

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **MAIDENHEAD TOWN CENTRE REJUVENATION**

Date: 27 August 2009

Member Reporting Councillors Burbage and Mrs Knight

Officer Reporting: Tim Slaney, Head of Planning and Development, extn 5712

Wards affected: Maidenhead (Oldfield, Belmont, Boyn Hill)

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Outline progress on the overall regeneration for Maidenhead Town Centre;
- Confirm the way forward for the rejuvenation programme; and
- To seek endorsement for the Public Realm Strategy.

1.2 There is a short and longer term programme to improve Maidenhead town centre and ensure the advantages it has (location, transport links, desirable commercial destination and attractive surroundings) are fully utilised. Whilst the last year has seen difficult economic circumstances there is a clear project plan to ensure that a programme is in place to enhance the town centre now and be ready and able to lead the town centre when further opportunities arise.

1.3 Since the establishment of the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead (PRoM) in 2008, there has been significant progress in setting the vision for the town centre and an action plan for rejuvenation. The Vision for Maidenhead adopted by Cabinet in January 2009 has provided the launch pad for further activities which have been progressed during the year. The approach towards the planned development of the town centre on a 'whole town' basis is now part of an emerging Area Action Plan for the town centre. This Plan will provide the basis for site developments to proceed in a co-ordinated and agreed way, for the Council to lead where appropriate with its own land holdings, and with the support of the community and other interests.

1.4 The Maidenhead Waterways Framework, approved in June, provides the basis for assessing new development proposals along the waterway corridor with the objective of bringing water closer to the town centre – a key objective of the rejuvenation of the town centre. A Planning Brief approved in December 2008 lays the foundation for a successful mixed use development scheme for the Broadway Triangle area.

1.5 The recent completion of a Public Realm Strategy, overseen by PRoM, will ensure that as the prospect for new development emerges the whole town centre can be upgraded in a co-ordinated fashion. The existence of a positive and pro-active framework for development and other works, with known expectations and

requirements, acts as a marketing tool. Through providing certainty, this will ensure that Maidenhead has the ability to attract business and trade to the benefit of the whole community. The rejuvenation programme will also ensure that improvements to the town centre transport infrastructure are considered, particularly given the stimulus provided by Crossrail and the prospect for a major improvement scheme at Maidenhead station. Liaison with Crossrail and Network Rail is already taking place to ensure plans for the future of this key area are aligned.

- 1.6 There is also a vibrant programme of short term measures to improve the town centre that forms part of the rejuvenation agenda. This covers a range of activities from the re-use of empty shops and their visual enhancement to immediate impact themes such as events, carnivals and public realm improvements. A sample panel and street furniture prototypes will be in situ during the autumn for public comment.
- 1.7 Much of the good progress on the rejuvenation has been achieved through the deliberations of all members of PRoM and the overall drive of its Chairman. With cross party support from within the Council and a membership that extends across a range of expertise and passion for the town, the importance of PRoM and the work it does is pivotal in ensuring that the progress in finding ‘agreed solutions’ is maintained.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) Progress on the rejuvenation of Maidenhead Town Centre be noted.**
- ii) The Public Realm Strategy be adopted as a basis for town centre improvements.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
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Residents will be able to understand the scale of change proposed for the town centre and influence the programme of works being undertaken, and have a greater degree of certainty over what is likely to happen.
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3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The following sections of the report set out the following:

- The need for rejuvenation of Maidenhead Town Centre
- The role of PRoM (Partnership for Rejuvenation of Maidenhead)
- The work of PRoM to date
- The way forward

The need for rejuvenation of Maidenhead Town Centre

- 3.1.2 There has been a long held desire to improve the town centre both in terms of what it offers and its physical appearance. There is a strong manifesto commitment from the Council for the rejuvenation of the town centre.
- 3.1.3 The need to pro-actively lead the process and have clear objectives has been accepted corporately as being vital to the success of the rejuvenation. The past attempts to achieve the same goal can be said to have been more piecemeal, with a less holistic approach to town centre rejuvenation than that now being undertaken which seeks to ensure both short and medium term requirements are taken into account.
- 3.1.4 Ten Strategic Objectives for regenerating the town have been identified in the Vision for Maidenhead document; these include: introducing greenery; improving the identity and image of the town; and, optimising accessibility. These objectives will result in significant change and an opportunity to raise the quality of the town centre and ensure its long term competitiveness and sustainability.

