1. **Summary Statement**

1.1 Approval is sought for the first phase of a staged project to secure a comprehensive and integrated series of improvements along Bearwood Road corridor in Smethwick.

1.2 Funding of £2,000,000 from the Council’s 2013/14 revenue surplus has been earmarked for improvements along the Cape Hill / Bearwood Road corridor. The Bearwood Road improvements are expected to span three separate phases of work.

1.3 There will be a series of complementary initiatives funded through other sources that will add value to these works and help meet the wider objectives. The objectives are to:

   - promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging walking;
   - improve safety for pedestrians and other road users;
   - understand and tackle issues around poor air quality;
   - invest in essential infrastructure within the adopted highway;
   - reduce litter and encourage recycling;
   - undertake greening initiatives and environmental improvements;
   - improve confidence within the business and retail community.

1.4 In the first phase of works, it is intended to review, rationalise and renew footway paving and associated highway infrastructure; extend infrastructure life by preventing vehicle access and parking on footways; secure safety improvements to a number of pedestrian crossings; install additional safety signage near a primary school and plant a number of street trees.
1.5 Subsequent phases of work depend on further developmental and design exercises being undertaken and will be the subject of additional public consultation. These will cover redesigning a busy junction to improve pedestrian safety and secure environmental benefits; implementing further greening initiatives to key sites in the centre and establishing a high-quality Bearwood gateway, related to improved bus interchange facilities and better linkages to Lightwoods Park.

1.6 Approval is sought to undertake the first phase of works, at a total cost of £210,760. Works would begin in April 2015 and be substantially complete within the 2015-2016 financial year, with just contractor retention sums amounting to £10,760 carried forward into 2016-17.

1.7 The first phase of works, for which approval is now sought, is confined to the adopted public highway and requires only limited consultation with outside agencies. Ahead of the works commencing, notices will be placed on the privatised utility companies, requiring them to bring forward any planned maintenance or renewal ahead of the proposed resurfacing, to prolong the life and integrity of the paving asset and reduce the likelihood of excavation and damage by third parties.

1.8 The proposals have been brought forward in full consultation with the three ward members. A public consultation event held in September 2014 confirmed positive public support for the courses of action now proposed.

1.9 An equality impact assessment screening has been carried out and this has indicated that a full equality impact assessment is not required, as the works currently proposed will bring about improvements to the safety and functionality of the pedestrian environment and cater for the needs of all members of the community.

1.10 A full appraisal has been undertaken by Strategic Finance. A copy of the report can be found at Appendix 1. Risks have been identified as a result of the appraisal and action points recommended to mitigate these risks.

1.11 A risk assessment has been undertaken and, following the identification of appropriate mitigation measures, there are no red risks associated with the project.

Further details are attached for your information
2. **Recommendations**

2.1 That a total of £210,760 be allocated from earmarked balances to the Capital Programme 2015-16 (£200,000) and 2016-17 (£10,760) to enable a first phase of streetscape and safety improvements to take place on Bearwood Road, Smethwick.

2.2 That subject to 2.1 above, the following action points identified within the appraisal report be implemented to reduce any risk to the Council:-

- determine the cost of implementing the whole Cape Hill / Bearwood Road, Smethwick, Streetscape and Safety Improvements project to ensure that all of the proposals can be met from the approved funding of £2,000,000;

- ensure that future revenue requirements for the maintenance of Bearwood Road, Smethwick, are managed within Regeneration and Economy’s existing resources;

- ensure robust contract monitoring is undertaken to assist with the successful delivery of the project within required timescales and costs;

- quantify outputs, outcomes and impacts to be monitored over the life cycle of the project;

- provide a corporate risk register to identify appropriate risk officers and managers, along with associated target dates for the mitigation of risks.

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3. **Strategic Resource Implications**

3.1 The capital cost of phase 1 of the project will be £210,760 and will be funded from earmarked balances in 2015-16 (£200,000) and 2016-17 (£10,760). Approval for the use of £2,000,000 from the Council’s 2013/14 revenue surplus for road improvements on Cape Hill / Bearwood Road corridor, Smethwick was given by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Resources in June 2014, subject to a positive Strategic Finance appraisal of the scheme.

