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Report to Cabinet Member (City Services)

12<sup>th</sup> January 2006

**Report of**  
Director of City Services

**Title**  
Liveability Progress Report

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### **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To report on the progress of the service reforms and physical projects financed by Coventry's Liveability programme. A separate report will be considered at a later date on the strategic and policy issues arising from the Liveability programme.
- 1.2 To seek authority to enter into Grant Aid Agreements with CovWise and West Midlands Police to help deliver parts of the Green Space 'block' (paragraph 4.16) and enforcement cameras (paragraph 4.18), respectively.

### **2 Recommendations**

Cabinet Member is asked to:

- 2.1 Note and endorse progress on delivering the Liveability service reforms and physical projects described in section 4 and listed in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Authorise officers to prepare Grant Aid Agreements with CovWise (paragraph 4.16) and West Midlands Police (paragraph 4.18)
- 2.3 Note that another progress report will be submitted in six months' time.

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 In April 2004, Coventry learned that it was one of the government's 27 successful Liveability pilots and was offered £3.4m. to invest in projects that will test new ways of making our city cleaner, safer and greener. The objectives of the Liveability Fund are to:
  - encourage local authorities to strategically plan the management and maintenance of the environment;
  - develop performance management systems for improving service delivery;
  - encourage better use of funding for local environmental management by joining up with other initiatives; and
  - share good practice - the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) monitors and shares good practice through the Liveability Action Learning programme.
- 3.2 On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2005, following a public consultation mapping exercise, Cabinet agreed to allocate the funding to the projects in Appendix A, subject to consideration of periodic reports to Cabinet Member for City Services. The projects were recommended to Cabinet by the Coventry Partnership as a balanced programme that reflects the twenty agreed national and local Liveability criteria.

3.3 Four of the projects comprise a number of smaller schemes put forward through a series of consultation events with local Ward Members and Area Forums, accounting for approximately half the capital expenditure. These are: green space, streetscape, neighbourhood shopping centres and neglected properties. Recommendations to Cabinet Member for City Services for schemes to be funded through these 'blocks' have been made by the Coventry Partnership's Environment Group after being scored against the twenty Liveability criteria.

#### **4 Proposal and Other Option(s) to be Considered**

4.1 Coventry's Liveability programme provides revenue funding of £400,000 for programme management and to undertake a series of service reforms to accelerate change, which must be completed by agreed target dates. As a 'reward' for meeting these deadlines, capital funding of up to £3m., claimed in four instalments, is available to finance a series of physical projects. The service reforms are now largely complete and positive outcomes are evident. Full service reform evaluations will be available after the end of the service reform programme in March 2006.

4.2 All the physical projects will have started by March 2006 and will be complete within two years. Evaluations are ongoing and full reports will be available in 2008. The reports below focus on the emerging outcomes of each service reform and summarises progress on each physical project.

##### **Service reforms**

4.3 Integrating fly-posting with fly-tipping and dog-fouling enforcement The fly-posting enforcement function has been transferred from Planning to Public Protection and is now delivered as part of an integrated environmental enforcement team. As part of a new protocol, front line and area based staff from a variety of agencies are now being trained to assist the team to investigate and enforce the relevant legislation on fouling, littering, and fly-tipping/posting.

4.4 Training plan for front line staff The purpose of this was to help grounds maintenance and street cleansing staff adapt to a new integrated way of working. The training has led to more flexibility, a sharing of skills, a better understanding between staff and a more co-ordinated and responsive service.

4.5 Improving access to services New ways of publicising street services have been tested in Stoke Aldermoor, with a view to using the most effective methods elsewhere in the city. Stoke Aldermoor was chosen because it has one of the lowest service take-up rates in the city, yet street services have one of the poorest perceptions amongst residents. As part of the Stoke Aldermoor Renewal Project (SARP), service promotion has centred on an "It's Your Call" campaign, using high quality posters, tenant information packs in appropriate languages, wrist bands & suggestion boxes. The expected increase in service use and residents' perceptions will be measured over the next six months.

4.6 Area-based generic teams The grounds maintenance and street cleansing functions have been successfully brought together, resulting in the completion of all operations on one site simultaneously and a faster response to customer demands. The results are evidenced, for example, in a fall in the number of customer complaints about litter in grass.

