

Proposed allocation of ARG funding for city centre reopening



Topic: COVID_19 Economic Recovery – re-opening the city centre

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Purpose

To set out the proposed projects for managing outdoor city centre spaces during the re-opening from lockdown and the associated allocation of the Executive approved £200k ARG funding to delivery partners for their implementation.

Recommendations

ERG consider and the proposals in this report and, subject to SAG approval, recommend:

- The allocation of £45k to the BID to deliver College Green and general outdoor seating across the city centre
- The allocation of £60k to Make It York to deliver Parliament Street seating area and £4.5k for the associated toilets
- The allocation of a single budget of up to £20k to allow Make It York and the BID to operate shared security and waste collections across all city centre wide projects

The final decision to proceed on the above basis will be taken by the Corporate Director for Economy and Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy under the delegation provided by the Executive on 18 March 2021.

Background

A number of proposals for managing the lifting of lockdown restrictions and reopening of businesses in the city centre have been considered and on Thursday 18 March Executive approved the following:

To Delegate to the Corporate Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy the following interventions:

- *To provide temporary public toilets in the city centre during the initial stages of lockdown easing should they be required at a cost of £2k per week*
- *The expenditure of up to £200k ARG to fund the delivery of the principles for managing city and secondary centre spaces that are set out in this report*
- *The submission of any planning application required for temporary managed outdoor spaces*
- *Extend the Covid Marshalls until the end of June at a cost of £28k to facilitate the covid-safe management of the city through Covid Containment Grant funding*

The proposed expenditure to deliver these measures was set out as followed, but with an acceptance that the funding split would need to flex based on the final proposals and actual costed projects.

| Measure | Estimated cost | ARG | Containment grant | 21/22 already Budgeted |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Covid Marshalls | £28k | | £28k | |
| Public toilets (if required) | £20k | £20k | | |
| Extended footstreet costs to September | £60k | | | £60k |
| Trader Initiative contingency | £80k | £80k | | |
| Parliament Street (stage 2 and 3) | £50k | £50k | | |
| College Green (stage 2, 3 and 4) | £40k | £40k | | |
| General outdoor seating | £10k | £10k | | |
| Total | £288k | £200k | £28k | £60k |

Having undertaken detailed work with officers and supplier to refine the proposals there are three projects proposed for ARG funding, two to be delivered by the BID and one by Make It York. However, these will have some shared security costs and will have a single consistent brand identity.

Parliament Street – Make It York (see annex 1)

Make It York’s covid response proposal is to provide outdoor seating on Parliament Street throughout the spring period when lockdown is lifted in a staged approach. This should not be confused with Make It York’s usually summer programme of commercial events which will run throughout July and August as the restrictions ease (this proposals will be considered through the usual Make It York events approval process).

The spring events instead focus on providing free to use outdoor seating for people who have purchased food or drink from the Shambles Market or any other city centre businesses. The project would be run in partnership with Thor’s Tipi to assist with equipment supply and logistics, but there would be no commercial offer competing with neighbouring businesses. Instead it is designed to facilitate city centre businesses ability to serve food and drinks when they do not have their own outdoor seating or internal capacity. It will also allow the easing of congestion in the popular Shambles Market by providing somewhere to sit and eat.

At the southern end of Parliament Street this will include two open-sided tent structures (complying with public health guidance as an outdoor space) to offer some covered areas in poor weather. There will also be toilet provision. This area will have a low level fence around it to enable it to be signified that it is closed at night. It will not be a security fence as this would have a detrimental visual impact on the surrounding area, and it will be monitored by regular security patrols.

The northern end of Parliament Street will provide seating and tables which will be purchased by Make It York, remaining throughout the summer and enabling them to be used in future years. They will again be free to use by anyone.

It is proposed that the security and management of all the spaces proposed in this paper, whether provided by Make It York or the BID is shared and is set out later in this report.

