
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	2 May 2019
Report By:	Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration and Resources	Report No:	E&R/19/05/05/SJ/AW
Contact Officer:	Alan Williamson	Contact No:	01475 712491
Subject:	West Blackhall Street Public Realm Proposals		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the West Blackhall Street public realm improvement project.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Improving the environment of West Blackhall Street has been identified and agreed by the Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum and the Committee as a priority project for Greenock town centre. A design for the improvement of the public realm of West Blackhall Street was developed involving public consultation in 2018. A design review, funded by Sustrans, which will provide an alternative design which meets Sustrans funding principles is currently ongoing. Both designs will be reported to the Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum and this Committee for a decision on which to take forward.
- 2.2 There are changes to traffic flow along West Blackhall Street which will be common to both schemes and Traffic Regulation Orders will be required for whichever scheme is progressed. These will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the ongoing West Blackhall Street public realm improvements design review and agrees that the project should be progressed subject to future reports to the Committee.

Scott Allan
Corporate Director
Environment, Regeneration & Resources

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Improving the streetscape of West Blackhall Street was identified as a priority project in the masterplan that emerged from the Greenock town centre charrette held in 2016. The importance of this project was confirmed by the Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum at its meeting of 14 June 2017, and thereafter a design team led by landscape architects Ironside Farrar was appointed in February 2018 to prepare a design for public realm improvements to the street. The design process involved two stages of public consultation (in June and September 2018) plus reports back to the Town Centre Regeneration Forum and a project steering group. The developed design was reported to the Committee on 25 October 2018, where it was decided that the project be approved as a town centre priority project with implementation funding of £1.5m also approved.

5.0 DESIGN REVIEW OF WEST BLACKHALL STREET PROPOSALS

5.1 Subsequent to the October 2018 Environment and Regeneration Committee meeting, Council officers held discussions with walking and cycling charity Sustrans. Sustrans had reviewed the public realm improvement plans for West Blackhall Street and indicated that, if the design was more in keeping with its draft funding principles, it would be a scheme to which it could contribute funding. These principles are:

- the route is suitable for a 12 year old to walk/cycle unaccompanied
- the design is Equality Act compliant – suitable for all
- holistic design solution with communities as influences and beneficiaries
- reallocate road space to prioritise people on foot and cycle
- restrict motor traffic permeability

5.2 Sustrans also advised that it could fund a design review of the existing proposals for West Blackhall Street to develop alternative proposals in keeping with its principles. The Council successfully applied for design review funding and this process is now underway and is expected to be completed by early June 2019.

5.3 Ultimately, there would be two designs developed for the street, being the design already reported to the October 2018 meeting of the Committee and a new design developed in line with Sustrans principles. A design review of the proposals in line with Sustrans principles would open up the possibility for Sustrans funding for the implementation stage, with funding of up to £1m a possibility. This would help meet an anticipated funding gap between the approved budget and expected cost of the project. Ultimately, the decision of which scheme to implement will be for the Committee, following input from the Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum.

5.4 A principle of the existing design that will be retained for the design review is making West Blackhall Street a one-way street with traffic running east to west i.e. from Oak Mall towards Grey Place. This will enable the Council to begin to bring forward the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders for this change to be implemented as part of the public realm project.

5.5 It is anticipated that implementation of the West Blackhall Street public realm project will commence in 2020 with an implementation period of 40-50 weeks.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

6.1 The Committee has already agreed a Council contribution of £1.5m to the West Blackhall Street project through the Towns and Villages Environmental Improvements Projects fund. Partner funding will be sought for the remaining funding, which is expected to be in the region of £0.5-1M. Some of the £1.5M has already been spent on design work and related studies.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement from	Other Comments
Towns and Villages Environmental Improvement Fund - Greenock	West Blackhall Street	2019/20-2020/21	£1,400,000	n/a	Up to £1,000,000 partner funding will be sought

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement from (if Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Legal

6.2 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Human Resources

6.3 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

Equalities

6.4 There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

Repopulation

6.5 Improving the environment of West Blackhall Street will make Greenock town centre a more attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The Council's Head of Legal and Property Services and Chief Financial Officer were consulted during the preparation of this report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None