

Key Decision Required:	No	In the Forward Plan:	No
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REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE AND PUBLIC REALM TO AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO ENTER INTO CONTRACT FOR THE HIGH STREET ACCELERATOR

21 November 2025

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
To allocate £296,151.63 from the High Street Accelerator Green Space Funding (as part of the HSA projects) to RCL to complete the works as agreed by the High Street Accelerator Partnership. To approve the Council entering into Contract with Ryebriidge Construction Limited (RCL) to carry out public realm works in Dovercourt under the High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme Green Space Scheme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
In August 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded the Council £500,000 of Green Spaces Funding as part of the High Accelerator Pilot scheme focusing on Dovercourt High Street, after an Expression of Interest was submitted by the Council. The Expression of Interest was based on projects identified within the Dovercourt Masterplan Revisited and was agreed with the High Street Accelerator (HSA) Partnership. The HSA Green Space Fund is a UK government pilot programme that provided additional funding to selected high street areas to improve their green spaces, such as parks and planters. It's a component of the broader High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme, which offers seed funding to help revitalise declining town centres by tackling vacancy and footfall issues. To ensure the maximum impact was realised from the funding, the Council commissioned a Public Realm Architect, to draw up proposals and prepare tender documentation to procure a contractor for delivery of the main contract. As such, on 15 January 2025, a decision was published to engage Deborah Saunt David Hills Architects (DSDHA), to undertake this role. A tender process with support from the Essex Procurement Partnership (EPP) has now taken place with the initial exercise not securing a successful contractor although there had been interest prior. Investigation by EPP established that the deadline for spend was the blocker to contractors submitting a tender. The original deadline for committing these funds was March 31 2025, this was then extended to June 30, 2025 but flexibility on the timeline has now been granted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Early August 2025, correspondence was sent to MHCLG stating the challenges to spending the funding by the deadline and a reply was received on 15th August 2025 to confirm they are happy for the projects to continue and on the 28th August 2025 a further response was received: <i>'Many thanks for your patience and sending through your procurement plans to allocate the remaining programme spend.'</i>

I am pleased to confirm that we are happy for you to commit the rest of the funding as long as the work represents value for money and the funding is defrayed in this financial year (ideally this calendar year).'

EPP contacted those contractors who had initially expressed an interest in the project during the soft market testing stage and informed them of the extended timeline and invited them to re-tender.

On the 27 August 2025 one tender submission was received from Ryebidge Construction Limited and on 10 September 2025 a Consensus Meeting took place to score the submitted tender with a second Consensus Meeting taking place on 15 October 2025 looking at cost and social value. This tender scored sufficiently to be awarded the contract but required a Value for Money Report.

Cost consultants, Playle & Partners, were commissioned on 1 October 2025 to provide a Value for Money report which the Council received on 5 November 2025 and which recommended that: *Overall, based on the information we have been provided, we deem that the Works Schedule submitted by Ryebidge Construction Ltd with a proposed Contract Sum of £296,151.63 appears to be justified and well aligned with the projects objectives and expected outcomes and provides Tendring District Council with a value for money return.*

Works within this contract are to include:

- **Queen Victoria Memorial**
 - Improved accessibility to the town centre from the beach.
 - High Street and the Queen Victoria statue public realm improvements
 - Safety improvement to the rear of the Queen Victoria statue
- **Station Plaza** - New Pocket Space in town centre
- **Underpass** – improve attractiveness, access and connectivity between the promenade and the main retail spaces
- **Mill Lane North** – Improve wayfinding and connectivity to the main retail spaces
- **Improved Greenery** –
 - Improved green spaces and attractiveness of town centre
 - Improved access from Cliff Park

Although MHCLG have agreed that the money is defrayed by the end of the financial year, they have advised that they would prefer that we are in contract by the end of December. This contract is currently on track to meet the December deadline with works starting in the new year.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm:

- a) approves the allocation of £296,151.63 of the High Street Accelerator Green Space Funding to enable the contract to be awarded to Ryebidge Construction Limited to complete the works as specified; and
- b) approves the Council entering into contract with Ryebidge Construction Limited enabling the specified green space projects in Dovercourt to continue as approved by the High Street Accelerator Partnership.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

An allocation of £500,000 has been awarded to the Council by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to improve the green spaces within and around Dovercourt High Street. A design has been agreed by the High Street Accelerator Partnership and MHCLG which provided the information required for the tender documents.

