Information

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR COUNTY COUNCILLORS

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for County Councillors

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| Date: | 9 January 2017 |

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| To: | All County Councillors |

# Taunton Public Space Improvements

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide Members with an update on an emerging project commissioned to understand the feasibility of making improvements to the public spaces in Taunton town centre.

SCC has been supporting Taunton Deane Borough Council with the development of ideas for improving the public spaces in Taunton town centre with the aim of enhancing the shopping experience.

The ambition goes hand-in-hand with Taunton’s recent designation as one of a new wave of Garden Towns by the Government and is a key part of its growth programme.

The changes would create an environment that is better connected for residents, shoppers and visitors, could help attract investment and help businesses to thrive.

The proposed plan to redirect traffic to more appropriate routes would free up space for new and improved public spaces. Pedestrian areas would be safer and more pleasant for shoppers, families and cyclists as there would be less traffic, noise and pollution.

Transport and urban design specialists at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff have been commissioned to lead and provide technical input to the pilot project. A steering group made up of officers and the relevant Cabinet Members from SCC and TDBC has been overseeing the consultants’ work.

To date the work that has been carried out is as follows –

* Analysis of existing policy and planned activities
* Analysis of previous work carried out
* Analysis of traffic movements through the town centre
* Streetscape and pedestrian demand assessment

The project is at the stage where it is vital to obtain input from stakeholders and the public. The following activities are now planned –

* 11 January – Media launch
* 18 January – A drop-in session for invited stakeholders and businesses to discuss the practical implications of the emerging ideas
* 17 February to 17 March – Full public consultation on emerging ideas
* 20 February - Members event at Taunton Library.

Further details of the events in February will be circulated closer to the time.

If the ideas gain support through the consultation, further work is required to take on board the detailed feedback and develop a trial scheme. TDBC would then introduce the changes on a trial basis in autumn 2017. The pilot scheme would run for 18 months to monitor and assess the result of the changes before any permanent public space changes come into effect.

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