1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

1.1 To update Members on progress of this important environmental improvement project in Strabane town centre and to seek members continued endorsement of the scheme.

2 Background

2.1 Members will be aware that this project was initiated under the former Strabane District Council, in conjunction with the then Department of Social Development (DSD). Council are the lead partner for the project, with the Department for Communities (formerly DSD) acting as the sole funder for the design of the project up to RIBA Stage 3 i.e. developed design, including the submission of a planning application.

2.2 The project will see environmental improvements to Abercorn Square, Railway Street, Market Street and Castle Street.

2.3 The flow of traffic through the town centre will also change with priority given to traffic travelling between Market Street and Railway Street and a new junction for traffic wishing to turn onto the Derry Road. These changes to the traffic regime will necessitate movement of the current public realm space in the vicinity of the pagoda moving to the eastern side of the Abercorn Square, this move will also result in the removal of the pagoda. Furthermore, the existing bus stop at Abercorn Square will be relocated to the purpose built layby on Canal Street to the side of the Library.

2.4 The environmental improvement works will consist of the replacement of the variety of footpath finishes on Market Street and Abercorn Square with new natural stone paving, along with new granite kerbs. The existing street furniture will also be replaced to give a consistent appearance across the whole public realm area. On Castle Street both the pavement and road will be replaced with natural stone paving. Railway Street has been subject to previous improvement works within recently recent times so it is proposed to use a similar pallet of finishes along the remainder of this street e.g. reconstituted stone concrete paviours, asphalt and granite kerbs.

2.5 With the exception of Castle Street it is not intended to resurface the roads within the area of the scheme, unless their existing condition merits resurfacing.
2.6 The site layout plans for the scheme have been appended to this item.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The design has now reached RIBA Stage 3 i.e. developed design.

3.2 The scheme has been subject to a Pre-application Discussion (PAD) with the various interested consultees, including extended discussions with Transport NI. Officers await the final PAD report from our Planning colleagues. The Strabane Town Forum has also been brief on the project at their monthly meetings.

3.3 Council’s appointed design team has also been liaising with the various utility companies so that the proposed environmental improvements works can be future proofed, as far as is reasonably possible, from untimely disturbance by utility companies once completed.

3.4 Officers are now in a position to submit the planning application for the scheme but given the scale of the project, a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) has to be undertaken. This will entail a 12 week consultation period between the notice being made and the submitting of the application. A separate item has been submitted to Committee this month for endorsement by members that sets out in detail the proposed consultation strategy to be undertaken as part of the PAN.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR and Other Implications

4.1 The scheme currently has an overall global cost estimate of approximately £4m.

4.2 As discussed in Section 2.1 above, Council are the lead partner for the project. The Department for Communities (DfC) have funded the design of the project up to RIBA Stage 3 i.e. developed design, including the submission of a planning application.

4.3 The funding of the project beyond Stage 3 is currently the subject of discussions between Council and DfC at the joint working group on capital projects set up between Council and DfC.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members continued endorsement of this important environmental improvement scheme for the town centre of Strabane is here by sought.
Background Papers

Appendix 1 - Site Plans