The role of PRoM

- 3.1.5 Recognising the importance of being pro-active and having clear objectives resulted in the administration, with opposition support, setting up PRoM as a steering group charged with overseeing the rejuvenation and providing agreed solutions for the town centre. PRoM was first established in December 2007 but was formally launched in March 2008.
- 3.1.6 PRoM has a total of 10 members comprising an independent Chairman, Councillors from both parties and representatives from local organisations and business interests, with support from the Council's professional Officers. Since it was launched, PRoM meetings have taken place on a regular basis.
- 3.1.7 PRoM effectively operates as an advisory body to the Council, providing ideas, overseeing work commissioned by the Council and making recommendations.

The work of PRoM to date

- 3.1.8 PRoM is involved in devising and advising on the 'planning strategy' for Maidenhead Town Centre as part of the Local Development Framework. However, rejuvenation is not simply about 'future planning strategy', and PRoM is actively encouraging other measures. The package together ensures that Maidenhead town centre improves both in the short and longer term. Appendix 1 illustrates the activities taking place (APPENDIX 1 – Activities for Maidenhead Rejuvenation). Taking these areas of work in turn:

Strategy

- 3.1.9 **A Vision for Maidenhead Town Centre (the Vision document)** – In January 2009 Cabinet approved this document which sets out the context and future strategy for the town centre rejuvenation; it sets out the vision, 10 strategic objectives (grouped according to the three themes of 'natural environment', 'physical environment and

accessibility', and 'economic, social and management') and an action plan to meet these objectives. The public consultation exercise showed the majority of respondents were supportive of the approach.

- 3.1.10 **Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)** – Following PRoM's initiative and the adoption of the Vision document, work is currently under way on drawing up an AAP for Maidenhead that will set out a master plan for the town centre as a whole, as well as guidance for key sites to bring about the regeneration of the town centre. This document will be a formal 'planning' one which will have primacy when determining the type and acceptability of developments in the town centre.
- 3.1.11 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to date including a workshop that was held on 10th June 2009. The workshop was very successful with approximately 50 stakeholders in attendance. In two breakout sessions the stakeholders discussed and debated 'Town Wide Themes' and 'The Opportunity Areas for new Development'. The current stage is producing options for the rejuvenation (e.g. should the town centre boundary go south of the railway line or not, are tall buildings appropriate in certain locations and if so to what degree). These questions will be subject to public consideration as will the final preferred options, ensuring the public and other interested parties are able to comment and shape the Plan.
- 3.1.12 **Public Realm Strategy** – The spaces and streets between buildings make up the 'public realm'. The quality of streets and the pedestrian environment together with the ease of finding the way around the town centre all affect its attraction. In order to improve the town centre's public realm, urban design consultants BDP assessed the current quality of the public realm, held a workshop with stakeholders and as a result have produced a strategy. The main features of the strategy are as follows:
- Promote a people-friendly town.
 - High quality paving materials should be used, with suggestions given. The strategy promotes a refined palette avoiding too many variations and patterns, given the relative quality of some of the buildings and the AAP requirement for new development to be of high quality architecture.
 - Street furniture should be contemporary and elegant, placed in appropriate locations and should not clutter the public realm.
 - Lighting should be used at focal areas, pedestrian spaces and gateways.
 - Public art should be used and comes in many forms, from surface materials to lighting to sculptures. Ideas are given to where public art could be used.
 - There should be more planting and street trees at strategic locations which are outlined.
 - Events such as Carnivals and Farmers Market are important and sufficient space should be identified in the public realm to accommodate these. Locations are also indicated as to where such events should be.
 - Regular cleaning and maintenance of the public realm is crucial.

3.1.13 The Public Realm Strategy has been considered by PRoM and agreed as a basis for securing a co-ordinated approach to the town centre. Copies of the final strategy document will be available in the members' and group rooms. Cabinet is requested to adopt the Public Realm Strategy as a way of coordinating future improvements:

- to ensure developments provide a public realm that is of quality and co-ordinates with the rest of the town centre;
- for replacement and maintenance purposes; and
- to ensure s106 contributions are robustly captured (having an adopted strategy provides a much firmer basis for negotiation for contributions toward improvements).

