

OPEN REPORT
ASHBOURNE REBORN PROGRAMME BOARD

Ashbourne Reborn Programme Board – 08 March 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 updated Ashbourne Reborn Communications Protocol is received and noted by the Board, including the approach to urgent communications.
3. That the Board receives and notes the AMC Procurement Strategy/Guidelines document.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 Minutes of the H&PR Project Control Board 06/02/24
- Appendix 2 Minutes of the LCH Project Board 06/02/24
- Appendix 3 Ashbourne Reborn Communications Protocol 02/24
- Appendix 4 AMC Procurement Strategy/Guidelines 02/24

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.

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 06/02/24, and Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Link Community Hub Project Board 06/02/24. Verbal updates reflecting the Project Board meetings on Tuesday 5 March 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, continues to progress through RIBA Stage 4 detailed design and the process for the procurement of the main contractor is ongoing following good indications of interest in the project at PQQ stage.
- 2.3 The Procurement Guidelines/Strategy for the Link Community Hub has been updated to reflect the latest position in line with DLUHC requirements and is provided as Appendix 4 of this report for noting.
- 2.4 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 by March 2024 to inform any changes that need to be considered by the Programme Board.

- 2.5 Highest scored risks for the Link Community Hub Project continue to include project costs and unforeseen costs, the potential outcome from intrusive surveys e.g. building fabric / structure worse than anticipated and failure to obtain sufficient tenders for the construction work within the budget.

Highways and Public Realm Project:

- 2.6 The DCC-led Highways and Public Realm Project is progressing through RIBA Stage 4 design. This includes the completion of Shrovetide Walk and Millennium Square designs to the required level of detail to enable updated cost estimates and subsequent construction. Any associated increase in costs will need to be reviewed by the Project Board.

- 2.7 Framework contractor Galliford Try are now in contract and Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) has enabled an initial review of the estimated project cost and an indicative phasing plan. Further development of this work, including to reflect progressed detailed designs as they become available through AECOM, will inform recommendations in March and April 2024 about the extent of any value engineering and if necessary descopeing that may be required to stay within the project budget.

- 2.8 Risk workshops were held on 29 January and 12 February 2024 to update the risk register based on the most recent information. This will be used to inform an update of the Strategic Risk Register for Ashbourne Reborn, required within the quarterly reporting to DLUHC. 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 has been developed in partnership with Derbyshire Dales District Council and issued by Derbyshire County Council to procure specialist advice on HVM for Ashbourne Reborn.
- 2.10 This will result in evidence-based recommendations being made 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 will also need to be reviewed by the Project and Programme Boards.
- 2.11 National consultation is ongoing until 18 March 2024 on the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, otherwise known as Martyn's law. To aid understanding of the current position and how the law might be applied to public spaces in the Derbyshire Dales, a further discussion with the police

is scheduled for 29 February. A verbal update on the outcome of this meeting will be provided to the Programme Board.

Working Group – Design and Events:

- 2.12 A second meeting of the Design and Events Working Group was held on 28 February and included discussion about the future use of spaces and associated influences on design. Recommendations about street furniture and a preference to allow for the provision of a canopy to support flexible use of the Market Place for events, rather than investment in market stalls, were considered for feedback at the subsequent Project Control Board. Fortnightly meetings of the working group have been scheduled to maintain momentum and support further recommendations to enable designs to be finalised.
- 2.13 Future meetings will also include consideration of the influence on the emerging construction programme on key events.

