

OPEN REPORT
ASHBOURNE REBORN PROGRAMME BOARD

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board – 25 April 2024

ASHBOURNE REBORN PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Policy

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

Ashbourne North and South

Report Summary

The report summarises activity to progress the *Ashbourne Reborn* Programme, highlights key programme risks and sets out next steps.

Recommendations

1. That the Board considers progress to date and the position regarding programme, cost, deliverables and risks be received and noted.
2. That the revised Ashbourne Reborn Communications Protocol is received and approved by the Board, including the approach to urgent communications.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft Minutes of the H&PR Project Control Board 05/03/24

Appendix 2 Minutes of the LCH Project Board 05/03/24

Appendix 3 Ashbourne Reborn Communications Protocol 04/24

Background Papers

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board Update Report 27 September 2023.

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board Update Report 26 October 2023.

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board Update Report 12 December 2023.

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board Update Report 30 January 2024.

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board Update Report 8 March 2024.

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from Press or Public

No

ASHBOURNE REBORN PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Background

- 1.1 As set out in the papers of previous Programme Board meetings, Ashbourne Reborn is a £15.22m programme aimed at transforming Ashbourne town centre through significant improvements to highways and public realm and the development of the Link Community Hub. The programme is principally funded by the UK Government through a £13,373,509 funding allocation from the Levelling Up Fund, Round Two. The programme comprises the following projects:

Project 1: Public Realm & Highways Improvements led by Derbyshire County Council - £8.804m

Project 2: Link Community Hub led by Ashbourne Methodist Church - £6.418m

- 1.2 Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC) is the Accountable Body for Ashbourne Reborn. Matters that could have a significant impact on the programme, potentially resulting in a change to the approved bid / Memorandum of Understanding between the District Council and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in terms of deliverables, timescales, cost, outputs / outcomes and risk should be matters for decision by the strategic Programme Board and are required to be escalated by Project Boards.

2. Key Issues

Project Progress, Procurement and Risks:

- 2.1 Partners continue to work collaboratively to progress both projects. Brief project-based updates are set out below, with further detail provided in Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Highways and Public Realm Project Control Board 05/03/24, and Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Link Community Hub Project Board 05/03/24. Verbal updates reflecting the Project Board meetings on Tuesday 2 April and Thursday 11 April will be provided to the Programme Board in advance of the written Minutes being available.

Link Community Hub:

- 2.2 The Link Community Hub Project, led by Ashbourne Methodist Church, is currently in a period of cost review, following receipt of an updated pre-tender estimate / bill of quantities prepared by the Project Manager / QS. The estimated cost increases are more significant than previously understood and require appropriate validation, which is being addressed alongside comprehensive assessment of options for value engineering and consideration of approaches to delivery.
- 2.3 Work continues to consider a range of potential solutions to remain on budget while continuing to deliver the project outputs and outcomes agreed with DLUHC. Confirmation of whether an element of descoping is likely to be required will be provided over the next few weeks to inform any changes

that may need to be considered by the Programme Board. Following initial review, the AMC team is of the view that the outputs and outcomes remain achievable.

- 2.4 Work continues in parallel to finalise RIBA Stage 4 detailed design and the process for the procurement of the main contractor is now due to proceed in May to allow for the outcome of the review process to influence the main works contract information.
- 2.5 Highest scored risks for the Link Community Hub Project continue to include project costs and unforeseen costs, and slippage within the programme.

Highways and Public Realm Project:

- 2.6 The DCC-led Highways and Public Realm Project is progressing through RIBA Stage 4 design, with highways designs becoming available for review. Public realm designs are due to follow later this month, with a short delay to drainage and lighting designs, which will follow in May. Following consideration of the existing designs, it has been identified that there will be unavoidable additional costs to complete the Shrovetide Walk and Millennium Square designs to the required level of detail to enable updated cost estimates and subsequent construction. Ashbourne Town Council re-considered the design cost information for Millennium Square at its meeting on 16 April and resolved to contribute up to £35k towards finalising the designs. Confirmation of additional design costs for Shrovetide Walk will follow for review by the Project Control Board.
- 2.7 Framework contractor Galliford Try is progressing Early Contractor Involvement (ECI). Further development of cost and phasing plans, including to reflect progressed detailed designs as they become available through AECOM, will inform recommendations about the extent of any value engineering and if necessary descoping that may be required to stay within the project budget. The completion of detailed design beyond the end of April will result in a delay to the full cost update and associated decisions. A key design decision relates to the choice of materials used on the highway. The materials specification needed to be agreed by the Highway Authority and also meet the aspirations of the original scheme bid and be affordable within the scheme budget. The project team is working to mitigate overall impact on the timing of delivery and further information will be provided at the next Programme Board meeting. A review of the latest construction cost estimate against the original bid costs is also planned.
- 2.8 Highest scored risks for the Highways and Public Realm Project continue to include budget pressures, traffic management and phasing of delivery, disruption to traders and stakeholder management. Active co-ordination of projects across Ashbourne and liaison with utility providers to minimise impact of their activities on the Ashbourne Reborn improvements following completion are also key mitigation strategies.

