

Report to	-	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	-	26 November 2018
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	The Progression of the Rother District Public Realm Strategic Framework

---

**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That the draft Rother District Public Realm Strategic Framework be agreed and forwarded it to Cabinet for approval to:

- 1) carry out consultation on the draft Framework with key stakeholders and the public; and
  - 2) report the outcomes of the consultation back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in spring 2019, along with a final draft of the Rother District Public Realm Strategic Framework.
- 

**Head of Service: Tim Hickling**

---

## Introduction

1. The Public Realm Working Group (PRWG) was set up at the request of Members following a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) in July 2015 on the management of the public realm in Rother. This supports a number of the Core Aims and Broad Outcomes of Rother District Council's Corporate Plan 2014 – 2021.
2. The PRWG concluded in a report to Cabinet in November 2016 (Minute CB16/42 refers) which contained eight recommendations, representing the culmination of site visits by Members, evidence gathering, stakeholder interviews and other research, which established the importance of good management of the public realm to economic growth and to health and social wellbeing across the district.
3. The first of these recommendations was that a Public Realm Strategic Framework (PRSF) for Rother be commissioned from independent consultants via a competitive tendering process. The commissioning of the PRSF was approved in Cabinet Minute CB16/42.
4. Officers subsequently prepared and issued a brief for the work to a number of consultants via the East Sussex Procurement Hub in autumn 2017. However, no interest was received from the invitation to tender.
5. In response to this, a draft PRSF has now been produced by officers and this is presented at Appendix A for Members' consideration and recommendation to Cabinet for public consultation (including relevant stakeholders).

6. The PRSF aims to address the need for better and more co-ordinated plans, standards and procedures and is informed by all the evidence gathered to date. It is a strategic document that aligns with the Council's Planning Core Strategy requirements to manage and improve the district's public realm in cooperation with relevant stakeholders. The framework sets out the vision, objectives and key principles.
7. The PRSF is structured in three sections;
  - i. **Section 1:** This introduces the subject and scope of the document, the local policy context, a vision for the district's public realm, a set of strategic objectives, an overview of national best practice guidance and a summary of the challenges and opportunities facing the district's public realm, including case studies of recent public realm improvement schemes in the district.
  - ii. **Section 2:** Analyses the different spatial areas of the district; the towns (Battle, Bexhill and Rye), the villages and the rural areas. This provides an overview of the current quality and condition of the district wide public realm and proposes place-specific priorities and principles for public realm management, maintenance and potential intervention.
  - iii. **Section 3:** Sets out with delivery mechanisms and translation into policy, along with funding mechanism and explores the roles and responsibilities of the various local authorities, statutory undertakers/utility companies and other key stakeholders (including the local community, businesses and developers) and sets out a number of future actions to be developed through a collaborative, multi-agency approach. The development of each of the actions will be a collaborative task between different departments within Rother District Council as relevant and liaison with appropriate external agencies.
8. The PRSF is closely aligned to the Council's Core Strategy and linked to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). A number of actions within the PRSF could potentially benefit from infrastructure funds at both district level (through the Regulation 123 list) and locally through Parish and Town Council's CIL fund for improvement to the public realm.
9. The PRSF also delivers on several areas of the Rother Corporate Plan:
  - i. Core Aim 2: Sustainable Economic Prosperity
    - a) Town Centre Improvement
  - ii. Core Aim 3: Stronger, Safer Communities
    - a) Safer communities and reduction in anti-social behaviour
  - iii. Core Aim 4: A Quality Physical Environment
    - a) Quality Public Realm
    - b) Conservation and Biodiversity
10. Consultation is now required on the draft PRSF with key stakeholders, organisations and the public, to ensure multi-agency buy-in and support for the intentions contained within the Framework.

## **Conclusion**

11. The PRSF will help drive a cultural step change to embed the goal of achieving a quality public realm in Rother, supporting the Corporate Plan Vision and the delivery of a number of the broad outcomes of the Corporate Plan. It will encourage a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to public realm design, quality and appearance throughout the district and will promote local distinctiveness.
12. Agreement is sought on the draft PRSF for the improvement of the public realm in Rother for onward presentation to Cabinet. Thereafter, if approved by Cabinet, the responses generated through the consultation process and officers' proposed responses to them, will be prepared to a future OSC likely to be spring 2019.

Dr Anthony Leonard  
Executive Director

## **Risk Assessment Statement**

There are reputational and strategic risks to the Council in not acting on the results of this scrutiny review. Taking the opportunity to create a positive impact on the public realm has the potential to create economic, social and financial benefit.