DLUHC Information and Processes

- 2.14 Email confirmation was received from DLUHC on 20 February 2024 detailing their acceptance of output profiles and project completion dates as set out in the Quarter 2 Monitoring Return in October 2023. This includes completion of the Link Community Hub project in July 2025 and completion of the Highways and Public Realm Project by October 2025. Further changes to end dates cannot be made without discussion with DLUHC.
- 2.15 In terms of outputs, there remains a 30% tolerance within which changes can be made to individual outputs without triggering a project adjustment request process. The 30% threshold will now be measured against the updated baseline information from October 2023.
- 2.16 The next monitoring requirement for DLUHC is the Quarter 4 Monitoring Report, which is required to be submitted by 26 April 2024.
- 2.17 As explained earlier in this section, both projects within the Ashbourne Reborn programme are currently reviewing the potential need for any descoping to remain within budget to support recommendations in March/early April. It is possible that recommendations from Project Boards will need to be reviewed outside the current schedule of Programme Board dates to enable discussion with DLUHC and inclusion of the outcome within the Quarter 4 Monitoring Report in April.
- 2.18 DLUHC have also launched their Delivery Associates Network, which aims to provide support to unlock barriers to delivery on DLUHC funded projects. Current challenges for Ashbourne Reborn have been outlined to DLUHC in response to their request for information, submitted in an online survey on 10 January and in a subsequent discussion on 15 February 2024. While these challenges are mainly focussed around specialised issues outside the anticipated offer of support, such as HVM requirements and the influence of bat roosts on planning conditions, knowledge sharing may be possible with other local authorities with similar issues.

- 2.19 The Delivery Associates Network is also keen to support Ashbourne Reborn with challenges related to value engineering, especially if potential descoping becomes a more significant risk in the weeks to come. This opportunity is being mobilised to enable a swift response if it is required towards the end of March/early April. Such support remains optional, however it is likely that DLUHC will expect all offers of support to have been exhausted before agreeing to any project adjustment requests.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 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 reviewed 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. The Comms Group meeting schedule has been set to meet monthly but it is anticipated that more frequent meetings may be required around times of peak comms requirements.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 The latest update on progress against milestones will be included in the presentation to Programme Board.
- 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 Ashbourne Reborn is one of the District Council's Corporate Plan priorities within the 'prosperity' theme. The LUF proposals are closely linked to the Council's Economic Recovery Plan and Economic Plan. They support the Corporate Plan priority of '*Prosperity*'. In particular, the proposals directly contribute to the corporate target area: *Promote investment to stimulate the economy of our market towns.*

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 on 5 March. For the Highways and Public Realm project, this will be informed by the initial review through ECI, as set out in section 2.
- 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.

- 7.3 Evolving supply chain considerations are also being taken into account within the consideration of the materials palette for Ashbourne Reborn. For example, materials sourced from outside the UK may currently be at risk of delay due to international conflict. This may limit certain options with a related impact on project costs.
- 7.4 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, with updates and related recommendations likely to be available for review by the end of March/early April, as set out in Section 2 of this report.
- 7.5 The financial risk is assessed as High.

8. Procurement Implications

- 8.1 The Procurement Strategy/Guideline document for the Link Community Hub is provided as Appendix 4, following recent additions to ensure it reflects the most up to date information, consistent with DLUHC requirements. The Procurement Strategy for the Highways and Public Realm Project was received and noted at the September 2023 Programme Board meeting. Delivery partners are required to follow these procedures in procuring project activity.
- 8.2 Procurement of a main contractor for the construction of the Highways and Public Realm project has been undertaken by DCC. This will enable completion of the ECI stage and detailed pricing of the works prior to enable formal consideration of the offer and project costs, and a decision on whether to proceed to stage 2 construction.
- 8.3 Procurement of the main contractor for the Link Community Hub is ongoing, following a promising response to the initial PQQ stage before Christmas. The stage 2 Invitation To Tender is now due to be issued in April.

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 3 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 None additional 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.

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 Project and Programme risks continue to be monitored actively, including to enable required quarterly reporting to Government on Ashbourne Reborn. Recent risk workshops for the Highways and Public Realm project and further consideration of risks for the Link Community Hub project will be reflected within a review of strategic risks in advance of the Quarter 4 return in April 2024. This will also be influenced by the outcome of work to update cost plans and determine the extent of any potential descoping.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	29/02/2024
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Karen Henriksen	29/02/2024
Legal Services Manager (on behalf of the Monitoring Officer)	Kerry France	29/02/2024