The detailed costs of the proposals are set out in Annex 1, but are summarised below:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Outdoor tented seating space and associated management cost</i> | - £45,867 |
| <i>Toilet provision and cleaning/emptying</i> | - £4,500 |
| <i>Purchase of outdoor seating pods for remainder of Parliament St</i> | - £28,500 |

As the outdoor seating will be purchased rather than rented, and therefore used for the summer events programme and future years, it is proposed that the cost is split between ARG funding and Make It York. **This mean that the total ARG funding provided to Make It York will be £60k for the seating provision and £4.5k for toilets.**

College Green and general outdoor seating – York BID (see annex 2)

York BID successfully delivered a managed outdoor seating area at College Green last year that enabled surrounding businesses with no outdoor space to re-open and operate under Covid restrictions. They have an agreement in principle with York Minster (who own the land) to implement a similar version this year (subject to their board approval).

There are a number of refinements to the proposal based on lessons learned last year. This will allow a reduction in running costs and to minimise the impact on the grass by removing physical structures. There will be no tented area and instead of temporary toilets people using the space will be signposted to and permitted to use the toilets of neighbouring businesses. The management and cleaning of the space will also be the responsibility of those businesses who will enjoy significant benefits from it, with a clear principle that if they fail to do so the seating will be removed. The details of security are set out in the following section.

In addition to College Green the BID will provide further general outdoor seating across the city centre, offering high quality benches in locations that are agreed with landowners and council officers. These will be free to use by anyone, and overseen by BID and Covid rangers, and the surrounding businesses that will benefit. Again, should any seating area become problematic it will simply be removed.

There are currently 13 locations where it is envisaged the seating can be provided, subject to final sign off with landowners, highways and SAG.

The cost of hiring the equipment for both College Green and the general outdoor seating will be £45k, funded through ARG funding (detail in annex 2).

Security and branding

Although the above are being led by Make It York and the BID the proposals have been worked up in collaboration. The spaces will bring significant benefits to residents and visitors in providing spaces to sit, eat and socialise, and for businesses who will be able to reopen under Covid restrictions. However, there is also an acknowledgement that the spaces will need to be monitored to ensure they do not attract any anti-social behaviour.

There are four key strands to this strategy:

- 1) An acknowledgement that licensing laws do allow takeaway alcohol regardless, and the introduction of this seating will ensure social distancing and prevent people from congregating in large unmanageable numbers
- 2) There will be clear signage and waste bins to encourage users to clear up after themselves, with BID Rangers, Covid Marshalls and surrounding businesses having day to day responsibility to ensure that they are not being abused and are remaining clean.
- 3) Should any area start to attract persistent issues and aren't being kept clean by the businesses that benefit then they will be removed.
- 4) **A significant budget of £20k is proposed to provide security and waste collection for all of the spaces throughout the operation period.** This will include night patrols and can be stepped up on weekends and busy periods and will flex should any issues arise.

It is also proposed that the tables and seating provided has a consistent colour palette and feel across all the city centre projects to ensure that it is a coordinated and high quality approach. The Behavioural Insights project will also help to shape the proposals, layouts and signage, whilst noting that there will need to be a degree of retrospective application and evolution of each project as the delivery timescales will predate most of the guidance.

Summary of expenditure

| Project | Delivery partner | ARG allocation |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Parliament Street | Make It York | £60k |
| Parliament Street toilets | Make It York | £5k |
| College Green and general outdoor seating | BID | £45k |
| Shared security and waste collection | Make It York/BID | £20k |
| Total | | £130k |

This will result in a total of £130k of ARG funding against a previously assumed delivery budget of £120k for these projects and temporary toilets. It is proposed that the generous £80k Trader Initiatives contingency fund is reduced by £10k to fund the shortfall.

Next steps

Should ERG recommend the approval of the projects set out above they will be taken to Safety Advisory Group (SAG) for consideration on **Friday 26 March**. If approved in principle it is proposed that the Corporate Director for Economy and Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy formally approves the allocation of each ARG funding to each project that same day. This will allow Make It York to commission before the school Easter holidays and refine based on any SAG feedback to give the best possible chance of implementation by the first weekend of anticipated re-opening on Friday 16 April.

A paper will be brought to the next ERG setting out proposed guidelines for the allocation of the Trader Initiatives contingency following next week's Traders Meeting.