

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION

**DECISION OF: COUNCILLOR ASH CARTMAN, THE EXECUTIVE
MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE**

**WITH ADVICE FROM: DIRECTOR OF PLACE AND S151 OFFICER
FOR CORPORATE SERVICES**



DECISION NO: 20/21 DE 195

**SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF FULL BUSINESS CASE FOR GETTING BUILDING
FUND GRANT TOWARD CREATION OF WESTON GENERAL STORES**

This is an urgent key decision which has not been included in the forward plan. The Public notice procedure has been followed.

KEY DECISION: YES

REASONS: If successful, the Fund will attract £1.7m

BACKGROUND:

In June 2020 the Government made a call to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) for shovel-ready schemes which were able to spend by March 2022 as a way to stimulate economic recovery and help mitigate the impact that COVID-19 has had on employment levels. As a result, the Council worked with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to submit proposals for a number of projects across the area including a bid to help deliver the Weston General Stores (WGS) concept identified within the adopted Weston Placemaking Strategy.

The Council was subsequently advised that a sum of £1.7m had been allocated from the Getting Building Fund for the delivery of the WGS project as capital grant funding subject to approval of a full business case.

Work was already being carried out on a revised Business Plan for the Sovereign Centre and a high-level concept design for the WGS element. An instruction has now been issued to Inner Circle to help support the preparation of the full business case that will be required to secure the Getting Building Fund grant (approved under decision DE158, 2020/21). Approval is now sought to submit the full business case.

It will also be necessary to appoint consultants to prepare detailed design to RIBA Stage 4 in order to secure a contractor and deliver the project should the full business case be approved, and the funding released. Delegated approval will be sought for this appointment following an appropriate procurement exercise.

DECISION:

That officers submit the full business case to WECA to secure the £1,7m allocation from the Getting Building Fund

REASONS:

To take advantage of the offer of capital grant funding to help deliver the Weston General Stores element of the Sovereign Centre business plan

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

Do nothing: This option was discarded as it would either prevent the delivery of the Weston General Stores concept identified within the Weston Placemaking Strategy or require Council capital funding to deliver it.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding

The Getting Building Fund is a capital grant and can only be used to fund the capital expenditure costs associated with the Weston General Stores element of the Sovereign Centre business plan. If funding is approved the council will subsequently be required to increase its capital programme by £1.7m as required by Financial Regulations.

Costs

The detailed cost to deliver the Weston General Stores concept will be drawn together as part of the full business case and will include detailed design and delivery by contractors but will only be progressed on the basis that costs will be contained within the grant conditions associated with the Getting Building Fund of £1.7m.

Revenue related professional fees for early design, business case development and market testing will be charged to the Development & Environment revenue budget and funded from the Strategic Projects revenue reserve (ZXB405), as these would not be deemed to be capital in nature although, a review will be undertaken to determine if any of these may subsequently be recoverable through the Getting Building Fund.

LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS:

Paragraphs 3.32 to 3.37 of the Council's Financial Regulations require all bids for capital funding to be approved before submission to ensure transparency of decision-making and clarity subsequent implications.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Weston General Stores project will help promote distributed working in Weston, thus reducing the need to commute out of the town and encourage local expenditure in the economy. An increase in walking and cycling will have wellbeing and economic benefits for the town, but also increase the chances of achieving carbon neutrality.

The construction works to create the WGS space will be delivered in an environmentally sustainable manner.

CONSULTATION:

Full consultation took place as part of the recently adopted Weston Placemaking Strategy which includes the Weston General Stores concept.

RISK MANAGEMENT:

At this stage the principal risk is that the funding is not approved in which case the Weston General Stores may not progress as quickly as otherwise planned. This risk is mitigated by the appointment of Inner Circle to assist with the preparation of the full business case and through regular contact with WECA

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? NO

An EIA is not necessary for this specific decision

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

The Weston General Stores project will form part of the delivery of the adopted Weston Placemaking Strategy which expresses a new vision and ambition for the regeneration of Weston town centre, which is a long-standing commitment of the council, and supported within the current Local Plan and the Weston Town Centre SPD.

The objectives of the strategy, including Weston General Stores will cut across other strategic aims of the council including skills and employment, housing, climate, heritage, culture and transport. The intention is that the strategy brings together such aims and manifest them through interventions across the town centre or in relation to specific locations or sites.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Weston Placemaking Strategy

SIGNATORIES:


DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: Approved by email. Executive Member for Finance and Performance

Date: 18 November 2020.

Signed:  Director of Place

Date: 10 November 2020

Signed:  S151 Officer

Date: 17 November 2020