

Agenda Item 7

Executive Member	Councillor Seed
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Date	

Ward (s) affected	Dorking South and North	Key Decision	No
Subject	West Street, Dorking – Public Art Project		

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

Agreement be given to commissioning a work of public art in West Street, as described in this report, at a cost not exceeding £32,000.

Funding for the project to be provided from the Planning Infrastructure Contributions for Dorking.

Final approval of the designs for the project would be delegated to the Corporate Head of Service in consultation with the Executive Members for Town Centres and Planning following consultation with the project group referred to in paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9 of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A number of private and publicly funded enhancement schemes in West Street have been completed recently, designed to enhance the appearance of this important historic street and provide a context in which the businesses there will thrive. To complement these recent enhancements, a proposal for an art project has come forward supported by the West Street Association.

The project would support MVDC's priority to promote the culture and economy of Dorking town centre.

Funding would come from the Planning Infrastructure Contributions allocated to Dorking for the purpose of carrying out environmental improvements. The cost of the project would not exceed £32,000. It would be developed with support from community representatives.

The approval of the Executive is required to agree the funds for this project and thus enable it to proceed.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

ENVIRONMENT

A highly attractive area with housing that meets local need

- Protect and enhance the natural and built environment and ensure our areas of natural beauty are well looked after.

PROSPERITY

A vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages

- Promote the culture and economy of the market town of Dorking.

The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations

1.0 BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 MVDC has undertaken environmental improvement projects in the past, often with third parties. These improvements are usually funded from Planning Infrastructure Contributions (PIC) secured from the private sector through the planning process for a range of purposes including environmental improvements.
- 1.2 Recently, as a result of a scheme undertaken jointly with the County Council and funded through PIC, West Street in Dorking was resurfaced and improvements undertaken to street furniture. The scheme enabled some widening of the footways to take place and included additional crossing points designed to make the street easier for pedestrians to use. The scheme has been widely welcomed because of its practical benefits as well as for the visual improvement to West Street. It has been welcomed by the businesses in West Street because it will assist the commercial viability of the street as a whole.
- 1.3 Enhancement of the public realm has gone hand in hand with the upgrading of business premises in West Street, notably the historic and picturesque Mullins building. The businesses have taken forward initiatives to enhance the street visually through seasonal planting. Although there are challenges to maintaining the traditional mix of business premises, notably antiques shops, West Street now presents a more appealing and attractive face than it has done for some time. The refurbished and revitalised museum is part of the package of regeneration. The mix of small businesses, notably antique shops, the cafes and restaurants and the fact that West Street forms the western gateway to the town means that the success of the street is important to the wellbeing of whole of the town.
- 1.4 In order to continue the momentum of positive change, the West Street Traders Association and local Members have come forward with another project to enhance the street. This involves commissioning a piece of public art that will be located on the south side of the street between nos. 15 and 16 West Street. A plan of the location is shown as Appendix 1 to this report. The art work would perform a number of functions:
 - Provide a focal point;
 - Be a point of interest to attract people who might visit the street;
 - Include a number of references that will reflect the history of West Street

and the personalities that are associated with it: William Mullins and John Wesley for example;

- Utilize and fill a gap in an otherwise undistinguished section of the building frontage on the south side of the street;
 - Provide a gateway from West Street into the Waitrose development in South Street and, similarly, for visitors to Waitrose who could be tempted to walk down a flight of new steps into West Street and thereby make linked shopping trips.
- 1.5 It is expected that this route from Waitrose to West Street will become more important because of the improvements made to this pedestrian route to and from West Street. Other locations for the art work within West Street have been considered, particularly at the western entrance to the street. However, any structures spanning the carriageway present particular difficulties in terms of ensuring sufficient height to allow larger vehicles to pass through and because the footways are generally too narrow to accommodate the structure. The chosen location is, therefore, considered to provide the best potential for the project. In coming to a decision to support this project, local Members have discussed other potential projects in Dorking. It was considered, however, that the West Street art installation should be supported as the next project in the town.
- 1.6 As a first step, an informal approach has been made to a local artist to establish a budget cost (see below), although it will be necessary to go through a suitable procurement process. Informal approaches have also been made to Waitrose who own the land. Waitrose has been involved in a number of public art projects, including some with local authorities. They would not maintain or insure the art work but would license the Council to do this. Waitrose has entered into a similar arrangement with a London authority.
- 1.7 It is expected that the time taken to undertake the commission and install the art work would be in the region of twelve to fourteen months. Some discussion has taken place about the possibility of securing some funds through public donations, but without a champion within the community to organise a fundraising campaign, this would be difficult.

