

Funding for Paving in front of The Playhouse

Report of the:	Interim Head of Planning
Contact:	Viv Evans
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annexe 1: Plan of proposed area to be paved – Surrey County Council Drawing no. SP0007-0006 – “Construction Drawings Playhouse Junction – Playhouse Footway Area”
Other available papers (not attached):	Report to, and Minutes of, Strategy and Resources Committee, 27 June 2017.

Report summary

This report seeks approval for an additional contribution of £60,000 to extend new paving across the Borough Council owned forecourt to the Playhouse and the adjacent footway in order to improve the quality and appearance of the public realm in this area and enhance the approach to the theatre.

Recommendation (s)

That the Committee approve the allocation of £60,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding for the paving of the Playhouse forecourt and adjacent footway (the area indicated on the attached plan) to a specification matching that in South Street and around the Playhouse Junction.

1 Implications for the Council’s Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 Delivery of the Plan E highways scheme is a key part of the Borough Council’s Plan E Town Centre Area Action Plan. It supports the Council’s key priorities.
- 1.2 It will deliver substantive operational, safety and visual improvements to the Western part of the town centre and thereby enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre in a period of uncertainty in the retail sector nationally.

Strategy and Resources Committee

17 April 2018

- 1.3 Additional investment in the area of the Playhouse will further enhance the town centre and specifically improve the approach to the building and its appearance to passers-by.

2 Background

- 2.1 The background to funding for the Plan E highway and public realm improvements is set out in the Strategy and Resources Committee report and minutes from the meeting held on 27 June 2017.
- 2.2 There are no changes to the funding of the scheme since that report was considered and Members decided not to make any additional contribution at that time.
- 2.3 The area in front of the Playhouse is mostly in Borough Council ownership although the footway adjacent to the road is part of the public highway. Inclusion of this area in the Plan E highway and public realm improvements was not part of the original Surrey County Council scheme.
- 2.4 The existing paving is in a poor state and has become uneven and cracked. The falls are no longer as originally laid and this results in puddling. The overall appearance is “tired” and does not set-off the theatre in the best light at a time when the Playhouse is likely to be in the spotlight with the Satisfied Eye International Film Festival set to take place there in October. There is an opportunity, whilst contractors are on site improving the public highway, to rebuild the forecourt in a specification consistent with the new highway works and to continue this up to the kerb-line to achieve a “seamless” appearance.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposal is to use the same materials and specification as agreed for the rest of the town centre works, using concrete blockwork laid on sand and constructed with a sub-base sufficient to withstand use over a long period.
- 3.2 The area proposed to be added is shown on the attached plan. At present it is agreed that the Plan E works would come up to and include the new Ashley Avenue crossing point. It was not, however, envisaged that it would continue along Ashley Avenue whereas the extent now shown on the attached drawing carries the paving of the highway along to the pedestrian entrance to the Ashley Centre car park and “washes” right up to the façade of the Playhouse.
- 3.3 The existing uneven concrete slabs would be entirely removed, the sub-based re-laid and the surface finished in concrete blockwork using the “Woburn Original” rustic red blend agreed for the rest of the town centre and already partly laid in South Street. Brass studs would be fixed to delineate the boundary between the public highway and the Borough Council’s land.

Strategy and Resources Committee

17 April 2018

- 3.4 The proposed works would be laid to fall correctly to gullies that will carry surface water away and the patterning of the blockwork would be laid in a pattern indicated on the attached drawing.
- 3.5 The design will respect, retain and work around the existing sculpture and tree.
- 3.6 In view of the pending film festival, Surrey County Council would be requested to undertake the works prior to this event.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 There are existing uncommitted funds available from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). However, given the scale of infrastructure demand in the Borough, the funding should be carefully allocated according to the priorities identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Plan E is already a commitment from CIL and the highway and public realm works associated with the Borough's Town Centre Area Action Plan are among the top priorities already identified.
- 4.2 The allocation of an additional £60,000 to Plan E would not significantly prejudice the delivery of any other priorities and would enable a significant improvement to a scheme that already qualifies for the use of CIL.
- 4.3 ***Chief Finance Officer's comments:*** *The Council holds funds from CIL totalling £5.23 million as at 31 March 2018. This is divided into three pots, 80% for strategic local infrastructure projects; 15% as a Local Fund; and a 5% monitoring fee. £476k of the strategic infrastructure pot is already committed to Plan E; allocating an additional £60,000 would leave an uncommitted balance in the strategic infrastructure pot of £3.65m.*
- 4.4 *Another report on this agenda is seeking approval to use £771k of CIL funding for two further infrastructure schemes, Epsom Cemetery Extension and Lower Mill Weir. If that funding is agreed, this will further reduce the uncommitted fund balance to £2.88m.*

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 The County Council will need to secure the Borough Council's consent to undertake work on the Borough Council's land.
- 5.2 ***Monitoring Officer's comments:*** *The funding for the proposal meets the CIL requirements. Consent to carry out works will need to be granted to the County before works are carried out.*

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 None for the purposes of this report

Strategy and Resources Committee

17 April 2018

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The overall Plan E highway and public realm improvements have been conceived and designed in partnership with Surrey County Council who are the principal partners and responsible for delivering the scheme. Funding has been provided by Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 7.2 The works to the town centre have been developed as part of Plan E Town Centre Area Action Plan in consultation with the local business community and all key stakeholders in the town centre. They are part of the Borough Council's commitment to improving the town centre for the benefit of all.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 The consequence of not proceeding with the re-paving are that the poor quality of the existing paving may eventually harm the prospects for the Playhouse, impair the reputation of the Council and result in safety hazards to users.
- 8.2 The implementation of the works could cause minor disruption to the operation of the Playhouse in the short-term but this can be managed and any low-level harm to the business will be greatly outweighed by the longer-term benefits.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 The Playhouse forecourt needs to be re-paved at some time in the near future and this has been brought into sharper focus with the film festival set to take place there in October. There is sense in carrying out the work whilst contractors are engaged on the adjacent highway and designing it to blend with the new refreshed public realm in the town centre. The funding is available from CIL and commitment of £60,000 for this purpose would be a sound investment in the fabric of the town and in the future of the Playhouse; a valued community asset.

Ward(s) affected: Town Ward;