- 4.7 Hand-held technology As part of the Council's investment in new technology to improve customer contact and speed service delivery (Coventry Direct), Liveability funding has been used to issue Personal Digital Assistants to staff undertaking tree inspections, street lighting inspections and to teams dealing with abandoned vehicles, fly-tipping and waste collection. This enables reports to be logged and instructions to be issued instantly, improves response times, reduces the risk of duplicate logging and reduces journeys.
- 4.8 Promoting individual action Ways of encouraging residents and businesses to adopt a responsible attitude to their surroundings are also being tested in Stoke Aldermoor as part of the SARP project. Neighbourhood Wardens are personally encouraging those responsible for creating litter and waste to deal with it responsibly, using information cards to remind people of the services available and how to access them and, as a last resort, action that can be taken against them for failing to act.
- 4.9 Implementing the review of area-based officers A review of area based staff has been implemented as a result of the move to Neighbourhood Management from Area Co-ordination and through the restructuring of part of the City Development Directorate. This has resulted in a more focused and efficient deployment of staff in the three new Neighbourhood Management areas. This has led to a wider review of area-based staff from all agencies and Council departments working to make the city cleaner, safer and greener.
- 4.10 Designated Public Places Orders Implementing the legal process of extending Police powers to deal with anti-social drinking in public places in all public places within the city boundary expected to be completed by the end of March 2006.

### **Physical Projects**

- 4.11 Longford park Liveability funding has enabled community-led improvements to Longford Park to continue. Works completed so far as part of the refurbishment scheme include: the provision of a multi use games area, a skate park, footpath improvements and provision of lighting. The following works are expected to begin in March 2006: entrance enhancements, creation of a sensory garden, provision of a CCTV system, additional footpaths, provision of an accessible play area and soft landscape works. We will also explore options of how to continue working with residents to assist in the ongoing development and management of the park.
- 4.12 Memorial Park Following a process of public consultation and a stakeholder design workshop, specialist advisers have been appointed to prepare a long-term development framework for the park and an application for Heritage Lottery (Parks) funding. In the short term, Liveability funding will be used to surface footpaths and improve lighting and entrances into the park. This work is expected to be underway by March 2006. In the longer term, a 'friends' of group will be set up from the 250 people who expressed an interest in the park during the consultation. This group will be engaged in the preparation and delivery of the long term development plan and management of the park.
- 4.13 Far Gosford Street Liveability funding has made an important contribution to the funding package necessary to secure £3.0m. of Heritage Lottery and other funding to implement a regeneration framework for the street. The funding will be used to create a new public square at the Gosford Green 'island', which will begin in February 2006, and provide high quality paving and street furniture in the street, which is a Conservation Area. The street works are scheduled to begin in July 2006.