The projects within this scheme are designed to improve Dovercourt High Street by:

- **Enhance public spaces:** Create and improve green areas and parklets to make high streets more pleasant and attractive.
- **Connect green spaces:** Improve pedestrian routes to better link high streets with existing green areas like parks.
- **Boost community life:** Provide better places for residents and visitors to meet and socialize.
- **Drive economic growth:** Encourage more footfall in high street areas, which helps support local businesses.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not to proceed with the contract and identify other projects within Dovercourt to spend the High Street Accelerator Green Space Funding or to start a completely new tender process. Both of these options would not be achievable within the timeline.

To not commission DSDHA to provide a Quality Control service and providing the resources in-house. The knowledge and experience to provide

To return the funds to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and not support the greening of Dovercourt High Street, however, this would mean the opportunity for regeneration in the high street would be missed.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Corporate Plan (2024-2028)

The Council has adopted a new Corporate Plan – a key document which lays out the high-level priorities for the authority over the next four years. The Accelerator project meet the following themes in the plan:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities
- Championing the local environment
- Promoting local heritage
- Working with partners to improve quality of life

Highlight Priorities 2024-25

On the 12th March 2024 the Council set out its highlight priorities for 2024-25, which included delivering the High Street Accelerator under the raising aspirations and creating opportunities theme.

We will celebrate business success, encourage cultural, tourism and economic growth:

- Implement Levelling Up Fund, Capital Regeneration Partnership Projects and High Street Accelerator Schemes, taking these through design and planning

Economic Strategy 2020-24

The Tending Economic Strategy was updated in 2020. The Strategy uses evidence from Office of National Statistics to demonstrate that there have been some important changes in the district's economy in recent years which require a change in approach. The successful Levelling Up application complements the following areas for Action set out in the Strategy

The Accelerator will further the Council's development of high-quality public realm projects in Dovercourt town centre, making it an increasingly attractive place for people to visit, capitalising on the growth in tourism locally.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A residents and business consultation was carried out in August 2024. The two major challenges identified as barriers to using and operating in Dovercourt were the look and feel of the town.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	☐ Significant effect on two or more wards ☐ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income ☐ Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	

YES	The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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Normally a decision to award a contract following a procurement exercise would be at officer level, however it is noted that the decision of Cabinet on 24 May 2024 (minute no.10 (h)) delegated the authorisation of the spending of the grant funding to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm, therefore this report supports both decisions required.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The national High Street Accelerator Programme included a £5m capital fund. The ten participating councils nationally could apply for a share of up to £500,000 to improve their high streets' green spaces and create more pleasant environments for residents to meet and socialise.

The Council submitted an expression of interest on 1st March 2024 and published a notice of decision by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Economic Growth, Regeneration & Tourism Portfolio Holder on 16 April ahead of receiving funding.

Subsequently in June 2024 a Memorandum of Understanding was completed and provided to Government.

On the 8 May 2024 a Grant Determination Letter was received awarding £500,000 funding (£450,000 Capital, £50,000 Revenue) for the financial year 2024/25 to spend in line with the expression of interest in support improvements to green space in Harwich and Dovercourt. However, due to the announcement of the elections, unless payment was finalised, all Government funding was delayed allowing a new Government to take a view.

On the 5th August 2024, TDC received confirmation from the High Streets Team that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have approved continuation of the green spaces funding for the High Street Accelerators Pilot Programme and the Council received the funding later that month.

Budget:

Capital

- **Main Designers (DSDHA – David Hills)** The initial design for the green spaces. **£29,975.00**
- **Main Contractor (via CCS framework).** We are currently in the last round of clarifying queries (with another consensus meeting next Wednesday) and hopefully we can appoint soon after. **£296,151.63**
- **QS & Cost Consultant (RFQ)** We are looking to appoint Playle & Partners, their fees are **£24,393.75**
- **Architects** Additional services to be provided by appointed architect David Hills of DSDHA, incorporating quality control during construction, total fees of **£9,860.00**
- **Esign Media** Signage including wayfinders, map boards, hoarding etc.; **£41,415.79**
- **ECC Licenses.** Licenses for furniture, planters, maps etc. **£150**