Hostile Vehicle Mitigation:

- 2.9 A brief was developed in partnership with Derbyshire Dales District Council and issued by Derbyshire County Council in March to procure specialist advice on HVM for Ashbourne Reborn.
- 2.10 The consultant's initial proposal did not meet the required criteria in terms of cost and timeframe and a further proposal has been sought by DCC. This work is required to support proportionate / evidence-based recommendations as quickly as possible regarding any implications to the design of relevant areas within the Ashbourne Reborn Highways and Public Realm Project. Any resultant cost implications from mitigations proposed will also need to be reviewed by the Project and Programme Boards.

Working Group – Design and Events:

- 2.11 The Design and Events Working Group meets approximately fortnightly to support design completion and ensure the intended future use of spaces influences design. Recommendations from the group are considered at the subsequent Project Control Board. Related decisions have included confirmation that the current wayfinding signs should be retained and the provision of a storage unit on Shawcroft Carpark will not be pursued as this had been intended to house market stalls that are not anticipated to be required for the Market Place and the distance is also considered impractical. The concept of a canopy for the Market Place is being reviewed by the Town Team, as this was not within the original project scope and may be difficult to deliver, especially in advance of an agreed organisation to take responsibility for the related management and maintenance.
- 2.12 As discussed at the Programme Board on 8 March 2024, the Town Team is keen to investigate the opportunity for a Business Improvement District (BID) that could provide a management mechanism to support future events, alongside other benefits. In advance of a BID being determined, local partners will need to consider an interim or alternative approach to events promotion and management.
- 2.13 Future meetings will also include practical consideration of the influence on the emerging construction programme on key events, with parallel work through the Comms Group and Comms officer to liaise with events' organisers.

DLUHC Information and Processes

- 2.14 Email confirmation was received from DLUHC on 3 April 2024 that there will not be an annually updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for LUF round 2 projects and programmes. Instead, changes will be agreed through the quarterly monitoring process, by separate negotiation recorded by email and, where appropriate, through formal Project Adjustment Requests.
- 2.15 The next monitoring requirement for DLUHC is the 2023/24 Quarter 4 Monitoring Report, which is required to be submitted by 26 April 2024.
- 2.16 A series of discussions have been held with DLUHC's Delivery Associates Network, which aims to provide support to unlock barriers to delivery on DLUHC funded projects. Current challenges for Ashbourne Reborn had previously been outlined to DLUHC in response to their request for

information. Initial support has facilitated the written agreement by DLUHC of departures from LTN1/20 guidance where necessary in the delivery of cycling improvements as part of Ashbourne Reborn. The Delivery Associates Network is also intending to set up a knowledge sharing event for HVM and is keen to support the consideration of a proportionate approach to HVM within Ashbourne

- 2.17 Support through the Delivery Associates Network is ongoing as part of the cost review and value engineering work for the Link Community Hub, with a pre-meeting on 12 April and a workshop on 16 April 2024. This is intended to complement work by the project team and support solutions that should be acceptable with DLUHC.
- 2.18 AMC partners are also meeting with DLUHC's Levelling Up Service representatives on 1 May. This is to take up the offer of advice around building audience and visitor numbers to help lock-in the benefits of the Ashbourne Reborn investment.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 An overview of recent and planned Comms activity will be provided separately to this report in a verbal update in Agenda Item 6 of the Programme Board meeting.
- 4.2 Regular comms updates continue for Ashbourne Reborn, supported by the Ashbourne Reborn Comms officer and in line with the agreed Comms Grid of planned activities. The Ashbourne Reborn Communications Protocol has been revised following feedback at and following the Programme Board Meeting on 8 March and through consultation with the Ashbourne Reborn Communications Group (Comms Group), which includes representation from all project partners. This is provided in Appendix 3 of this report.
- 4.3 Following a briefing and feedback in March, regular Ward Member updates are being provided between more detailed briefings to support effective communications and help to manage stakeholder expectations. A presentation to the Ashbourne Town Council Meeting on Monday 15 April, delivered jointly by DCC, AECOM and DDDC representatives, also received positive feedback and further briefings have been proposed to follow.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 The latest update on progress against milestones will be included in the presentation to Programme Board. While there has been some delay to the completion of RIBA Stage 4 design on the Highways and Public Realm Project and the availability of information for the cost review for the Link Community Hub, both Project Teams are working to minimise the impact of these delays.

5.2 Programme delivery currently remains on track for full defrayal of the LUF grant by Quarter 3 2025/26, in line with DLUHC expectations.

