

| Report of | Meeting | Date |
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| (Introduced by Executive Member Public Sector Reform & Economic Development) | Council | Tuesday, 28 September 2021 |

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| Is this report confidential? | No |
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| Is this decision key? | Not applicable |
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Update on Temporary Civic Square Proposals

Purpose of the Report

1. A brief overview of the civic square temporary proposals for members to consider

Recommendations to Council

2. To note the temporary proposals for the civic square.

Executive summary

3. It has been an aspiration of the Council to bring forward a Civic Square on the site opposite the Town Hall on Market Street since the proposal in the 2016 Public Realm and Town Centre Masterplan. The former Oak House and Royal Oak site (and associated shops along Cleveland Street) were acquired in March 2016. The Buzz Bingo site was surrendered back to the Council in July 2020.
4. The Oak House and Royal Oak site was developed into a temporary car park as part of the enabling works for Market Walk Extension in 2018. Negotiations were held with Buzz Bingo in attempts to relocate them off the civic square site, but no other town centre sites matched their needs or rent expectations.
5. A Future High Street Fund bid, centred around developing the Civic Square, was submitted by Chorley Council in June 2020.
6. In July 2020 Buzz Bingo entered a CVA and surrendered their lease to Chorley as part of their site rationalisation programme due to the impact Covid had on their business.

7. Works began on site clearance at the earliest opportunity in October 2020 to show intent to the MHCLG bid team. This presented the opportunity for the civic square development to be progressed through the Future High Street Fund bidding process in 2020 as a cleared site in full council control.
8. Chorley Council were informed by MHCLG their bid had failed on 26th December 2020.
9. Works continued to clear the site during 2021 so that an “oven-ready” scheme could be developed for the next round of government funding made available. Chorley was put in tier 2 for the Levelling Up fund and that round of funding has yet to be released.
10. Once the building is cleared from the site late September 2020 there are a number of options on what to do next:
 - a. Hoard around an empty site
 - b. Create a temporary car park until government funding is forthcoming for further development
 - c. Continue to prepare the site for redevelopment through a reduce level dig
11. The Town Centre Masterplan is currently being refreshed and updated with the recently completed schemes such as Youth Zone, Primrose Gardens, Market Walk Extension and Friday Street decked car park before being presented to members for approval of the next phases.
12. Outline schemes will then be developed for the next phases in order to be ready for future funding opportunities when they arise.

Corporate priorities

13. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all | | A strong local economy | X |
| Clean, safe and healthy communities | | An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area | |

Background to the report

14. The Civic Square site was identified as a development site in the 2013 Town Centre Masterplan with various options for built form and landscaping.
15. A proposal for the Civic Square was put forward in the 2016 Public Realm and Town Centre Masterplan with a towns square for hosting events and utilised as car parking at other times.
16. The Oak House and Royal Oak site was developed into a temporary car park as part of the enabling works for Market Walk Extension in 2018 to provide 44 parking spaces in close proximity to the retail core to partially replace those lost on the Flat Iron.

17. Negotiations were held with Buzz Bingo in attempts to relocate them off the civic square site so that the full civic square proposals could be progressed ahead of the Market Walk development, but no other town centre sites matched their needs or rent expectations.
18. In April 2020 Council approved a capital budget for Town Centre Public Realm improvements of £4,060,000.
19. A Future High Street Fund bid, centred around developing the Civic Square, was submitted by Chorley Council in June 2020. This bid sought £12m of government funding to allow the demolition of the bingo hall and site development.
20. In July 2020 Buzz Bingo entered a CVA and surrendered their lease to Chorley as part of their site rationalisation programme due to the impact Covid had on their business. This was at no cost to the council other than acquiring a poorly maintained building not fit for purpose.
21. Works began on site clearance at the earliest opportunity in October 2020 to show intent to the MHCLG bid team.
22. The preparation of the Civic Square site had an initial budget of £371,000 for the demolition works.
23. This presented the opportunity for the civic square development to be progressed through the Future High Street Fund bidding process in 2020 as a cleared site in full council control.
24. Chorley Council were informed by MHCLG their bid had failed on 26th December 2020. The bid failed because it was felt that the target Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) was not met. This was disputed with MHCLG but there was no formal appeals process following their decision. Many other Lancashire bids were also unsuccessful for the same reason.
25. Works continued to clear the site so that an oven-ready scheme could be developed for the next round of government funding. Chorley was put in tier 2 for the Levelling Up fund and that round has yet to be released.
26. Following the internal strip, further asbestos was found in the ceiling which presented a delay to progression and increased costs before the building could be raised to the ground. This increased the budget from £371,000 to £560,000.

Budgets

27. The budget reported to the Wholly Owned Company and Projects Working Group on 8th September reflected a position on 24th August where the overall expected expenditure would be £659k against a budget of £560k demolition with a provisional sum of £150k for the car park plus a potential extra £70k expense identified since the budget was prepared.
28. The budget position on 20th September is that total demolition costs stand at £591k and provisional temporary car park costs are currently £142k giving an overall site budget of £733k which is comparable with the £729k (£659+£70k) previously reported as shown in the table below:

| | Demolition | Temporary parking | Estimated Extra Required | Total Budget |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Budget | £ 560,000 | £ 150,000 | | £ 710,000 |
| Reported position on 24th August | £ 509,000 | £ 150,000 | | £ 659,000 |
| Reported position on 8th September | £ 509,000 | £ 150,000 | £ 70,000 | £ 729,000 |
| Current position on 20th September | £ 591,000 | £ 142,000 | | £ 733,000 |

Temporary Works

29. Once the building is cleared from the site late September there are options on what to do next:
- a. Hoard around an empty site
 - b. Create a temporary car park until government funding is forthcoming for further development
 - c. Reduce level dig on the site in preparation for future development
30. A lined-out car park will provide a revenue stream whilst the site is in a temporary state. The Cleveland Street short stay parking tariffs will be extended to cover the whole site.
31. The addition of temporary parking will free up the existing surfaced Cleveland St side to be utilised for events with less impact on central parking provision.
32. The budget estimate for creating a temporary surfaced car park after demolition is £150,000 which includes, tarmac surface, drainage, lighting and boundary treatments.

Next Phases

33. The Town Centre Masterplan is currently being refreshed and updated with the recently completed schemes such as Youth Zone, Primrose Gardens, Market Walk Extension and Friday Street decked car park before being presented to members for approval of the next phases later this year.
34. Outline schemes will then be developed for the civic square in order to be ready for future funding opportunities as and when they arise.
35. Once the town centre car park capacity has been increased with temporary provision work can commence to upgrade Queens Road car park in early 2022.

Climate change and air quality

36. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Risk

37. Risk of not receiving any government funding meaning Chorley Council will have to self-fund any development

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

38. These works are contained within the overall Public Realm Town Centre capital budget of £4.06m. The costs are monitored via the capital programme and reported collectively under this heading so as a result we are within the existing budget approval.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

39. As this is an update report there are no legal comments save that the temporary car park should be established in line with legislation.

| Report Author: | Email: | Telephone: | Date: |
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