

REPORT TITLE: WINCHESTER DISTRICT HIGH STREETS' PRIORITY PLAN –  
UP-DATE AND PROGRESS REPORT

30 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Tod, Cabinet Member for Economic  
Recovery

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

At its June meeting the Policy Committee's reviewed the Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan and provided feedback on its content and purpose.

This report provides the Policy Committee with an up-dated High Streets Priority Plan that incorporates the feedback given (see appendix 1) and a progress report on its delivery (see appendix 2) along with data on outcome measures.

It also sets out a forward plan of activity to be delivered under the Plan to March 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Policy committee are asked to:

1. Note the up-dated Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan.
2. Note the progress made on project delivery to date.
3. Make comments and provide direction on the proposed forward plan of work to March 2022.

## 1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 The Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan is being delivered by the Economy & Community Service teams, with staff resources deployed from Economy, Tourism and Community.
- 1.2 The delivery of a number of the projects identified in the Plan has been made possible by aligning this activity to that of the funding the council received under the Government and ERDF programmes;
  - a) Reopening High Street Safely (RHSS) - £110,972 from June 2020 to March 2021 the extend to July 2021;
  - b) Welcome Back Fund (WBF) – £110,971 from April 2021 to March 2022.
- 1.3 The council has grant agreements for the use of these funds that set out the eligible expenditure and outcome measures. The plans for these funds were developed in consultation with Winchester BID and representatives from the market towns including ward members, town / parish councils and local trade associations and chambers of commerce. We continue to work with these representatives on the implementation of the projects.
- 1.4 The WBF enabled the council to appoint a temporary project officer to co-ordinate activity, liaise with partners and support the programme management and monitoring.
- 1.5 All contracts are being managed in accordance with the council's contract management framework in order to maximise the opportunities presented and grant funding provided.

## 2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

### 2.1 **Background**

- 2.2 The Policy Committee considered the Winchester District High Street Plan 2021-22 at its June meeting. The Plan has been developed as a short term tactical plan to “reinvigorate our District’s high streets post COVID-19, to support our businesses to reopen and innovate and to enable people to enjoy social and cultural experiences again.”

### 2.3 Matters raised by the Committee were:

- a) Council to engage with the landlord on the former Debenhams site’s concerning its future use and potential for meanwhile uses such as an indoor market.
- b) the Winchester Town Forum informal group that considers the High Street should also be asked to also consider the role of markets

- c) the role of advertising and branding in promoting the districts' high streets
- d) the Priority Plan should include rural towns and the wider district rather than focus on Winchester High Street.

2.4 The Plan has been up-dated to include a more detailed section on the role of the market town high streets within the district and the revised Plan is attached as Appendix 1. The other matters arising are addressed in the following progress report on project delivery.

### 3 Progress Report

3.1 The District High Streets Priority Plan included an action plan that identified specific actions and projects that would be delivered in 2021-22. A detailed progress report on the actions included in given in Appendix 2. The following is a summary drawing out some of the highlights from what has been achieved in the first six months.

#### 3.2 Completed activity Q1 & Q2

#### 3.3 Business support

**ShopAppy - e-commerce platform** has been launched offering an additional marketing channel for independent businesses and consumers. Over 150 businesses registered offering over 7000 products and services for purchase. Transaction figures will be available in January 2022.



**Business Support programme – Digital Islands** were contracted to provide a COVID-19 business information and guidance service between January and extended to August 2021.

- 178 people registered for on line support on the website. <https://highstreet.winchester.gov.uk/>
- 133 businesses have attended one or more group support events, webinars or masterclasses.
- 54 businesses have booked one to one sessions with a business advisor

### 3.4 Public Realm

**Buskett Yard** – improving the aesthetics of the area within Buskett Lane, Buskett Yard and the Bus Station by painting the tarmac, putting up bunting and placing planters/seating within the area.



**The Square** – weekend closures to through traffic and new signs installed.



### 3.5 Promotion and Campaigns

#### 5 Things to do this week/weekend

Launched beginning of October. 4 short videos to date combined Facebook reach: 1,105



#### New Trails

Tree trail - Winchester is home to an abundance of trees. A guide to over 20 species that provide us with beauty and shade in the city centre – from the Common Beech to the Japanese Cedar tree.

Visit Winchester website views: 366  
Trail views via new digital trails platform: 541 (20 Sept – 9 Nov)



## Summer campaigns

Digital content (blogs, B2C e-newsletters and VW social media channels) included:

- Summer holidays in Winchester
- Top 10 Green spaces to explore in Winchester this summer.
- Festivals – Heritage Open Days

Ave open rate: 28.2%

Ave Click rate: 4.3%



## Shop local

Made in Winchester and Shop Appy blogs (also promoted via VW social media channels) along with competition to win a hamper of local produce – over 1,100 entries.



## Rediscover Campaign at River Park Leisure Centre



## Knitted King Alf Trail by Playmakers

Trail promoted via Visit Winchester channels April to July 2021 to encourage people to visit shops to take photos of the Knitted King Alfs on display. VW worked with Market Towns and knitted King Alfs made their way into Independents across our Market Towns.