Consultation

- 1.8 Discussions have already taken place with local Members, Waitrose and representatives of the West Street Association. All of these parties are keen to proceed with the project. If the Executive agrees that this is a suitable project, a brief would be worked up in consultation with community representatives. This project group would consist of officers, local Members, the West Street Association and Waitrose. During the development of two previous projects for public art in Dorking (Allen Court and the seating area in South Street) this form of community involvement has worked well. The project group would also agree the employment of a suitable artist to undertake the work having regard to the Council's procurement rules.
- 1.9 At the point in the development of the project when a design is agreed, formal agreement to proceed would be delegated to the Corporate Head of Service in consultation with the Executive Members for Planning and Town Centres.

Financial Implications –

There is a sufficient amount in the PIC funds to support such a project. There is a sum of £250,000 in the current capital programme to cover developer-funded projects throughout the District. For Dorking funded projects there is currently a

balance of £80,000 available for environmental improvements. Any individual projects costing over £10,000 must be agreed by the Executive before they can proceed. The indication is that the project could be implemented for a cost not in excess of £32,000, including design, fabrication, installation and any legal fees.

Two previous art projects in Dorking, at Allen Court and in South Street Gardens, were funded entirely through developer contributions. Two other art projects, the Dorking cockerel on the Deepdene roundabout and the cyclists on the Denbies roundabout, were funded by both developer contributions and voluntary donations. Both of these projects were promoted by past chairmen of the Council as personal projects, not as Council-led initiatives. In the case of the cockerel project 35% of the total costs came from developer contributions. In the case of the Denbies cyclists, 45% came from developer contributions. The current project is closer in nature to the other two projects in that it would be promoted by the Council rather than an individual and, as there is no individual or organization to head up a fundraising campaign, it has been assumed that the project would be entirely funded from developer contributions.

Responsibility for future maintenance and insurance would fall to the Council. It would be located on land owned by Waitrose, but on a publically accessible route. Despite being on Waitrose land, the Council would still have a clear insurable interest. The Council's insurance officer does not foresee any problems and the Council's insurers have confirmed that the artwork would not cause any insurance concerns. The value of the art work in relation to the total amount insured by the Council would be negligible. Maintenance is difficult to predict, but on the basis of experience gained by similar installations elsewhere in Dorking and Leatherhead, maintenance costs could be accommodated without an increase in the revenue budget.

Legal Implications –

The Council will need to enter into a licence with Waitrose, the terms of which would need to be negotiated and approved by the Property Manager. This is unlikely to present any problems and is something that Waitrose has undertaken elsewhere. A sum has been included in the budget to cover the fees associated with drawing up the licence.

2.0 OPTIONS

- 2.1 There are two potential options for the Executive to consider:
- 2.2 Option 1: agree funding not exceeding £32,000 for the design, fabrication and installation of a work of public art to provide a gateway feature between nos. 15 and 16 West Street, Dorking. The agreement of the Executive Members for Planning and Town Centres would be sought on the final design before further work proceeds. This is the preferred option.
- 2.3 Option 2: agree to fund the project in part and seek donations for the remaining cost. The project could not be commissioned until the full cost of the project had been raised.

3.0 CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Monitoring Officer commentary -

The Monitoring Officer confirms that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

S151 Officer commentary –

The S151 Officer is able to confirm that all financial implications have been taken into account

and/or

Risk Implications – the work would be insured by the Council..

Equalities Implications – the structure will be accessible to all to enjoy and the design and placing will take account of access issues..

Employment Issues - none.