- 4.14 Sustainable Communities The environmental charity Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire has prepared a schedule of community-led environmental improvements in Radford, Stoke Heath, Charterhouse and Bell Green, as part of their Sustainable Communities initiative. These improvements are an important part of delivering Neighbourhood Plans in these areas. Liveability funding has enabled two schemes to be implemented: new sporting and recreational facilities at the Meadowlands in Radford (completed) and new play facilities at Stoke Heath (underway). Further work is planned at next year at Charterhouse Fields.
- 4.15 Green Space 'block' At previous meetings, Cabinet Member for City Services has agreed investment from the Liveability Fund for 20 green space improvement projects that scored highest against twenty Liveability criteria. Of these, one is now completed (Hawkesbury Village), one is underway (Blackwell Road) and a further five are expected to be underway by March 2006, with the remainder expected to be underway by May 2005. A reserve list of schemes is available in case some of these do not proceed or cost less than expected.
- 4.16 It is proposed that the city's Intermediate Labour Market company, CovWise, should be engaged to implement certain work on green space schemes. The sites selected will be those that are a good match between the skills required to implement the project, the skills available to CovWise supervisors and the training that CovWise can offer to those excluded from the labour market.
- 4.17 Fly-tipping enforcement cameras Lamp columns have been adapted to take surveillance cameras and two mobile fly-tipping enforcement cameras and a surveillance vehicle have been purchased. These are being successfully used to collect evidence and secure fly-tipping prosecutions.
- 4.18 A second phase is proposed, which will involve the purchase of another 10 mobile cameras to target crime (including environmental crime) and anti social behaviour. The cameras will be used by all of the agencies involved in the Active Intelligence Mapping initiative (AIMs) process, including the City Council, Police and Whitefriars Housing. The cameras will act as a deterrent, help share information, co-ordinate services, target action and secure prosecutions. They will be managed and maintained by the Police as part of their existing arrangements that are in place to support the AIMs process. A Grant Aid Agreement is the recommended mechanism for the transfer of funding from the City Council to the Police Authority for purchase.
- 4.19 Swanswell Park As a 'quick win' for the Swanswell regeneration initiative and in partnership with CVOne, Liveability funding has been used to improve the short-term condition and appearance of the park. This has involved clearing and trimming vegetation and installing new seating and 'iron trees' for hanging baskets. Swanswell Park lies on the edge of the administration boundary between CVOne, who manage the City Centre, and City Services, who manage land outside the City Centre. It is also close to Whitefriars owned properties in Hillfields. The project is therefore being used to test new ways of working between these three organisations and English Landscapes, CVOne's and Whitefriars' private contractor.
- 4.20 Streetscape 'block' Implementation of Community Street Audits carried out in Stoney Stanton Road and Ball Hill will begin in Mid February / Early March 2006. Streetscape improvements will also be carried out in Jardine Crescent, Winchester Street, Colchester Street, Holbrooks Lane, Radford Road, Quinton Park and Ernesford Grange. Implementation in all these areas is closely linked to wider regeneration programmes for

road corridors and neighbourhood shopping areas. As well creating a more attractive shopping environment, this work will help to reduce unnecessary street clutter, improve safety and reduce conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. A reserve list of schemes is available in case some of these do not proceed or cost less than expected.

4.21 Neighbourhood shopping centres 'block' The following centres are due to be improved with the help of investment from the Liveability Fund: Riley Square, Jardine Crescent, Acorn Street (Stoke Aldermoor), Holbrook Lane, Radford Road and Quinton Park. Implementation is closely linked to wider regeneration programmes for neighbourhood shopping areas. This includes the provision of support services for independent retail business struggling to compete with their multiple counterparts and the marketing and management of centres that are not purpose built. A reserve list of schemes is available in case some of these do not proceed or cost less than expected.

4.22 Neglected property 'block' This initiative is designed to address the blighting effect of derelict and neglected private properties on neighbourhoods and on the city's image. Twenty-six neglected properties have been approved for implementation using grants of up to 75% of eligible works, up to a limit of £15,000 per property and a piece of derelict land (former car park) in Freehold Street which is now completed. These grants are closely linked to the co-ordinated use of legal powers, where appropriate, to force owners to take action and are not being used as substitute for this. Action is being targeted at areas with the greatest concentration of such properties or where a single neglected property has a great impact. A reserve list of schemes is available in case some of these do not proceed or cost less than expected.

#### **Other**

4.23 Staff training The equipping of staff to keep Coventry's streets and spaces clean, safe and green is critical to the long term success and sustainability of Coventry's Liveability programme. This is being done through a series of sessions that aim to harness staff at all levels and from all services and agencies to a common purpose and understanding. This training is closely linked to the service reform, *implementing the review of area-based officers* and involves the 'mapping' of all area based staff including those from three Council Directorates (City Services, Chief Executives and City Development), all registered social landlords (RSLs), the Police and Fire services and CVOne.

4.24 Community training This training, with support budgets, will target key area based officers and community leaders to set up and sustain community groups to oversee the maintenance and management of streets and green spaces throughout the city, often known as 'friends of' or 'street watch' groups.

4.25 Programme management This provides the essential staffing and support needed to deliver the Liveability programme, identify and embed best practice, identify areas for organisational change, drive through this change and harness and co-ordinate the contribution of different services and agencies.

4.26 Project design staff This budget enables the purchase of specialist skills (e.g. landscape design) to ensure the programme can be delivered to the required quality and timescale.