3.2 There are no implications for the workforce and no additional revenue costs resulting from the proposed project. Revenue liabilities will be reduced, partly through reductions in energy costs arising from the use of LEDs. Planned interventions in maintenance, upgrading and renewal will lead to reduced revenue liabilities over the coming years, based on the Council not having to undertake unplanned reactive works in response to component failure.

3.3 The main implication of not carrying out the proposed course of action would be to defer the timely review, upgrading and renewal of highway infrastructure, for which the Council has responsibility. Failure to invest at this time would increase the Council’s exposure to unplanned interventions and to the higher revenue costs these inevitable bring.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

4.1 The proposals outlined in this report relate to securing improvements to Council owned infrastructure within the adopted public highway and, as such, there are no legal implications for the Council directly arising from the proposals that are detailed in the report.

5. **Implications for the Council’s Scorecard Priorities**

5.1 The proposal contributes to the council’s priorities for Great People - Healthy lifestyle, Great Place - Cleaner streets, more recycling, Parks and green spaces to enjoy and Great Prospects - A better deal for Smethwick.

5.2 The programme will deliver better streets, with improved footways, less clutter, safer crossings and improved litter and recycle bins in appropriate locations. This project will provide a number of street trees, while the parallel initiative will see the installation of several lengths of green screens. Together these will make a small contribution towards the scorecard objective of parks and green spaces for people to enjoy.
Later phases of the project will make further progress towards these scorecard targets.

5.3 The project will aim to make walking in Bearwood (a high density neighbourhood where most facilities are within easy reach of people’s homes) safer, easier and more attractive so contributing towards the scorecard aim of nurturing healthy lifestyles.

5.4 Bearwood is one of the key communities of Smethwick, so this project will contribute towards the scorecard aim of securing a better deal for Smethwick.

6 Background Details

6.1 Approval is sought for the first phase of a staged project to secure a comprehensive and integrated series of improvements along Bearwood Road corridor in Smethwick.

6.2 Funding of £2,000,000 from the Council’s 2013/14 revenue surplus has been earmarked for improvements along the Cape Hill / Bearwood Road corridor. The Bearwood Road improvements are expected to span three separate phases of work.

6.3 There will be a series of complementary initiatives funded through other sources that will add value to these works and help meet the wider objectives.

6.4 Approval is sought to undertake the first phase of works, totalling £210,760. Works would begin in April 2015 and be substantially complete within the 2015-2016 financial year, with a financial retention carried over into 2016-17. The Phase 1 works comprise the following elements:

- Selectively repair or replace block-paved footways, kerbs, drop-kerbs, blister paving, drainage channels, cover boxes; remove redundant traffic signs and poles; rationalise signs through co-ordination and pole sharing; repaint poles and lighting columns.

- Install measures in specific street blocks to prevent unauthorised vehicle access and overrunning across adopted footways and pedestrian crossings, by the use of bollards or equivalent.

- Install 2 electronic advisory variable 20 mph signs by Bearwood School.

- Retrofit four existing signal-controlled pedestrian crossings in Bearwood shopping centre with far side green man displays and convert to LED specification.
• Plant up to 12 street trees of appropriate species in selected locations along Bearwood Road, subject to constraints imposed by underground plant and services.

6.5 A range of complementary works have been identified, funded from other sources that will add value to these works and help meet wider objectives: these are intended to take place in parallel with the works for which approval is now sought and are as follows:

6.6 A study is under way to measure roadside air quality and break down the sources of pollution by origin, by means of a traffic survey using ANPR cameras. This work includes the pilot installation of a series of ‘green screens’ designed to trap a proportion of the particulates that make up air pollution. These are to be installed within and close to Bearwood School. Public Heath funds have been identified and confirmed to implement these elements of work.

6.7 All streetlights within the target area along Bearwood Road have been identified for early upgrading to LED specification; this work is being funded from Highway budget sources and will take place during 2015.

6.8 Existing bins will be removed and replaced with new litter bins or combined litter / recycling duobins, in order to increase out of home recycling rates. These will be provided through the waste partnership programme between the Council and its waste partner, and are scheduled for installation during 2015.

Source Documents
None