Revenue

- **CVST** Equipment, resources and training to maintain the planters **£5,000**
- **Plants and Soil** For planters and rear of the Queen Victoria Statue **£25,000**

Capital

	Spend to Date	Committed to Date	Budgeted
DSDHA	£29,975.00		
Ryebridge			£296,153
Player and Partner		£24,393	
DSDHA - additional		£9,860	
Esigns		£41,416	
ECC	£150		
Total	£30,125	£75,669	£296,153
			£401,947

Revenue

	Spend to Date	Committed to Date	Budgeted
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CVST			£5,000	
Plants & Soil			£25,000	
Total			£30,000	£30,000
				£431,947

The remaining unallocated funding will be retained and used in the event of further contingency being required. Discussions will take place with the partnership, as to how this is spent, if the contract related contingency is not required. A further Executive Decision will be required for further budgeted spend once the value is confirmed and for any underspends at a later date

X The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

No further comments other than those within this report.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

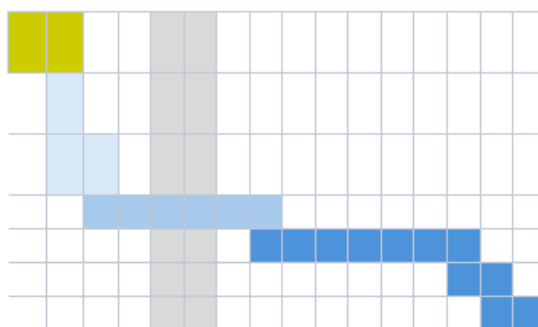
The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The HSA fund is specifically for regeneration projects in Dovercourt town centre. A specific budget has been allocated to cover this project in its entirety.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The HSA Partnership make the initial decisions which are then approved and published by the Council. Playle & Partners will provide a QS role throughout the project.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	Allowance in the budget has been made for the maintenance after the project is complete. As this is a pilot scheme, all spend and performance in monitored by MHCLG.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Project Programme (draft)

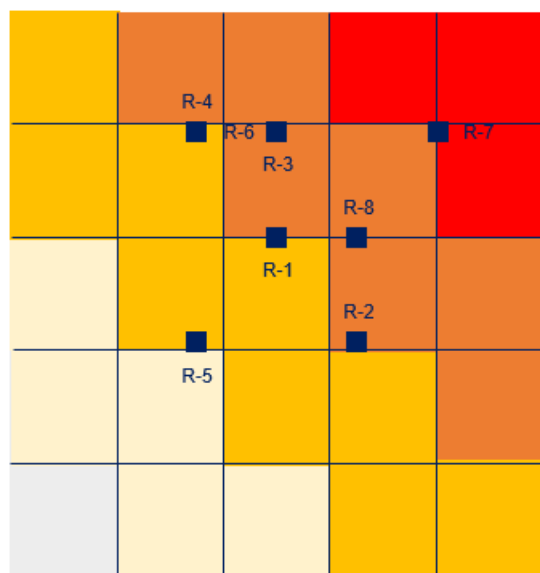
Govern- ance	Partnership Approvals	1	27/11/2025	02/12/2025
Prepare	Executive Decision	1	02/12/2025	07/12/2025
Prepare	Contract Award	1	07/12/2025	12/12/2025
Design	Mobilisation	5	12/12/2025	14/01/2026
Deliver	Construction	6	14/01/2026	23/02/2026
Deliver	Commissioning	2	23/02/2026	07/03/2026
Deliver	Handover	1	07/03/2026	12/03/2026



These dates will be confirmed once a contract is in place.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