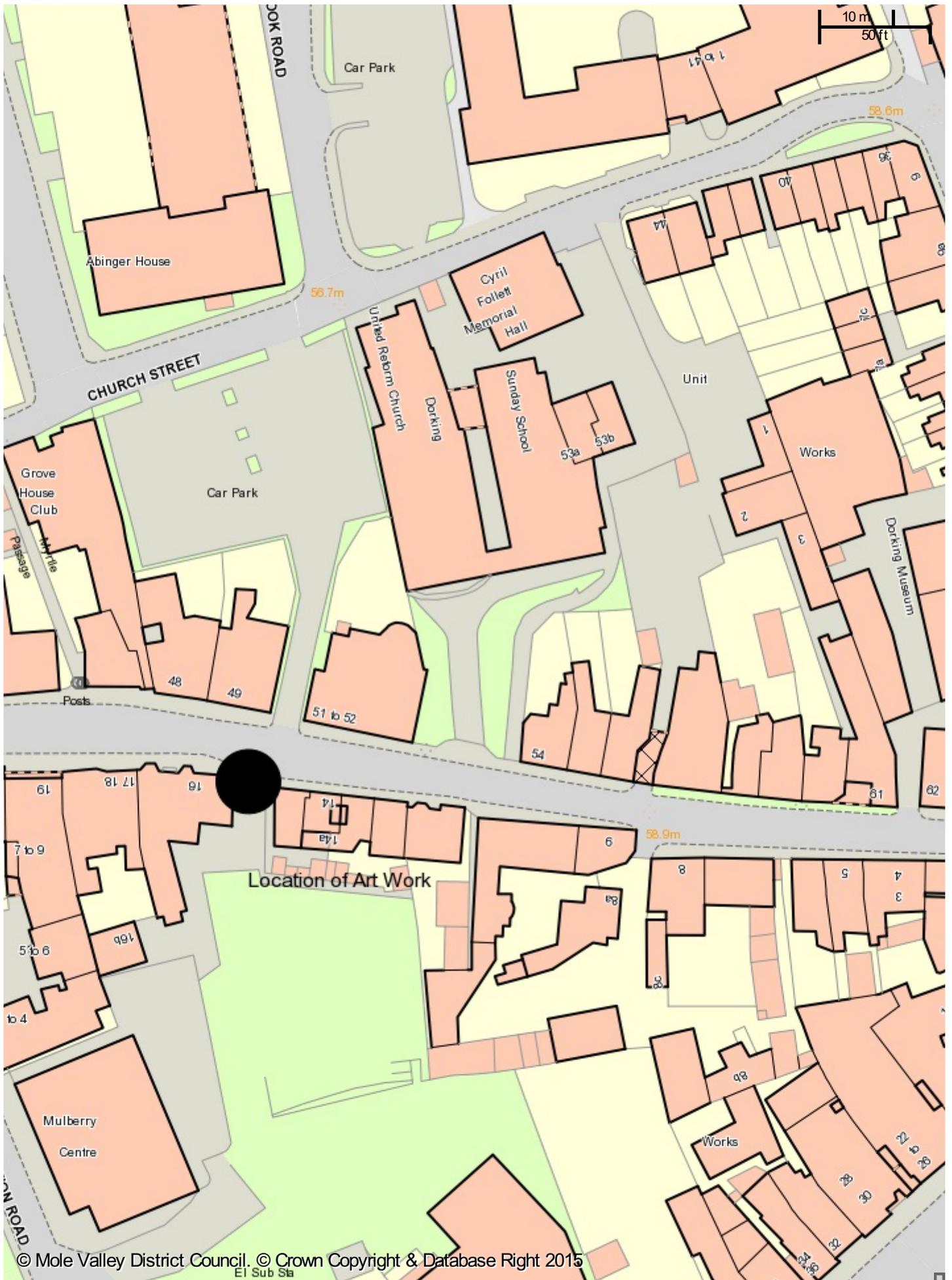
Sustainability Issues – no direct implications.

Consultation – informal consultation has taken place with stakeholders in West Street, local Members and Waitrose store manager.

Communications – discussions have been held with various interests, but there have been no formal communications during the embryonic stage of the project.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.



Appendix: Public Art Project: West Street, Dorking

Scale: 1:700

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