in which to live, work, visit and invest'.
- 1.2 The Council has been active in supporting various initiatives and programmes that drive forward support for all five market towns. The Councils Market Towns Initiative and more recently support for development of the "Breckland's Five Market Towns" Programme have sought to assemble evidence and resources to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan aims and objectives in all aspects of business, community and environmental initiatives creating future vitality and sustainability of the towns.
- 1.3 In 2019 the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Programme was launched by Historic England resourced through funding from the Government "Town's Funds" that provided £45m for prospective bids in England. The Programme has as its goal "making the high street a more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and spend time."
- 1.4 Swaffham was proposed as a potential HSHAZ location after carrying out analysis under the HSHAZ Programme main aims and objectives. Several factors provided evidence that the Market Place in Swaffham exhibited a high level of matching characteristics to the heritage, environmental, social and economic themes of the HSHAZ and therefore provided a sound rationale for pursuing an external funding bid. As a result of this initial activity an Expression of Interest was submitted to Historic England in July 2019.

1.5 The following challenges and potential investment rationale for the town were presented as follows:

- Current research presenting issues of pollution from large number of vehicles driving through the Market Place.
- Neighbourhood Plan 2019 presenting plans for the Market Place improvements
- High level of vacant properties within the Conservation Area
- Past record of investment in initiatives focused on the Market Place presented a sound track record of interest in the historic built environment
- Evidence of partnership working across heritage and economic activities

1.6 Details of Swaffham HSHAZ

Following approval of the Expression of Interest in September 2019, the Council were required to submit a Programme Design Plan (business case) before 20 December 2019 (Appendix 1) and following a three-month national assessment period were provided with approved funds of £380,000 as part of a total programme cost of £697,900 to deliver the HSHAZ over a four-year period from 2020-2024.

The Programme Design Plan identifies the actions to be financed through the scheme and provides the detail of confirmed and partnership match funding that has been initially approved by the Council in Support of the Swaffham HSHAZ in February 2020.

1.7 Spend Profile

The spend profile has been amended from the original spend profile submitted as part of the business case in December 2019. The current period of Covid 19 pandemic has limited the potential start for the programme from a twelve-month first year period to three months in the first year from January to March 2021.

1.8 Contract with Historic England

The Programme contract has been reviewed by the Council's solicitor and subject to any further specific comments that are being sought from members will be agreed with HE for Breckland Council to be the lead body for the Swaffham HSHAZ Programme.

1.9 Stakeholder Engagement

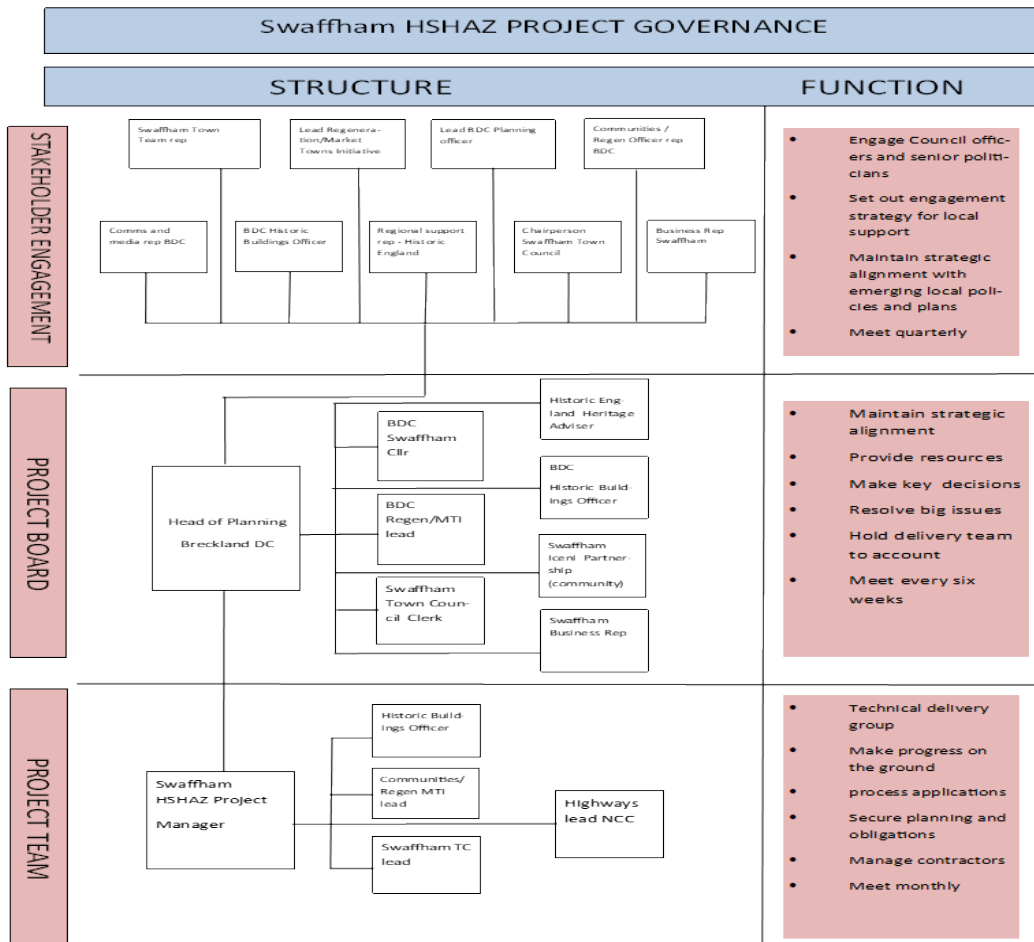
Community engagement is a central element of the HSHAZ. It has required both an initial statement of intent to engage and work with the community at Expression of Interest stage and from that the provision of Community Statement at full Programme Plan stage. The detail of this statement will be worked up into work streams once the Programme for Swaffham has commenced and therefore within the first three months from recruitment of the Project Officer. The full Community statement can be read at Section 5 of the Programme Plan in Appendix 1.