## 5 Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Neighbourhood Management	√	
Best Value	√	
Children and Young People	√	
Comparable Benchmark Data	√	
Corporate Parenting		√
Coventry Community Plan	√	
Crime and Disorder	√	
Equal Opportunities	√	
Finance	√	
Health and Safety		√
Human Resources	√	
Human Rights Act		√
Impact on Partner Organisations	√	
Information and Communications Technology		√
Legal Implications	√	
Property Implications	√	
Race Equality Scheme		√
Risk Management		√
Sustainable Development	√	
Trade Union Consultation		√
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact	√	

- 5.1 **Area Co-ordination** The Neighbourhood Management structure, network and knowledge has helped to identify priorities for investment under the block grant schemes and to engage with communities. In particular, the programme will involve Area Services Officers and capacity building officers. Neighbourhood Management is represented on the Liveability Officer Group and the service is fully aware of the programme and its implications.
- 5.2 **Best Value** The principles of Best Value will run through the Liveability programme. For example, all contracts will be tendered in accordance with Council Standing Orders.
- 5.3 **Children and Young People** Wherever appropriate, children and young people are engaged by project officers in the development, design and implementation of projects, tailoring projects to the needs of communities and using projects as learning opportunities for young people.

5.4 Comparable Benchmarking One of the Government's aims of the Liveability programme is to encourage Liveability pilots to use, develop and share best practice. To help with this, the ODPM has commissioned the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to develop an action learning programme. Projects that contribute to this score more highly against the Liveability criteria than those that do not.

5.5 Coventry Community Plan; and Crime and Disorder The Liveability programme has emerged directly from activity of the Coventry Partnership and the priorities of its Environment Theme Group. It helps to deliver the Environment aims of the Coventry Community Plan and contributes to the Partnership's community safety and transport aims.

5.6 Equal Opportunities The Liveability programme aims to 'narrow the gap' between different parts of the city. Some projects will improve access to streets and green spaces for disadvantaged people.

5.7 Finance Liveability grant is a reward for the achievement of agreed milestones, and, unusually, grant is claimed in advance of expenditure. This means that there is a delay between receiving the grant and spending the grant and that grant will be held on the balance sheet. By March 2006 the full £3.4m. grant will have been received. By then, all the service reforms will be completed and all physical projects will be underway.

5.8 The revised predicted cash flow table below shows that all expenditure will not be defrayed until 2007/08. This is because some projects, such as Memorial Park, will not begin until early 2006 and will require contract retention payments for up to a year after contract completion.

	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Total
Cap	25,000	450,000	1,525,000	1,000,000	3,000,000
Rev	25,000	100,000	150,000	125,000	400,000
Total	50,000	550,000	1,675,000	1,125,000	3,400,000

5.9 The ODPM have stated that the allocation of project expenditure to projects can be agreed locally and that the capital /revenue split is flexible. The expenditure allocations in Appendix A are potentially flexible, depending on deliverability and final cost estimates.

5.10 The block grant schemes in particular have the capacity to absorb underspends on other projects. By identifying a number of 'reserve' schemes, the 'blocks' can be 'grown' or 'shrunk' during the course of the programme, and can be used to help balance accounts, where necessary.

5.11 For some projects (e.g. Longford park, Far Gosford Street, Sustainable Communities), Liveability funding is part of larger funding packages. Every opportunity is being taken to use the Liveability fund as match funding for other external funding bids (e.g. European, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Regional Development Agency).

5.12 Human Resources The programme has created 1.5 new temporary posts: a half time Project Manager and a full time Project Officer. Each Liveability project has an allocated Project Officer from the relevant department and a nominated Evaluation Officer, identified from within City Services' Policy and Business Development Team. Landscape design expertise (paragraph 4.26) has been tendered to specialist local firms. Employees working in areas where the service reforms have been piloted have been fully involved throughout the process.