3.1.14 **Public Realm Implementation** - As specified in the Public Realm Strategy, a key part of achieving a high quality public realm is the palette of materials used in its creation. Cabinet approved on 28 May the laying out of a sample panel of materials of some 45m² to be constructed in a section of the High Street, which PRoM endorsed. The panel will comprise a variety of paving slabs, street furniture and sign prototypes, along with 'accents' of different colours and textures and local people will be asked for their views. In addition, it is proposed that a display board with a new map of the town be erected near to the Station Approach. The sample panel and street furniture prototypes will be in situ during autumn 2009. Furthermore, following the testing and agreement on the sample panel, Cabinet also approved the production of a materials masterplan setting out the type of paving from the agreed palette that could be used across the town centre.

3.1.15 It is important to reach a consensus on the palette of materials before it is rolled out across the town centre as funding becomes available, or securing it through development schemes or as part of other improvements highlighted in the current capital programme, for example highway improvements.

3.1.16 **Maidenhead Waterways Framework** – This planning brief was considered by Cabinet in June 2009 and adopted. Its preparation was subject to public consultation. Its purpose is to aid the restoration of the waterway by ensuring that future planning policy and the design of new developments along the waterway corridor contribute to the overall aim of improving the waterway and avoid obstacles to the delivery of the emerging Maidenhead Waterway Project. 'Water' is considered to be a key objective of the rejuvenation of the town centre.

3.1.17 **Other plans, strategies and consultation** – A planning brief to guide development on the Broadway Triangle site has been adopted by the Council and a Borough wide Traffic Model is 'feeding' into the work on the AAP. Furthermore, at the end of January this year, a workshop was held with young people to seek their view on the town centre and regeneration plans; there was strong support for the rejuvenation proposals and their comments are informing the Town Centre AAP.

Other rejuvenation work

3.1.18 As stated above, a key part of the programme for rejuvenation is also to ensure there are activities and improvements taking place to address current issues, such as

vacant shops and the need for greater footfall in the town. Measures include:

- A Vacant Shop initiative whereby 'wraps' will be placed across shop windows to improve the appearance of the shopping area during the current economic situation which is presenting challenges in attracting retail interest. This has been implemented with the first scheme in place this month on the former MVC unit in the High Street.
- Maidenhead town centre has a vibrant events programme managed through Maidenhead Town Partnership (MTP). Regular free events are held in the town throughout the year with highlights including Maidenhead Carnival, Christmas Lights Switch-On and Maidenhead at the Movies. Over the past three years the event calendar in the town has grown significantly and is gaining regular media coverage. High Street markets are also managed by MTP, these result in positive feedback from both traders and retailers in the town and create a lively atmosphere.
- MTP is also working closely with landlords and letting agents to actively market vacant units to businesses who have expressed an interest in the town. Recently a temporary let was secured on a premises on the High Street which has been vacant for over two years. The landlord is now saving £25,000 per annum in business rates due to the help provided by the partnership. MTP are also investigating the temporary use of vacant premises for art exhibitions or other community uses. A local art student has been matched up with a landlord and is due to exhibit her art work in a vacant unit over the coming months.
- MTP supports the work of PRoM and regularly liaises with the group regarding short term initiatives in the town whilst future plans are being developed. Regular presentations are given to groups such as the Maidenhead and District Chamber of Commerce to ensure local businesses are aware of the developments of PRoM. The Town Partnership Environment Action Group which consists of council officers and representatives from the business community monitors the short term action plan in the town centre and identifies any street scene issues which need to be addressed.

