

REPORT TITLE: WINCHESTER DISTRICT HIGH STREETS' PRIORITY PLAN  
2021/22

22 JUNE 2021

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Martin Tod, Cabinet Member for  
Economic Recovery

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This paper introduces for consideration a draft High Streets' Priority Plan 2021/22 (see Appendix 1). This one-year tactical plan frames the work of the Economy & Community Service, working with partners and stakeholders across the district to move from a position of response to the impacts and challenges brought about by COVID -19 restrictions, to one of proactive support.

It lays the foundation for a longer term strategic approach which will be developed for the next three to five years to support the future of our high streets and district centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Policy Committee are asked to;

1. Review and comment upon the draft High Streets' Priority Plan and in particular consider:
  - a. Are the objectives rights?
  - b. Have any dimensions which the Plan should emphasise or focus on been missed?
  - c. Have any important elements or attractors been missed and from which we should be maximising opportunity?
  - d. Is there one thing we should be doing that in your view will have the greatest impact?

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (If applicable, please include below some detail to state that option(s) will need to have a legal and financial assessment) (to be reviewed by Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer)

1.1 The resources required to implement the High Streets' Priority Plan will come from within existing staffing and expenditure budgets of the Economy & Community service. This plan is about realigning and focusing our service delivery for 2021/22.

1.2 The work will be supported by additional HM Government and ERDF funding made available through the Welcome Back Fund. Winchester City Council has been allocated £110,000 to deliver activity to support the high street to end March 2022. See appendix 2 for a summary of the Grant Action Plan.

1.3 To ensure the fund delivers value for money across all options, all procurements are required to be compliant with [ERDF Procurement Requirements](#) and council procedures and guidelines.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

2.1 Background

2.1.1 As the government has announced its reopening roadmap it is an appropriate time for the council to set out how it will work collaboratively to give effective support for the short term changes and longer term success of our high streets. The council recognises the challenges faced by businesses and places, but also the need to be clear about our way forward. This one-year tactical plan seeks to do that by articulating what we need and can do to drive the direction of change, act with confidence and to identify and take opportunities.

2.1.2 There is much in the way of market commentary on the changes to ways of working, demands for different types of commercial accommodation and high street uses. Some of which was being debated prior to 2020. As the Plan is implemented and long term approaches developed we can draw on this insight alongside best practice and case studies from other centres through, for example, the Future High Streets Task Force. We can also utilise our own evidence and consultation feedback from work on the Local Plan and Central Winchester Regeneration.

2.2 Stakeholder input

2.2.1 An early draft of this Plan has been shared with key stakeholders to test the proposed objectives and priorities. It also provided the opportunity to raise awareness and promote the approach of working together on this agenda. The Plan has been shared with the City Centre Strategic Partnership, Winchester Business Improvement District Board, Winchester Business Strategy Group. To ensure the needs and opportunities in the district centres

where included a joint meeting of Councillors and trade organisation representatives from New Alresford, Bishops Waltham, Wickham and Denmead has held along with separate a meeting with Whiteley.

## 2.3 High Streets' Priority Plan

2.3.1 The Plan sets out priorities and levers to frame the actions and approach to be taken. These objectives are to:

- **Build on our high streets' brand** and build confidence.
- **Create a better connection** between residents and their local centres.
- **Maximise opportunities** and capitalise on key added value activity.
- Make more of our **places as social and community hubs**.
- **Celebrate what we have and our new successes** - independent retail, festivals, events, attractions, creative and cultural venues.
- **Foster business resilience** so that our high street businesses survive, capitalise on change, grow and prosper.

2.3.2 The levers that the council has are to:

- **Lead** – be responsible for the things we have control over, recognising we will need others to help achieve these.
- **Enable** – help and support others to deliver through funding, regulation, planning.
- **Influence** – create a shared agenda with partners working to common goals.
- **Complement** – generate added value by aligning programmes and activities with each other.

2.3.3 The work proposed in the Plan will need to result in bringing footfall and unit vacancy rates back to where they were pre 2020. It will also contribute to the existing ambition to increase visitor spend and lengthen dwell time, by create a compelling reason for people to visit and to return. The specific indicators that will be monitored to gauge the success of the actions delivered under this Plan are:

- Footfall
- Vacancy rates
- Business closures / openings
- City Centre WIFI use
- Car parking use
- Marketing response rates and reach

## 3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3.1 Alternative options considered:

1. No plan is produced: this option was rejected as it is considered crucial that a clear plan for how we will work to support our high streets to build confidence, set the direction of change and focus efforts on what will have the greatest impact.

2. A long term strategic plan is produced: this option was rejected as it would take longer to draft and result in a period with no delivery plan when the high streets are at a critical time of recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions and need help now. A longer term plan will be produced over the coming year whilst the tactical plan is delivered.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

##### Previous Committee Reports:-

None

##### Other Background Documents:-

None

#### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Draft High Streets' Priority Plan 2021/22 May 2021 (ELB)

Appendix 2: Welcome Back Fund – Grant Action Plan Summary