

**CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET 16 DECEMBER 2014**

Background Papers, if any, are specified at the end of the Report

CHESHAM WELLBEING UPDATE

Contact Officer: Martin Holt 01494 732055

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) To approve the provision of £10K to The Backs lighting project.**
- b) To approve the provision of £3K towards funding an economic study**

Relationship to Council Objectives

*Deliver cost effective, customer focused services
Work towards safer and healthier local communities
Strive to conserve the environment and promote sustainability*

Implications

- (i) This is a key decision in the Forward Plan*
- (ii) Within the policy and budgetary framework*

Financial Implications

The services will be delivered within existing budgets.

Risk Implications

The lighting to 'The Backs' and High Street gap analysis projects would support the authority in working to achieve two of its key priorities - promoting the good health of local people and working with partners to make the District a safer place to live and work

Equalities Implications

None

Sustainability Implications

Improving lighting to The Backs with an LED system would demonstrate community leadership in relation to reducing Carbon emissions and improving the area to enable improved walking access to the station. The impact would be to reduce the reliance on car use

in Chesham and improve the local air quality.

Report

- 1 The Chesham Wellbeing Project seeks to target the Chesham Community and has been set up following the government's survey which identified Chesham as an area that had become increasingly deprived. The index of multiple deprivation focussed on seven areas;
 - a. income,
 - b. employment,
 - c. health,
 - d. skills/training,
 - e. built environment,
 - f. housing and
 - g. crime.
- 2 The project is being undertaken as a partnership initiative led by the County Council in association with; NHS, Bucks Business First, the Town and District Councils and Thames Valley police
- 3 Projects have been undertaken to improve young people's opportunities to access work, and to enable support to those claiming benefits or to lone parents on income support.
- 4 As a partnership several agencies have taken the initiative to relocate services in the upstairs area of the Chess Medical Centre. This now locates the Family Resilience Team, Lone Parent Advisers from the Job Centre (removing the stigma of a trip to the Job Centre), Healthy Minds and other relevant professionals to create a multi-agency hub, enabling support to single parents.
- 5 Other projects such as the Green Deal Communities Fund, the repair of the Chesham culvert and the work to improve educational attainment at Newtown school may also be seen as contributing to this project.
- 6 The Council's support provided to the Word War I commemorations; the Cycle Tour of Britain and their community impact in Chesham also contributed to the delivery of the project and engaged the community in celebrating local diversity.
- 7 The community development activity undertaken by the Council has encouraged greater community engagement and for example supported actions to reduce social isolation.

Built Environment Strand

- 8 The Built Environment Strand of the project ensures that a focus remains on the tangible as well as the intangible aspects of improving the wellbeing of residents of Chesham. The street lights along 'The

Backs' (the path running alongside the train track towards Waterside) and the high street have been provisionally agreed as being a key initiative by partners to the project.

- 9 There is a perception of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour along The Backs which is not helped by the current state of repair of some of the physical aspects, including the lighting. The Backs is a very useful and heavily used asset connecting the train station to a large part of the town, however it requires this modernisation to support residents walking across town without the fear of crime.
- 10 Some initial work has been undertaken to assess the condition of the streetlights along The Backs and it has been determined that 17 columns need completely replacing and 39 lanterns will need to be replaced with more efficient LED lighting, which would reduce its long term revenue costs and reduce Carbon emissions.
- 11 Along with some community work to tidy up the hedgerows and removal of graffiti this will go some way to improving the aesthetics of the area and thus improving its reputation and increasing its use. By assisting in reducing the fear of crime people may be more willing to choose healthier lifestyles and walk to the town or railway station which would have the benefit of reducing local car journeys which adversely impact on the Air Quality Action Zone. The total cost of the work to improve the lighting is £34,000.
- 12 At the time of writing Transport for London were being approached by CDC about joining the partnership to improve the area by improving the railway's assets and thus helping to make the whole area more attractive. CDC is also contacting Paradigm to assess the opportunity to access grant funding to support a community clean up.
- 13 As part of the partnership working, the County Council has agreed to contribute £14,000 to this work and the continuing project management time.
- 14 The partnership has requested that Chiltern District Council along with Chesham Town Council will support this project by contributing £10,000 each to reach the £34,000 cost.
- 15 Should Chiltern District Council seek to contribute £10k to The Backs project this would be met through the Community Safety Reserve.
- 16 The Community Health and Housing PAG supported this initiative

The High Street

- 17 A further project to build on the work of Better Chesham has been considered by the Chesham Wellbeing Partnership, with the aim of

encouraging new businesses and a diverse range of retail outlets to Chesham.

- 18 Whilst some good initial work has been undertaken by Better Chesham regarding the needs of Chesham Town users. Deeper and broader work needs to be completed by an independent body to validate and enhance that work so that changes within the high street can be supported by local government partners and the business community alike.
- 19 A proposal has been received from an external organisation with a wealth of experience in working with towns to improve their footfall, reputations and attractiveness. The study would consider barriers to trade and access and improvements to the town centre, marketing to visitors and the development of a sustainable local economy.
- 20 The company has worked with over 300 towns across England so has extensive experience in this work. The cost of their proposal is £8,400.
- 21 Chiltern District Council has been asked to contribute £3K to this study which would be drawn from the existing community development budget.
- 22 The Community Health and Housing PAG supported this initiative

Background Papers: None
