

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	21 August 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	City Centre and Beach Masterplan – Annual Update
REPORT NUMBER	CR&E/24/231
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Claire McArthur
TERMS OF REFERENCE	21

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an annual update on the City Centre and Beach Masterplan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

- 2.1 Note the progress made to advance a wide range of projects contained within the City Centre and Beach Masterplan (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Agree that Officers report future activity and updates on projects through the Council's Capital Planning process through the Finance & Resources Committee.
- 2.3 Note, in relation to city centre mobility and accessibility, the roundtable meeting hosted by the Co-Leaders with key stakeholders in July 2024, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to arrange for a programme of similar roundtable meetings with key stakeholders, in addition to the ongoing regular Masterplan engagement and consultation programme.
- 2.4 Agree the need for continued understanding of perceptions, insights, attitudes and experiences on City Centre Masterplan objectives, particularly around mobility and accessibility, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to use Bus Lane Enforcement surplus (capped at £20,000) to set up a professionally facilitated bi-annual focus group to collect data on opinions and personal experiences on this topic.
- 2.5 In relation to the Beach, and in line with the Budget decisions taken by Council in March 2024, note the update provided in paragraphs 3.5 - 3.6 and agree that the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning pause the preparation of a

Development Framework for the Beach Phase 2 area, until such a time as additional resources can be identified through future Budget setting processes.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Aberdeen City Council at its meeting in August 2022 agreed the Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan 2022 . The Masterplan included a review of the City Centre Masterplan 2015 following the dramatic changes to the city brought about by the Covid-19 public health emergency, alongside changes to other social, environmental and economic macro factors since the 2015 plan was prepared. The 2022 City Centre and Beach Masterplan was developed to serve the following purposes:

- An investment tool that showcases the city;
- A live programme that can be flexible in responding to current and future trends/needs;
- A communications tool to enable understanding; and
- A reference document to identify priorities, next steps and monitor progress.

3.2 Council at its meeting in August 2023 received an update on the projects contained within the Masterplan, and noted the activity to be undertaken during 2023/24. The Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning was subsequently instructed to keep the Masterplan report under review and to provide a further progress report to Council after 12 months. This report to Council has been prepared on this basis. Moving forward it is noted that separate instructions have been given to Officers from Council to monitor Masterplan projects through the Capital Planning process, with progress reported to the Finance and Resources Committee. Updates will also be shared on the Generation Aberdeen website – www.generationaberdeen.co.uk

Progress Report 2024

3.3 Over the past year considerable progress has been made on a number of projects within the City Centre and Beach Masterplan.

3.4 Appendix 1 provides a summary of the key Masterplan projects being taken forward by the Council and includes a “Current Status” and “Looking Ahead” section for each project. Highlights from the last 12 months include:

- Construction of Union Street Central streetscape improvements commenced in Spring 2024 and is due to complete late Summer 2025.
- Enabling works for the new Aberdeen Market are currently underway.
- An updated Business Case for streetscape improvements on Union Street East, Union Street West, the West End and the Castlegate was approved by Council in December 2023.
- Continued progress on the Queen Street site, with plans for an Urban Park moving forward to detailed and technical design.
- Ongoing work on delivering the Union Street Empty Shops Action Plan with key stakeholders

- Construction of new Beach Park currently underway, along with other enabling works for wider Beach Phase A works.

Beach Phase 2

- 3.5 At the August 2022 Council meeting, Members noted a revised Beach Masterplan boundary to include the Footdee Conservation Area and the area north to the River Don. Results of an initial public consultation to determine how people currently use these additional areas (described as Beach Phase 2), and to identify what people consider to be their positive and negative features, was reported back to Council's August 2023 meeting. Council subsequently instructed the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to prepare a Development Framework for Beach Phase 2 based on this initial investigatory exercise.
- 3.6 Officers have since scoped the resources required to undertake this Development Framework exercise and consider that, due to the limited resource available in-house to undertake this exercise and the focus of current attention on Beach Phase 1 and the City Centre Streetscape Projects, it is recommended that preparation of the Beach Phase 2 Development Framework be paused until such time as an identified resource, and associated budget, can be identified.