1.9.1 Cultural Programme strand

The Cultural Programme provides a significant component of the overall HSHAZ Programme. This strand relates to opportunity for the local partnerships to get additional funding (via Arts and Heritage Lottery funds) and support to sustain the long term community and infrastructure projects through the development and delivery of cultural projects that celebrate the heritage and uniqueness of the town.

1.10 Governance

The provisional governance structure that was submitted as part of the Programme Plan for the Swaffham HSHAZ is provided below. It is expected that the structure will be amended to accommodate the changing economic climate, levels of community engagement and input once the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic has been assessed locally.



1.11 Project Management

Swaffham HSHAZ Programme provides opportunity to deliver a wide range of activities and interventions that will support businesses on the High Street. The Programme will require close management and monitoring on a daily basis and continuous reporting to the Historic England as the accountable body over the four-year period that the Programme is active. Therefore, the recruitment of a Project Officer will be central to achieving both successful delivery of the Programme working with a wide range of stakeholders, but also ensuring that the processes and procedures required to adhere to the opportunities and constraints of the HSHAZ will be followed and met.

1.12 Timescales

The HSHAZ is a four-year programme that has an end date of March 2024. The current Covid 19 pandemic has reduced the four-year window to three years and three months. The detailed project delivery and spend profile is contained within section 1.7 of this report.

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 Do Nothing – This option would mean that Swaffham and the local partnership formed to undertake a programme of improvements for the High Street would not have the additional resources that the HSHAZ scheme could provide to progress them. Currently, this approach would leave Swaffham with a legacy programme document and therefore a plan that, if funding was to be achieved at a future date, could be updated and revised to meet the needs of the High Street.

2.2 Accept approved HSHAZ funds – Recommended option – This option would provide Swaffham High Street with £380,000 matched funding to take forward the HSHAZ Programme Plan. The option would provide a unique opportunity for the HSHAZ partnership to undertake a series of heritage improvements for Swaffham Market Place. The plan, as detailed in this report, would set a funding platform for part of the economic recovery of the retail and service sector in the town through funding improvements to the built infrastructure and grant support for property repairs and re-instatements of key historic features.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 The approved HSHAZ funding represents an opportunity to provide a co-ordinated plan of improvements for Swaffham Town centre that adds value to funding that has been identified for the town through the Council's Inclusive Growth Funding. Swaffham is an historic town centre that has many physical heritage attributes. The historic infrastructure has been assessed and improvements identified that, if taken forward, will sustain the appeal of the town to visitors and local shoppers and therefore actions that will be expected to play a part in the next phase of recovery from the period of lockdown and recent underinvestment.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

The benefits that will be derived from investment in the Swaffham HSHAZ Programme were articulated in a Logic Table for the Programme. This set out the stream of activities in relation to the resources and expenditure that will be required to deliver them set against the outputs and outcomes indicating the benefits delivered by the Programme.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

5.1.1 The project will support the Council's priority of protecting the District's environment.

5.2.1 Contracts

5.2.1 All Initiatives and activities will be procured, where appropriate, in accordance with Council Standing Orders and Public Procurement Regulations.

5.3 Corporate Priorities

5.3.1 The project will support the objectives of the current Breckland Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023, which are summarised as:

- Strive to ensure each of our five market towns and their surrounding areas are great places in which to live, work, visit and invest.
- Maximise the effectiveness of the Council's resources to the changing needs of local people and the challenges we face.

5.4 Crime and Disorder

5.5.1 The project will support the Council priority of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

5.5 Financial

5.5.1 Council funding of £100,000 for the project will be financed from the Inclusive Growth Fund that was approved by Council in February 2020. In-kind funding and private sector match funding for property improvements total equals £181,500 that in total with the Council's cash funding is 45.5% of the funding required to finance the Swaffham HSHAZ Programme.

5.5.2 Total funding commitments: - *£657,400

Historic England = *£351,691

Breckland Council (cash) = £100,000

Public other (cash TBC) = * £12,684

Breckland Council (in-kind) = *£35,500

Private Sector = £141,500

Swaffham Town Council (in-kind office use) = *£8,125

Planning– Conservation Area Plan = £7,900

* (reduced 1st year commitment inc)

5.5.3 The total spend per year is estimated as:

2020-21 = £13,500

2021-22 = £296,400

2022-23 = £263,500

2023-24 = £84,000

5.6 Health & Wellbeing

5.6.1 The project supports the Council's priority to support activities and partnerships which address key local physical and mental health, social care and wellbeing issues.

5.7 Reputation

5.7.1 The project strengthens the Council's reputation for working in partnership with different organisations to delivery effective services which meet local community needs.

5.7.2 Risk Management

5.7.3 The project includes a full programme RAID (Risk/Assumptions/Issues/Dependencies) controls to ensure that the allocated resource is managed effectively.

5.8 Safeguarding

5.9.1 The project will support the Council priority of 'ensuring that the national policies for protecting children and vulnerable adults are effectively implemented across all areas of our business and that safeguarding is at the forefront of all we do.'

5.9 Staffing

5.10.1 The proposed budget allocation will provide additional project management resource to support the project. This will be procured as detailed in section 1.11.

5.10.2 The Project Manager will be supported and managed by the Regeneration Manager supported by Historic Buildings Officer

5.10 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 Swaffham

Background papers:- none.

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 Programme Design Plan – Swaffham High Streets Heritage Action Zone