Last update: 21/11/2025			Initial score				
ID	Description of Risk & Consequences	Initiated by / date	Risk Cause / Driver	I	L	T	Mitigation Strategy
R-1	Scope Creep - scope increases once works start.		Programme & Fin	3	3	9	With only £500,000 allocated for green space upgrades, there's a risk of under-delivery or incomplete projects if costs escalate. Management of the contract will need to be robust and costs will need to be addressed effectively.
R-2	Budget - Not in contract by the end of the financial year		Financial	4	2	8	The project was initially due to be complete by March 2025 and subsequently extended to June 2025. Following an initial procurement exercise, this was not deliverable. As such, MHCLG have extended the timescales for which the project can be 'defrayed' until March 2025.
R-3	Stakeholder consultation and engagement - Need to consider businesses and their service delivery.		Communications	3	3	9	The High Street has a number of small retail units and a regular Friday market which relies on local trade. Works within this area could discourage residents from using these businesses and taking their trade elsewhere.
R-4	Reputational - Failing to deliver what the community requires or the improvements fail to meet the requirements under the funding.		Programme	3	2	6	There is a risk that the scheme will not meet the communities' expectations is not executed effectively. If the green space improvements don't reflect what the community actually wants, they may fail to attract footfall or reduce anti-social behaviour.
R-5	Impact on other projects - ECC's public realm, CRP project at Milton Road and Victoria Terrace.		Financial	3	4	12	Essex County Council's Kingsway Public Realm Scheme is currently under procurement and could potentially start at the same time. Engagement with the ECC team is essential to ensure both projects don't run at the same time causing a higher of level of risk to residents and businesses. CRP projects engage internally with leads.
R-6	Resource availability - limited resources available to maintain the planters. Without long-term funding or maintenance plans, they could deteriorate and become neglected.		Programme	4	2	8	New green spaces require ongoing maintenance. CVST has expressed an interest to maintain the planters ongoing. The HSA funding will provide the equipment, training and advertising for a new group of Highstreet Hero's. An SLA will be required.
R-7	Cliff Stabilisation		Environmental	5	3	15	The cliffs behind the Queen Victoria Statue are unstable. Part of the scheme is to support closing an unsafe path. Strong engagement required between the contractor and Engineering.
R-8	Resource availability - CVST volunteers reduce and they are unable to maintain the planters.		Operational	4	3	12	There are currently limited resources in Public Realm and for them to maintain the planters will have significant impact. Also, with LGR future resourcing is unknown. However, CVST volunteers have supported Public Realm for some time and have currently proved to be reliable.



EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	
It is anticipated that the scheme will improve access between the town centre and the beach by lighting and improving the surface of the tunnel at the top of Mill Lane which is the only access point without steps. This will enhance the experienced of disabled residents and visitors, those with limited mobility and for those with young children who require prams and pushchairs. Lighting the tunnel will also provide a safer route for all during the hours of darkness or reduce visibility and will provide better security for the residents of the assisted living accommodation located at the mouth of the tunnel. The full scheme has been designed to improve the environment providing a heightened ‘pride in place’ supporting the wellbeing of the residents, visitors and businesses.	
SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS	
The High Street Accelerator Green Space Fund is a UK government pilot program that provides additional funding to selected high street areas to improve their green spaces, such as parks and planters. It's a component of the broader High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme, which offers seed funding to help revitalize declining town centers by tackling vacancy and footfall issues. Local authorities are using these funds to implement projects like creating parklets and improving the aesthetics of their high streets.	
IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION	
There will be no implication to Devolution or Local Government Reorganisation as this funding will be spent by the end of 2025/26. CVST have agreed to maintain	
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050	
The decision of this report will not impact the Council’s net zero aim. Adding green spaces to Dovercourt will have environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, reduced urban heat, and support for biodiversity. They achieve this by absorbing carbon dioxide and pollutants, intercepting and absorbing rainwater, cooling urban areas through shade and evaporation, and creating habitats for wildlife	
OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS	
Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.	
Crime and Disorder	Lighting the tunnel will also provide a safer route for all and security for the residents. Providing spaces that encourages people to dwell and socialise supporting more footfall into the high street which discourages anti-social behaviour.
Health Inequalities	N/A
Area or Ward affected	Harwich & Kingsway

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The High Street Accelerator Green Space Scheme is a key component of the UK Government's broader High Street Accelerators pilot programme, launched in 2023 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (now Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government). This initiative is designed to rejuvenate struggling high streets across England through community-led regeneration.

On 13 September 2023, TDC were advised by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) that Tendring had been identified as one of ten authorities to pilot the Government's new High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme and it was agreed that Dovercourt High Street would be the beneficiary.

