

AGENDA ITEM 10

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

29th OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

PARTNERSHIP SCHEMES IN CONSERVATION AREAS – MELTON MOWBRAY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members that English Heritage has now declined to 'match fund' a bid from Melton Borough Council to extend the Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSICA) for Melton Mowbray for an additional year and request that the funds dedicated are used unilaterally for their intended purpose.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Committee authorises the use of the £15,000 pounds previously earmarked to the PSICA to maximise potential funding for repair and restoration works within the town centre conservation area.**
- 2.2 **That the Committee delegates authority to the Head of Regulatory Services to sanction repair and restoration projects for buildings within the Melton Mowbray conservation area and authorise grant funding in conjunction with those projects.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

BACKGROUND TO THE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

- 3.1 Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is an English Heritage initiative designed to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. They are based on partnerships between English Heritage, local authorities as lead partner and other funding partners.
- 3.2 Partnership schemes make grants available to owners of individual properties, within a conservation area, who want to carry out repairs or other appropriate work. The funding comes from English Heritage, local authorities, the property owner and any other potential sources.
- 3.3 The role of partnerships schemes is to provide a framework for identifying problems and opportunities and to channel available resources to encourage remedial works, thus acting as a catalyst for wider regeneration.
- 3.4 The partnership takes the form of an agreement between English Heritage and the local authorities. The original Melton Mowbray Scheme was a partnership between English Heritage, Leicestershire County Council, Melton Borough Council and any other appropriate partners. To date Leicestershire County Council has acted as lead authority in this case and has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the scheme with this Council's regular input. Whilst it no longer are able to contribute financially to the scheme the County Council contributes Officer hours to the management and administration of the scheme.
- 3.5 Members may recall that a report was presented to this Committee in March of this year requesting funding following a request from English Heritage to extend the successful PSICA programme by a further year.

- 3.6 Whist recognising the success of the scheme and praising the works undertaken by officers from both this Council and Leicestershire County Council and detailing the positive change that has occurred within the Melton Mowbray conservation area, unfortunately English Heritage have since decided not to extend the scheme citing the reason that it no longer considers the Melton Mowbray conservation area to be at risk and has been removed from the 'At Risk Register'. Furthermore they state that their funds must be directed towards areas that are at risk.
- 3.7 There is however still active support for the scheme within the community and there are properties on the 'waiting list' for grant assistance. Should finances be available there would clearly be further benefit to the town centre and conservation area to continue the success to date.
- 3.8 Given that £15,000 has already been earmarked by Committee to the scheme for this financial year it is suggested that consideration be given to Committee to allow these funds to be utilised by the Head of Regulatory Services to continue grant funding of properties within the town centre. The continuing priority of English Heritage is to boost the social and economic resurgence of rural communities and thus secure a sustainable future for the historic environment by ensuring that the works funded are sympathetic to the character and historic importance of the area and will bring historic buildings back into use.
- 3.9 To date the operation of the scheme has ensured that English Heritage matched funds the joint contribution made to the scheme by both this Council and Leicestershire County Council. In effect this means that every £1 contributed by this Council has generated another £3 of partnership funding (£1 LCC & £2 EH), thus quadrupling potential funding for repair and restoration of historic buildings within the conservation area, which in turn will generate additional funding. However following the cessation of financial input from LCC, match funding in monetary terms is currently only available from this Council in conjunction with English Heritage

3.10 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.10.1 The scheme commenced at the start of the 2007/08 financial year initially for a three year period and has extended each year since as a result of its success. In that regard joint funding has, to date, made £550,000 available for the repair, restoration and refurbishment of town centre properties.
- 3.10.2 Grants for works to buildings have been offered at varying rates (50% to 90%) depending on the complexity and scope of the works. For example a grant to refurbish a shop front to incorporate traditional features such as pilasters, console brackets, stallrisers etc. would probably attract a grant of between 50% and 60% of the total cost. Should the applicant decide to include the repair of upper floor windows the level of grant would likely increase to 70%. However if the entire building frontage were to be refurbished including roof, rainwater goods etc will attract a grant of up to 90%.
- 3.10.3 During the life of the scheme forty-five town centre properties have benefitted from that funding. Notably, the former Arbon and Watts shop in Sherard Street, Off the Beaten Path in Park Road, the former P & M Fruiterers in Nottingham Street, 1,3 5 and 7 Leicester Street, and most recently the refurbishment of the former Game station on Market Place (now Loros) and Jasmine house on Sherard Street. Work has recently commenced on The Harborough Hotel.

