

Agenda item No. 8

Title:	Castle Place Multi Storey Car Park
Portfolio holder:	Cllr Graham Payne, Leader
Reporting officer:	Ian Gallin Corporate Director, John Follows Head of Property and Commercial Services
Key decision:	Yes

Purpose

This report sets out the latest position with regard to the redevelopment of Castle Place Shopping Centre and the multi-storey car park (MSCP). The main purpose of the report is to address the need for the Council to consider urgent improvement works to the MSCP, the scope of these works and the outline process for delivering these improvements.

Background

The Council has been working for a considerable time with the developer and owner of Castle Place Shopping Centre and St. Stephen's Place on a comprehensive redevelopment of both sites. The arrangements for this development included for both a short term lease for the Castle Place MSCP during which improvement works would be carried out by the developer and charging introduced.

Following this stage, agreement had been reached in principle for a longer lease to be entered into which would see the redevelopment of Castle Place Shopping Centre and the replacement of the existing facility with a new MSCP.

The Council has previously agreed to the arrangement to facilitate the development of these two key sites. A number of measures have been agreed in principle and put in place including sharing of car parking income to protect the Council's interests. In addition the view of the District Valuer has been obtained on these arrangements and a positive response received on the principles contained in the heads of terms for these proposals.

Unfortunately despite the best efforts of the Council to facilitate this arrangement the developer has failed on a number of occasions to achieve a start on site for the works or to progress and complete the required legal documentation.

The Council now needs to consider undertaking improvements to the MSCP to address the standard and safety of the car park for users.

Key issues

The exact scope of the works to the MSCP need to be finalised but subject to the outcome of a detail survey, final costs and the letting of relevant contracts for the work will include;

- Waterproofing of the top deck
- Repair to damaged pillars
- Sealing of the concrete to prevent further erosion and damage
- Improvements to the lighting levels throughout
- Improvement to signage
- Relining of the spaces
- Repainting to brighten the car park internally
- Improvements to stair cores

In addition we will also be considering;

- Additional barriers to strengthen the parapet
- Improvements to security including the introduction of CCTV coverage within the car park
- Options for closing and securing the car park outside of its main operating hours to improve security
- Improved cleansing of the car park on a regular cycle

Officers will also be working to ensure that benefits under the existing covenant are met, which include ensuring that the car park is free from shopping trolleys.

Officers are commissioning an up to date survey of the car park in order that essential works can be prioritised effectively. On completion of these works a final specification and timetable for completion of these works will be drawn up.

Timing of Works

Timing of the work is a further key consideration. Works to the car park are at this stage being considered for early in the new year. It is felt important that we do not attempt to commence works in the run up to Christmas as this would potentially have a negative impact on the retail trade in the town during this busy period.

The nature of the proposed works will almost certainly necessitate complete closure of the MSCP for a period of time. While every effort will be made to keep this time to a minimum and officers will investigate alternatives, Cabinet is advised that a period of complete shut down will probably be required.

It is also important that we maintain an open dialogue with DC Leisure who operate the Leisure Centre at Castle Place on behalf of the Council. Closure of the car park will have a negative impact on the business and user numbers. It is important that we make every effort

to phase the work so that this impact is minimised. The first quarter in any new year is the busiest time in terms of usage and membership sign up. There remains the likelihood of the Council being required to compensate DC Leisure for potential loss of business. Officers will work with DC Leisure to minimise this potential impact.

Effect on strategies and codes

It is extremely disappointing that the protraction and delays in achieving the comprehensive redevelopment of both St. Stephen's Place and Castle Place in support of the wider Transforming Trowbridge objectives and commitment to town centre regeneration as highlighted in the Corporate Plan has led the Cabinet to consider alternative proposals for addressing the condition of the MSCP.

Improving this asset and important facility within Trowbridge is in line with Council objectives.

Risk Management Implications

The Council needs to actively manage the maintenance and improvements to the MSCP to address potential health and safety issues.

The detailed survey will identify the prioritisation of works to address Health and Safety and risk management issues.

Finance and performance implications

Final costs and prioritisation of works are still required. An initial budget figure of £450,000 has been estimated for the works, subject to the survey work, final specification and tendering. Further work will need to be carried out on the final details to maintain costs within this overall figure.

This figure is estimated at this stage to be sufficient to be able to carry out the majority of works listed, but is of course subject to the detailed survey and tendering process. The Council may also need to consider in the costing of these works the potential for compensation payments to DC Leisure for loss of business depending on the final timing, phasing of works.

The budgeting for these works from current and future years budgets are addressed in reports on the agenda for this meeting.

Legal and human rights implications

A covenant is in place which prohibits the Councils from charging for use of the MSCP. The covenant also provides some benefits for the Council in ensuring that access is maintained and that the activities of the shopping centre do not negatively impact on the operation of the car park. Officers will be establishing these in detail and ensuring that these benefits are enjoyed by the Council and users of the car park.

Next Steps

The next steps are to commission a detailed survey of the car park to establish the exact final scope and program of works. Health and Safety works will need to be prioritised within the overall program of works to the MSCP.

On completion of the survey the final schedule will be drawn up and the work tendered as appropriate.

As noted we will also be maintaining an active dialogue and working with DC Leisure to minimise the impact of these works on the leisure centre.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- Agree and support the process as outlined in this report for maintenance and improvement works to the MSCP
- Instruct officers to work with DC Leisure on minimising the negative impact on the operation of the leisure centre
- Agree that the final specification and timing for the works is delegated to the Head of Property and Commercial Services in consultation with the Leader.

Key decision box

Statement of reason for key decision	Expenditure to improve and maintain an important town centre facility and asset.
Options considered and rejected	The Council has worked on an option for the private sector to lead on this work as part of a major regeneration of this area. Unfortunately this work has suffered from numerous setbacks and delays and now requires direct action by the Council.
Date of implementation	Works to the car park will not proceed until the new calendar year. Survey work, which is not specifically subject to the key decision, will start as soon as practically possible but will not be within five days of the meeting of Cabinet.