As part of the funding agreement, the High Street Accelerator Partnership, which is representative of the local commercial sector, community leaders, voluntary sector and importantly town centre retail businesses was formed from an established and successful group - Harwich and Dovercourt Tourism Partnership. The scheme empowers local decision making for projects through both the revenue and capital (Green Spaces) schemes. The agreement for the funding stipulates that the local authority will administer the funds, but it is a partnership decision on the projects it would like to take forward.

In year one (2023/24) a seed fund of £50,000 was made available. This fund was spent on a number of projects to enhance the look of the High Street, to market the area and to provide a successful community event to launch the initiative on 30 March 2024.

For this financial (2024/2025), £187,000 was made available from DLUHC for each High Street Accelerator Partnership to support further projects in line with the long-term vision to regenerate and revive a declining high street. This funding must be spent in the current financial year. Year 1 and 2 (above) of the seed funding has now been spent.

Alongside the funding for the pilot, MHCLG invited the Council to submit an 'Expression of Interest' for a share of £5 million funding (£4.5m CDEL and £0.5m RDEL) available as part of the High Street Accelerator Pilot Programme. This additional funding is intended for Accelerator partnerships to deliver projects to improve green spaces and parklets around the High Street, if these are necessary to the High Street vision.

The Council submitted an expression of interest on 1st March 2024 and published a notice of decision by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Economic Growth, Regeneration & Tourism Portfolio Holder on 16 April ahead of receiving funding. Some of the areas the funding covers are:

- Improved accessibility to the town centre from the beach.
- High Street and the Queen Victoria statue public realm improvements
- Pocket Spaces
- Wayfinding

TDC requested their full allocation of £500,000 to be used on green schemes that are intended to draw footfall in the High Street.

On 24 May 2024, Cabinet considered a report titled 'Progress with Town Centre Regeneration through the Clacton Long Term Plan for Towns and Dovercourt High Street Accelerator.' Through that report, Cabinet delegated authorisation of this spending of the High St Accelerator

Green Space Budget to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm. As such, spending recommendations are made by the HSA partnership but require authority from the Leader of the Council in order for decisions to be published.

In order to mobilise the Green Spaces fund, the Council commissioned a Public Realm Architect, to draw up proposals and prepare tender documentation to procure a contractor for delivery of the main contract. As such, on 15 January 2025, a decision was published to engage Deborah Saunt David Hills Architects (DSDHA), to undertake this role and achieve maximum impact for the area.

In addition to the main project as discussed in this report, a scheme to install new wayfinding and heritage signage in addition to improve connectivity between key visitor locations and the town centre is being progressed in advance of letting the main contractor. Following a procurement exercise, it is recommended through this decision to engage Esign Visual Communication to complete the following:

- 14 map boards (replacing 7 existing and installing 7 new)
- 5 lectern style history boards;
- 5 aluminium Wayfinder signs; and
- printed hoarding around the beach end of the derelict site at Orwell Terrace.

These investments will support the continued enhancement of the town centres offer by improving the visitor experience, supporting local businesses, and celebrating the town's identity. The wayfinding signage will assist visitors and residents to easily find key locations such as shops, attractions, transport hubs, and public facilities. Importantly, the installations will also encourage exploration of lesser-known areas and spread footfall more evenly across the town centre. The heritage signage will turn spaces into meaningful locations by highlighting their historical significance, whilst attracting cultural and heritage tourism from visitors who are interested in learning about the town's past.

The wider project will support the continued enhancement of the town centres offer by improving the visitor experience, supporting local businesses, and celebrating the town's identity.

The public realm scheme will focus on driving footfall from the sea front, improving accessibility, providing attractive open spaces to support dwell time and general enhancing and improving the look and feel of the town centre.

Dovercourt and Harwich have a strong historic offering which is in close proximity but there is a disconnected from the town centre due to the lack of quality pedestrian routes. Improving connections, especially for those with limited mobility or young children would integrate these open spaces as part of a greater town centre offer, encourage trips and increase dwell time.

The poor quality public realm further detracts from the character and distinctiveness of the town centre and degrades its image.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

[Acceptant of the High Street Accelerator Green Space Funding](#)

[Procurement for a Specialist for the HSA Seed Funding and Green Space Funding Projects plus Exemption from Procurement Rules](#)

[High Street Accelerator Green Spaces Scheme - Consultancy appointments for construction](#)

[HSA Procurement and Contract with Esign Visuals Communication](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

APPENDICES

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