- 3.10.4 In early March 2014 Officers from English Heritage visited Melton Mowbray to establish progress to date and ascertain where the grant monies were being targeted. It was noted by English Heritage that the historic town centre conservation area was clearly benefitting from property refurbishments and repairs especially the restoration and re-introduction of traditional shop frontages and that the PSICA programme continued to attract quality applications with associated match funding.
- 3.10.5 As a result English Heritage reinforced their support to the PSICA and were keen to continue offering funding in association with this Council and has therefore made additional funding available and requested that the scheme be extended for a further year.
- 3.10.6 However members will note (see sections 1.1 – 1.3 of this report) that English Heritage have subsequently declined to match fund the scheme for a further year

3.11 SUCCESS OF THE SCHEME

- 3.12 To date some forty-five town centre properties have benefited from grant assistance and several retail premises have undergone major restoration works. As a result several new businesses have been attracted to the town centre. The scheme has also proved a catalyst for refurbishment works to a further fourteen town centre properties, without any funding from the scheme. Several more have been redecorated.

3.13 SUPPORT FOR THE SCHEME

- 3.14 The Scheme has been well received by the community and has also been publicised in the local press. Various local amenity bodies have voiced their support for the scheme and its resultant improvements to the town centre.
- 3.15 In particular the Melton Mowbray and District Civic Society have been very supportive as witnessed by the following quotations:

" The Council is warmly to be congratulated on having the will and the imagination to adopt the PSICA scheme.

The effect of the refurbishments has been immense. There is no doubt that the appearance of the town is having a beneficial effect on the vibrancy of the town centre. It is an attractive place to visit. With the gradual disappearance of plastic replacement windows and doors, ugly disproportionate fascia and out of scale shop fronts, our Victorian and Georgian buildings are once again showing their colours.

It is a matter of pride that English Heritage recently used Melton as a national example of good practice, and it was obvious that they recognised the town as being well worth their support. It is obviously their aim, as it is ours, that the town will be fully restored.

Not all Councils have had the foresight to support it wholeheartedly as Melton has done. It is very important now to carry on, with the help of English Heritage and complete the job.

From every point of view - local pride of place - tourist attraction and impetus to the local economy, it is totally desirable."

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 PSICA has obvious linkages to the Councils priority of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre. It complements the existing physical improvements identified in the Town Centre Priority Plan and the detailed application may be able to facilitate some of the measures within it.
- 4.2 At a broader level, the scheme improves the council's efficiency and effectiveness by securing greater investment in the town centre from the Council's own contribution (see para 5.1 below). As such, it contributes to the ethos of 'doing what we do well' and 'doing what we do efficiently'.
- 4.3 Diverting the earmarked funding from PSICA to enable its similar use in grant aiding works to town centre properties will continue to meet these objectives

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The contribution from Melton Borough Council to PSICA has been £15000 per annum for the first six financial years and £10,000 in year 7. Due to the success of the scheme English Heritage was willing to extend it into an eighth year and therefore an additional £15,000 funding from MBC was earmarked from capital receipts by this Committee in March 2014.
- 5.2 Funding of £15,000 has already been allocated to PSICA by this Committee in March 2014. Diverting that funding for a similar use within similar parameters to the existing scheme will therefore have no financial or resource implications

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 The establishment of the partnership agreement is in accordance with Section 79 of the Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES


- 8.1 Promotional work associated with the scheme has been carried out to ensure no barriers are presented through the use of the literature concerned. The terms and conditions of the grants provided can include requirements to prevent any works that may hinder the mobility impaired and projects may come forward for grant aid that remove such obstacles (e.g new shopfronts deleting steps).

9.0 RISKS

9.1

Very High A				
High B				

Risk No.	Description
1.	Failure to secure English Heritage funding for the bid
2.	Failure to identify schemes suitable and eligible for funding.
3.	Failure of property owners to take advantage of the available funds, within the lifetime of the partnership

Significant C				
Low D			1,3	
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F			2	
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic
				
	Impact			

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken with Leicestershire County Council and English Heritage regarding the feasibility of the partnership.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 Melton Egerton, Melton Dorian, Melton Warwick and Melton Craven are the wards directly affected, although the benefits would apply to the entire community.

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