6. Policy Implications

6.1 The LUF proposals were developed in line with the Council's Economic Recovery Plan and Economic Plan, and Ashbourne Reborn is one of the District Council's Corporate Plan priorities within the '*Prosperous and sustainable Dales communities and businesses*' theme. In particular, the proposals directly contribute to the Place Shaping Delivery Plan core programme area: *Facilitate town centre regeneration to improve public realm and stimulate spend and investment.*

7. Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 The latest financial position will be provided within a presentation at the Programme Board meeting, reflecting information provided at Project Board meetings in April and expenditure to date set out in the quarterly monitoring Report due for submission to DLUHC by 26 April.

7.2 Cost plans were updated for both projects following the completion of RIBA Stage 3 design and are in the process of being revised to reflect more detailed information through RIBA Stage 4 design. Costs have risen considerably since the LUF bid, with much higher than predicted levels of inflation and challenging market conditions. Alongside rising construction costs and costs of materials, project fees have also increased from the original estimates prepared by the consultant bid team. Availability of materials and the influence of international conflict on supply chains is also a consideration within finances and risk.

7.3 Ashbourne Reborn Project Boards continue to consider value engineering, prioritisation and, as a last resort, potential de-scoping activities to remain within budget. Any resultant recommendations that could have direct or cumulative implications for commitments made to the DLUHC will be escalated to the Programme Board for consideration when confirmed. Reflecting the need to wait for substantive completion of the RIBA Stage 4 designs for the Highways and Public Realm Project and the outcome of the detailed cost review of the Link Community Hub, associated updates and related recommendations are anticipated for review by the Programme Board Meeting on 14 June.

7.4 DLUHC provided an unscheduled programme capacity funding payment of £16,000 in March, intended to accelerate the delivery of LUF projects. A subsequent allocation may follow in 2024/25 but is unconfirmed. The approach to the use of this funding will be reported to the Programme Board following due consideration.

7.5 The financial risk is assessed as High.

8. Procurement Implications

8.1 Procurement strategies are in place for both projects within Ashbourne Reborn, and the project teams are reminded to maintain up to date Procurement Registers to record key procurement activity.

- 8.2 Procurement of a main contractor for the construction of the Highways and Public Realm project has been undertaken by DCC. Following the ECI stage and detailed pricing of the works, formal consideration of the offer and project costs will inform a decision on whether to proceed to stage 2 construction.
- 8.3 As set out in Section 2, procurement of the main contractor for the Link Community Hub is ongoing following a promising response to the initial PQQ stage before Christmas. Following a review period to enable tender information to be informed by the required cost review, the stage 2 Invitation To Tender is now due to be issued in May. Prospective contractors have been kept informed of the process.

9. Legal Advice and Implications

- 9.1 As stated, this report summarises activity to progress the *Ashbourne Reborn* Programme, highlights key programme risks and sets out next steps.
- 9.2 There are 2 recommended decisions to be taken as noted at the top of this report. The legal risk of challenge when taking the decision as recommended has been assessed as low.

10. Equalities Implications

- 10.1 None additional at this stage, but equalities remain an important consideration for detailed design. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was prepared for the *Levelling Up Fund* bid and was submitted to the Derbyshire Dales District Council C&E Committee meeting on 29th June 2022. A further equalities assessment will be required on final scheme proposals to assess the implications of any significant changes to the project.

11. Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 No additional implications at this stage, but Climate Change Implications remain an important consideration for detailed design. A Climate Change Impact Assessment was prepared for the *Levelling Up Fund* bid and was submitted to the Derbyshire Dales District Council C&E Committee meeting on 29th June 2022. A further climate change assessment may be required on final scheme proposals to assess the implications of any significant changes to the project.
- 11.2 In terms of other environmental considerations, there are synergies between the traffic management element of Ashbourne Reborn and the air quality considerations for the area. Where the delivery of Ashbourne Reborn can contribute to and complement activity to improve air quality, this will be reflected in the Air Quality Action Plan.

12. Risk Management

- 12.1 Project level risks have been highlighted within the report in section 2, with further detail to be presented at the Programme Board meeting. The

highest strategic risk is currently considered to be Project Costs, which are being addressed through active review and management of both projects.

12.2 Current programme level risks reflect:

- Cost challenges, consistent with the national picture. Mitigation at this stage includes working with delivery partners to reduce fee expenditure (where possible), early contractor involvement and value engineering.
- Stakeholder expectations. Mitigation at this stage includes early stakeholder engagement and regular communications, expectation management and quality control.
- Programme and Resources. Delivery timeframes are challenging, and the programme is resource-intensive at all levels. Ongoing consideration of resources is required, including any related challenges facing delivery partners.

11.2 Additional comms activities outlined in section 4 and highlighted within a verbal update for Agenda Item 6 of the Programme Board meeting, will further strengthen mitigation in terms of the risks around stakeholder expectations.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	17/04/2024
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer	Karen Henriksen	17/04/2024
Director of Corporate and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)	Helen Mitchell	17/04/2024