Monitoring

- 3.7 Monitoring progress requires an understanding of the baseline conditions and what the key objectives are that the Council wants to achieve. A set of SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Timely) Objectives with metrics and owners was therefore included as Appendix 1 to the City Centre and Beach Masterplan 2022. In the August 2023 update report to Council, Officers reported that it was too early to comment on any established trends due to data availability. Early indications based on quantitative data show positive improvements in occupancy figures on Union Street, coupled with reductions in air pollution levels and improvements in public transport reliability. Concern from a number of city centre businesses however remains in relation to footfall figures and the perceived impact of changes to the transport network on visitors to the city centre. Officers will continue to monitor progress against the SMART Objectives as delivery of the Masterplan continues.
- 3.8 As noted in recommendations 2.3 and 2.4, Officers recommend that additional qualitative monitoring is also undertaken as progress on the Masterplan continues, and that a series of stakeholder roundtables and focus groups, particularly around mobility and accessibility, be set up on this basis. It is recommended that the Bus Lane Enforcement surplus be used to fund this additional monitoring. This would be capped initially at £20,000, which Officers estimate would be sufficient to fund approximately 2 years of activity.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The original funding commitment made by the Council Budget meeting on 10 March 2021 was for £150m from the General Fund Capital Programme over financial years 2021/22 to 2025/26 (rolling forward to 2026/27 as per the current Capital Programme) to ensure the Council transforms the City Centre and the Beach area. This £150m funding commitment was used as match funding to secure the £20m from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund in 2021.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The City Centre and Beach Masterplan informs the consideration of planning applications, but each application will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Authority.
- 5.2 As project proposals from the Masterplan report progress, they will be examined and managed within the professional scope of property / conveyancing industry accepted standards, ensuring all due diligence exercises and pre-contract enquiries are complete and satisfactory.
- 5.3 Any work that is recommended to a property not owned by the Council will require effective dialogue and the owner's consent before it can commence. Other local authority consents, such as planning permission and listed building consent, may also be required for works to buildings.
- 5.4 All changes to vehicular movement on the road network are subject to statutory processes.
- 5.5 The Bus Lane Contraventions (Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 require that any sums paid to a local authority by way of charges under these Regulations must only be used to facilitate the achievement of policies in that authority's Local Transport Strategy.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The City Centre and Beach Masterplan has been screened through the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process and the consultation authorities have confirmed that no Environmental Report specific to this overarching Masterplan is required. Individual plans, programmes and strategies falling out of the Masterplan will be considered individually, as will any requirements for project-specific Habitat Regulations Appraisals (HRAs).

7. RISK

- 7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not delivering City Centre and Beach Masterplan projects	Full programme of works developed, with funding approvals in place at key stages	L	Yes
Compliance	Traffic Management challenges	Manage through ongoing engagement programme and statutory processes	M	Yes
Operational	Sufficient capacity of resources within Council teams to meet programme objectives	Forward planning through City Centre and Beach project delivery programme	M	Yes
Financial	Budget pressures due to current market volatility	Robust budgets established. Independent monitoring process established. Regular reports to Committee through the Capital Planning process.	M	Yes
Reputational	Continued debate without decision, ongoing uncertainty over city centre and beach future	Agree and implement projects, supported by clear communications and a well articulated vision.	M	Yes

Environment / Climate	Air quality improvements. Active and sustainable transport improvements. Local material supply.	Incorporated into project proposals.	M	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Supports the delivery of Economy Policy Statement 4 – Increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan. 1. – Continue to maximise community benefit from major developments.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 1 - 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 7 - Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 14 - Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate Supports Outcome 15 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The report supports the priorities in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) investment in infrastructure, regenerating our city centre, unlock development potential, improve the deployment of low carbon transport, to enable Aberdeen to realise development opportunities in the City Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>The report supports the National, Regional and Local Transport Strategies, particularly the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, which prioritises the needs of those walking, wheeling and cycling above other road users, and the 4 pillars identified in the recent</p>

	<p>Regional Transport Strategy, Nestrans 2040: Equality, Climate, Prosperity and Wellbeing.</p> <p>It also supports the Aberdeen Active Travel Plan and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, both of which seek to improve conditions for people walking and cycling in Aberdeen, particularly to, from and within the City Centre, through the provision of more and safer infrastructure.</p> <p>Measures to reduce unnecessary vehicle traffic in the City Centre will support the Air Quality Action Plan, Climate Change Plan, Net Zero Action Plan and Low Emission Zone by contributing to emissions reduction.</p>
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with David Dunne, Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning on 26 July 2024.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	If the bi-annual focus groups recommended at 2.4 are approved than a Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed.
Other	Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening undertaken with consultation authorities.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Full Council, 23 August 2023
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s148032/230823%20CCBMP%20Annual%20Update%20-%20FINAL%20Report.pdf>
- Decisions of Full Council, 23 August 2023
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8662/Decisions%2023rd-Aug-2023%2010.30%20Council.pdf?T=2>
- Report to Adjourned Meeting of Full Council, 25 August 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=8436>

- Decisions of Adjourned Meeting of Full Council, 25 August 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8436/Decisions%2025th-Aug-2022%2014.00%20Council.pdf?T=2>
- City Centre & Beach Masterplan
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s135130/CCMP%20-%20Appendix%202%20-%20City%20Centre%20Beach%20Masterplan%202022.pdf>

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – City Centre and Beach Masterplan Projects: 2024 Update

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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