

Agenda Item No: **Report No:**

Report Title: **Lewes District Public Realm Framework**

Report To: **Cabinet** **Date:** **13 February 2013**

Lead Councillors: **Cllr Rob Blackman & Cllr Tom Jones**

Ward(s) Affected: **All wards**

Report By: **Nazeya Hussain – Director of Business Strategy & Development**

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Purpose of Report:

To introduce the final draft of the Lewes District Public Realm Framework as the basis for agreeing its contents to shape policy and detailed plans to drive delivery of improved public realm across Lewes District.

1. Officers Recommendation(s):

To seek Cabinet's Approval for:

1.1 Production of a ***Planning Discussion Paper*** to explore how the findings of the Framework will feed into the planning process. Key items for discussion will be :

(a) Possibility of drafting a Supplementary Planning Document/ Planning Advice Note

(b) How to secure links and integration into the planning policies that the District Council, National Park Authority and town and parish councils (as part of the neighbourhood planning process) are currently developing to

ensure that the Public Realm Framework is embedded in decisions made on development proposals where public realm is an issue.

- 1.2 Putting in place a **Public Realm Working Group** to consider and drive forward the implementation of the Framework; and
- 1.3 **Delegating authority** to the Director of Business Strategy and Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Business, Economic Development and Tourism and the Lead Member for Planning, to agree the final version of the Framework and associated working arrangements on behalf of the Cabinet.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Lewes District Public Realm Framework has been produced as part of the process of translating the Lewes District Regeneration Strategy into action. This has involved working with strategic and local partners (through several meetings and workshops) to develop the current version as the basis for seeking formal approval from Lewes District Council.
- 2.2 The work to produce the Framework was undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates who were engaged as part of a joint commission (£24,750 value) between Lewes District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and East Sussex County Council who contributed £13,000, £8,000 and £5,000 respectively. The work was undertaken between January and April 2013 and involved 6 workshops with a range of local stakeholders which were managed in consultation with town councils.
- 2.3 The Framework will help inform the development of spatial policy through the local plan process, as well as plans prepared by other organisations such as utility companies and infrastructure providers, and the production of operational policies with a key focus on a County Public Realm Guidance Note and Public Realm Plans as part of the Regeneration Delivery Framework process reported to the April Cabinet. The Framework will also influence public realm through the Council's use and development of its own assets; other partners will be encouraged to take this leadership by example approach.

3 Information

- 3.1 The strategic objectives of the Lewes District Public Realm Framework are to:
 - Enhance civic pride by contributing to the quality of life of residents through enhancing the sense of place, identity and belonging

- Attract visitors, investors and businesses to underpin job and business growth

3.2 To achieve these strategic objectives the Framework seeks to:

- Expand and develop the unique features of Lewes District with a particular focus on South Downs National Park, Lewes Town, Newhaven, Seaford, Peacehaven, Telscombe and rural settlements;
- Inform future development and funding opportunities for improving the public realm including spending and development plans of public sector bodies, investors and businesses and investment sought through grants;
- Align with current and emerging public realm plans and policies at a local, county and national level;
- Provide the first point of reference for any proposed public realm work and inform Neighbourhood and Town Plans;
- Protect and enhance the character of the urban environment whilst emphasising their gateway relationships to the South Downs National Park;
- Match and exceed best practice in the development of urban form and the public realm; and
- Build on work undertaken, planned and in progress; this is important for ensuring that future plans and developments support a consistency of design, quality and appearance that promotes a distinct local identity within a broader district brand and therefore makes Lewes District an excellent place to live, work, visit, learn and invest.

3.3 The Framework is underpinned by the following values which suggest that public realm should:

- Preserve and enhance existing historic public realm
- Create a clutter-free environment
- Be Comfortable, durable, easy to maintain, alter and clean
- Be Well maintained, well lit, safe, secure, and minimises opportunities for crime
- Be Accessible, attractive and appropriately furnished
- Be Permeable, legible, and relates to the surroundings and heritage with a lasting/timeless appeal
- Be distinctive with a high degree of quality and design
- Include opportunities for commissioning public art
- Reflect views and aspirations of local communities, local businesses and potential investors
- Represent good value for money
- Encourage and improve economic development and investment
- Be fit for a diversity of uses and vibrant street life

- Achieve a sustained balance between vehicles, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians
- Create places where public and private spaces are easily distinguished and physical barriers to movement are minimised or eliminated

3.4 Each of the urban towns and rural parishes has its own character and cultural heritage with unique issues and challenges to be addressed. The high quality natural environment is emphasised by the high level of environmental protection in parts of the District, including the National Park, 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, two Special Areas of Conservation, two National Nature Reserves, four Local Nature Reserves, and three Wildlife Trust Reserves. The District has a rich built heritage including 35 Conservation Areas, with 1,700 Listed Buildings and over 100 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, plus several sites of rich archaeological interest and four historic parks and one historic battlefield site.

3.5 Despite continual investment in Lewes District, there is currently no strategic direction or lead on how the public realm is treated and developed. In some parts of the District, the public realm is uninspiring, the streetscape dated and in poor condition, giving an impression of a tired District without a distinct identity. It does not presently have a strong identity with the South Downs National Park or have a consistent District-wide relationship to its rich and diverse heritage.