The way forward

- 3.1.19 The rejuvenation of Maidenhead is a complex project with many strands. To date considerable time and energy has been invested by PRoM and the Council in raising the profile of the rejuvenation and taking a pro-active role in providing the framework for it. As a result, momentum has picked up with additional work coming to the fore. Whilst this is a healthy part of the rejuvenation agenda, there is a need to continue to draw on all the various elements under one management. By ensuring there is an understanding of how each part fits within the wider picture, the Council in its leadership role can achieve a successful rejuvenation.
- 3.1.20 Costs to date have been contained within existing budgets. However, in order to sustain the rejuvenation process, additional financial investment is required. This is not unusual and is consistent with all regeneration programmes as they advance; advice received from ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications) and 4ps (Local

Government project delivery specialists) in their booklet 'Regeneration Guide' confirm this, as does discussions with others who have been through this process. Finances are being made available to take the rejuvenation to the next stage, via the Capital process. For example, the capital budget for Maidenhead Environmental improvements is £200k for 2009/10, with an indicative budget of £400k for 2010/11 and £400k for 2011/12. This includes finance to underpin specialist advice (e.g. Legal, property and planning) as well as physical works to improve the environment of the town centre.

3.1.21 In terms of the future rejuvenation programme, the main projects and key milestones are set out below:

Project	Key Milestones
Area Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Newsletter summer 2009 • Preferred Options Consultation autumn 2009 • Submit AAP document to Secretary of State & Examination spring 2010 • Adoption of AAP summer 2010
Public Realm Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the Strategy summer 2009 • Construct sample panel and street furniture prototypes including consultation autumn 2009
Traffic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing of the model and results summer/autumn 2009

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Continue moving the rejuvenation programme forward within existing budgets and Capital available		<p>Revenue will continue to be carefully managed to ensure that any pressures arising are contained within broader budgets.</p> <p>Capital: Additional funding through Capital bids to the sum of £800,000 for years 2010/11 and 2011/12 to secure an ongoing programme of work will ensure that investment in town centre continues.</p>
2.	Do Nothing	If the programme is reduced or halted the town will decline, as investors and the public have less reason to visit or invest.	<p>Revenue: There is potential for increased costs through maintenance of the existing public realm.</p> <p>Capital: If the current programme is halted the £800K indicative would be released for other policy initiatives. If the whole rejuvenation does not progress a number of capital initiatives will return to the agenda including waterproofing of Nicholson's car park which was estimated to cost £200K.</p>

4.2 Risk assessment

4.2.1 The main risks to the progression of the rejuvenation have been assessed and fall into the following three main areas:

- The lack of an up to date and credible evidence base to justify the overall development strategy for the town centre. Mitigation - Studies have been commissioned to provide the evidence required to underpin the strategy. In particular, retail and employment study updates are being carried out to justify the eventual land use proposals for the opportunity sites within the town centre which have been identified through the 'Vision' work, and detailed transport modelling work for the Borough is progressing which will show the impacts of alternative development options.
- The risks of proceeding with an Area Action Plan in advance of the completion of work on the Core Strategy as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Mitigation - Justification for proceeding with the Area Action Plan has been discussed and agreed with GOSE officers and the plan now forms a part of the submitted Local Development Scheme (the detailed project plan for the delivery of the LDF).
- The risks to the delivery of the rejuvenation programme and the higher maintenance costs associated with the Public Realm Strategy through lack of funding and investment. Mitigation - The financial risks have been addressed at two levels, firstly by establishing a funding package which will address the short and medium term needs for the strategy and implementation plans including appropriate bids through the capital prioritisation process. Secondly, the financial uncertainties of the prospective redevelopment scheme for the central shopping area have been addressed through ongoing discussions with ING. In relation to maintenance costs and the Public Realm Strategy any s106 received will take into account revised costs.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1.1 To date there has been formal public consultation on the Waterways Framework and the Broadway Triangle Planning Brief. In addition, there have been workshops, namely:

- with young persons at which views were sought on their ideas for rejuvenation of the town
- with local residents to establish their views on how to improve Maidenhead's public streets and spaces (i.e. the public realm)
- with local residents, developers and other organisations on the Area Action Plan

5.12 Future consultations identified at this stage are:

- a newsletter in summer 2009 covering all aspects of Maidenhead rejuvenation from further consultation on the Area Action Plan, and an update on other projects namely the sample panel and street furniture prototypes, window wraps and events in the town.

- Consultation in autumn 2009 on the Preferred Option for the Area Action Plan.
- Consultation on the sample panel and street furniture prototypes in the autumn 2009.

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The report was circulated via email to all the members of the Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as agreed with the Chair. No comments were received.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓

Background Papers:

Vision for Maidenhead Town Centre – Final Report of PRoM, January 2009

Public Realm Strategy

4ps 'Regeneration Guide'