- 5.13 Impact on Partner Organisations Liaison arrangements are in place with the local partners listed in paragraph 4.23.
- 5.14 Legal Implications Powers to implement Liveability projects are given under the Local Government Act 2000, the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic regulations Act 1984 and Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Detailed design of projects will also be required to meet the relevant provisions of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 5.15 Property Liveability investment will improve the condition and appearance of some Council owned land and property.
- 5.16 Sustainable Development The Liveability programme as a whole will have a beneficial impact on the environment. As a requirement of the appraisal process, all Liveability funded projects are required to state how they will minimise or reduce the consumption of natural resources and any negative impact on the environment.
- 5.17 Voluntary sector The Liveability programme partners directly with Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire on the Sustainable Communities project. The Community Empowerment Network is represented on the Coventry Partnership's Liveability Sub-Group and other voluntary sector organisations are involved in delivering specific schemes under the 'blocks'.

**6 Monitoring**

- 6.1 Finances, benefits, outcomes and milestones are monitored by the Liveability project team and overseen by City Services Management Team, the Coventry Partnership and the Liveability Officer Group. The Coventry Partnership's Environment Group is responsible for appraising projects and recommending funding allocations to the Cabinet Member (City Services).
- 6.2 Each project is required to determine its own exit strategy as part of the project appraisal process. For example, physical projects that do not adequately plan for future maintenance and service reforms that do not take account of the impact on service demand may need to be changed. No projects are reliant on continued funding after the end of the programme.

**7 Timescale and expected outcomes**

- 7.1 The ODPM requires that certain milestones are met in order to trigger capital grant payment in instalments. All service reforms must be completed and all physical projects underway by March 2006. Outcomes are covered in paragraph 4.

	Yes	No
<b>Key Decision</b>		√
<b>Scrutiny Consideration</b>		√
<b>Council Consideration</b>		√

## List of background papers

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### Papers open to Public Inspection

<b>Description of paper</b>	<b>Location</b>
Liveability bid	BGH 5
Liveability pro formas	BGH 5
Liveability 'blocks' scoring matrix	CC4 5.03

**APPENDIX A – Liveability project summary**

		Revenue	Capital	Total
	<b>SERVICE REFORMS</b>			
A1	Integrating fly-posting	0	0	0
A2	Training plan for frontline staff	50,000	0	50,000
A3	Improving access to services	20,000	0	20,000
A4	Area based generic teams - stage 1	0	0	0
A5	Handheld technology (projects 1, 2 & 3)	60,000	75,000	135,000
A6	Promoting individual action	15,000	0	15,000
A7	Implement review of area based officers	0	0	0
B9	City-wide outdoor drinking ban (DPLO)	40,000	0	40,000
	<b>Service reform total</b>	<b>185,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>260,000</b>
	<b>PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS</b>			
	<u>Flagship greenspace</u>			
C1	Longford Park demonstration project	0	250,000	250000
C2	Memorial Park access dem. project	0	450,000	450000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>700,000</b>	<b>700,000</b>
	<u>Flagship streetscape</u>			
D1	Far Gosford Street demonstration project		340,000	340,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>340,000</b>	<b>340,000</b>
	<u>Small scale greenspace</u>			
E1	Sustainable communities (groundwork)	0	300,000	300000
E2	Green space block grant fund	0	400,000	400,000
E3	Fly-tipping enforcement cameras	0	100,000	100000
E4	Swanswell park improvements	0	25,000	25,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>825,000</b>	<b>825,000</b>
	<u>Small-scale streetscape</u>			
F1	Community street audits & 'clutter-busting' block grant fund	0	260,000	260,000

	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>260,000</b>	<b>260,000</b>
	<u>Shopping centre renewal</u>			
G1	Shopping centre renewal block grant fund		400,000	400,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>400,000</b>
	<u>Derelict, unsightly &amp; neglected property</u>			
H1	Property block grant fund		400,000	400,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>400,000</b>
	<u>Investing in people</u>			
I1	Liveability staff training	20,000	0	20,000
I2	Liveability community training	20,000	0	20,000
I3	Liveability programme management (Project Manager & Block Grant Officer)	135,000	0	135,000
I4	Liveability landscape/ urban designer	40,000	0	40,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>215,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>215,000</b>
	<b>Physical total</b>	<b>215,000</b>	<b>2,925,000</b>	<b>3,140,000</b>
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>3,000,000</b>	<b>3,400,000</b>