3.6 Improving the public realm is reflected in many strategic documents including English Heritage's 'Streets for All' publication, the Core Strategy, local Conservation Area Appraisals, the Sustainable Community Strategy as well as within East Sussex County Council's Local Transport Plan, Economic Development Strategy and emerging public realm policy. The National Park authority is currently preparing their own Local Plan for adoption in 2017. Individual towns and parishes within the District include aspects of public realm within their strategies and plans, including within some emerging neighbourhood plans.

3.7 The Lewes District Regeneration Strategy expresses the Council's and its partner's ambition for improving public realm to create the conditions for investment and prosperity; the Lewes District Public Realm Framework will provide the mechanism for translating this ambition into reality through aligning local and strategic public realm policy and driving joined up delivery

4. South Downs National Park Comments:

4.1 SDNPA welcomed the opportunity to be involved in this project and provide support. The recommendations are helpful and can be taken forward through a variety of mechanisms both formal and informal. For instance the framework raises a number of issues that need to be fed into the development of relevant policies in both the joint core strategy and in the future development of the National

Park local plan as well as on-going development control work. It will also help to guide funding sources such as Community Infrastructure Levy or Local Sustainable Transport Fund to improve the public realm within the National Park. The SDNPA would like to see this feed into further design guidance, Conservation Appraisals and Neighbourhood Plans within the National Park.

4.2 The SDNPA will look at suggestions within the Public Realm framework for gateway signage as part of the future development of the SDNP brand and identity and look at how it might take forward suggestions for interpretation and how these might fit with the NPA priorities.

4.3 It strengthens our requirements to work with the ESCC as the Local Highway Authority to ensure that any highways schemes reference the Public Realm Framework and are linked to the developing over-arching SDNP highways designs work.

5. East Sussex County Council Comments

5.1 ESCC offers its support for the recommendations of the report and has made some editorial comments on the draft Cabinet report which have been incorporated.

6. Financial Appraisal

6.1 The Lewes District Public Realm Framework provides a mechanism for co-ordinating and focusing resources from a number of different partners. As such, it does not have a single dedicated budget. For the most part, implementation of projects will involve working with the resource planning processes of partner organisations which will be subject to each partner's specific decision making processes and, where appropriate, pulled together through the emerging regeneration delivery frameworks. The commitment by Lewes District Council (in terms of staff and finances) will be managed through the Regeneration and Economic Development Team and will include involvement of other resources across and beyond the Council.

7 Legal Appraisal

7.1 There are no legal implications pertaining to this report.

8. Sustainability Implications

8.1 Sustainability is at the heart of Public Realm Framework (and the whole regeneration delivery framework process) in terms of driving a regeneration process that will embrace the dynamic between prosperity, people and place to improve the quality of life for all; translating and reinforcing the sustainability principles embedded in the Lewes District Regeneration Strategy.

8.2 These sustainability principles are also reflected in the drive to place the local community at the heart of the regeneration process through the regeneration delivery framework process. In addition sustainability principles are considered as part of the project development and delivery process.

9. Risk Management Implications

9.1 The main strategic risks and mitigations are as follows:

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation	Impact	Mitigation
Lack of support from local partners	Low –Local Partners have been involved in developing the initial draft	Continue to consult and seek formal sign off where appropriate as part of detailed plans developed through regeneration delivery frameworks	High – Important to get strategic and local partners to work together to shape detail policy and delivery	Put in place effective partnership arrangements and ensure communications plan is developed to keep partners abreast of progress
Lack of support from strategic partners	Medium – Some (LDC / ESCC/ SDNPA) have been involved in commissioning and drafting process	Continue to consult and seek formal sign off where appropriate – also meet on 1-1 basis where required	High – Important to get Strategic Partners on board to secure necessary approvals and co-ordinate investment	Put in place effective partnership arrangements and ensure communications plan is developed to keep partners abreast of progress
Lack of support from local residents	Medium – Some limited engagement but scope to do a lot more	Undertake more consultation as part of the next steps	Medium – Important to get public buy in to build support for local partners and embed culture of sustainability	Put in place effective communications plan to engage public and keep them abreast of progress
Lack of capacity to manage and deliver the project	Medium – Existing resource in place with LDC but need to make sure others contribute to joint working approach	Early discussion with partner organisations have been positive	High – Lack of resource will mean that project programme is reduced and scope to enjoy economies of scale of joint working greatly reduced	Put in place effective partnership arrangements via Public Realm Work Group

9.2 There will be a number of area and project level risks that will be considered and managed as part of the project development and delivery process through the regeneration delivery frameworks.

10 **Equality Screening**

10.1 An equalities screening report has been completed which identified a number of opportunities to promote equalities and diversity:

- Undertake an equalities assessment as part of the regeneration delivery framework process
- Inclusion of equalities policy in governing documents and associated processes and procedures
- Production of publicity material in other languages as required
- Representation of all groups in governance structures
- Holding meetings at different times and in a range of venue

11 **Background Papers**

A hard copy of the Lewes District Public Realm Framework can be obtained and or be viewed by contacting Judy Mackerras on 01273 484351