### 3.6 **Forward Plan projects Q3 and Q4**

3.7 Over the past six months work has commenced on a number projects that are still being developed, designed and procured for delivery in the next period to end March 2022. In summary this includes:

#### 3.8 Business Support

- a) Continue to promote e-commerce platform Shop Appy to increase businesses signed up and customer take and use.

#### 3.9 Public Realm

- a) Install planters for Parchment Street to replace the highway barriers
- b) Busket Yard phase 2 – potential bunting and umbrellas to dress the space and ways to activate it with events and performances
- c) Procurement of window dressing/wraps for Debenhams.
- d) Projects being scoped and costed for the market town high streets are weed clearing, replacement waste bins and temporary planter projects.

#### 3.10 Promotions and Campaigns

- a) Major focus on Christmas in Winchester and promotion of events, attractions, shops and things to do.
- b) Market towns maps, a joint market towns guide, and a district wide “Welcome Back” inspirational based publication.
- c) Procurement for a city Lights Festival in February has commenced.

3.11 Two research projects are being procured to review the street markets offer and the festivals and events offer across the district which will inform future activities and priorities. The Town Forum informal City Centre Group will be included in the work on the street markets.

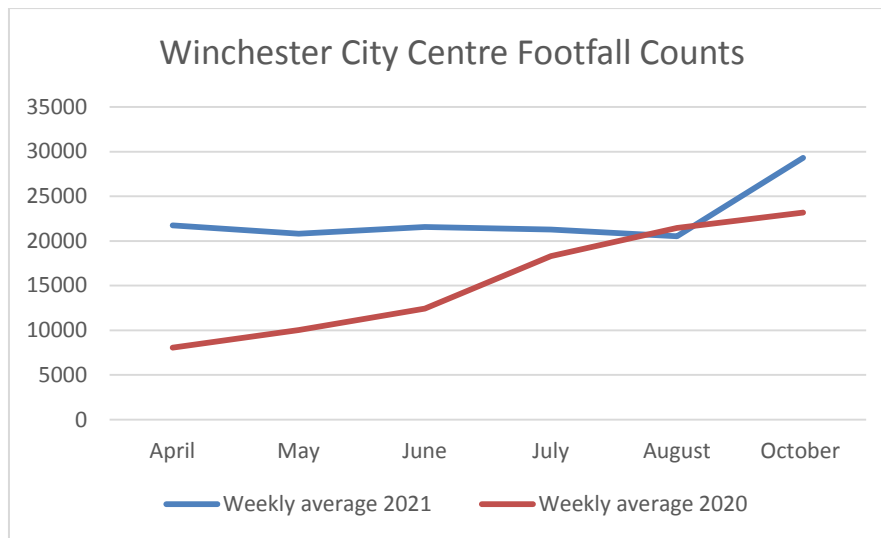
## 4 **Outcomes monitoring**

4.1 In order to measure the success of the Plan and its delivery a set of indicators where identified for quarterly monitoring with full review at the end of the plan period.

### 4.2 Footfall

4.3 City Centre footfall data is collected by Winchester BID. Chart 1 shows that that the average week footfall counts has remained relatively steady over the past five months (comparable data not available for September) but has risen in October to a weekly average footfall count of 29,319. Post COVID -19 restrictions in March 2020 the level of footfall was far less however grew steadily. In January 2020 pre-COVID-19 weekly footfall counts averaged 25,882.

Chart 1. Average weekly footfall counts 2021 compared to 2020



#### 4.4 Vacancy rates

4.5 City centre vacancy rates are provided by the Winchester Business Barometer produced by Prof. Kind. In mid-October, the city centre vacancy rate was 10.3% which is a slight fall from the January 2021 figure of 11.2%. In early 2020, pre- pandemic, the vacancy rate was 6.9%. The national figure is 14.5% (Retail Gazette [19 August 2021]).

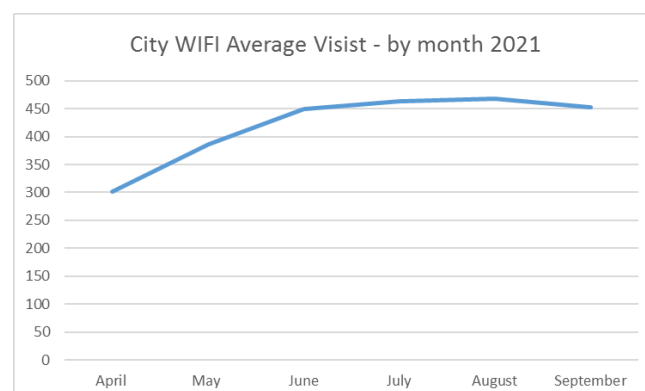
#### 4.6 Business closures / openings

4.7 In the market towns we are aware of three business closures; two in Wickham and one in Bishops Waltham. In the city centre there have been nine closures and 13 new openings. Additionally some stores have moved premises for example Mountain Warehouse and Jigsaw.

#### 4.8 City Centre WIFI use

4.9 The city WIFI launched in September 2020 and after an opening peak of 412 average monthly visits it steadily declined to around 100 per month until March 2021 when average monthly visit started to increase. The overall trend is of a steady increase over the past six months.

Chart 2. City WIFI Total Monthly average visits Q1 & Q2 2021



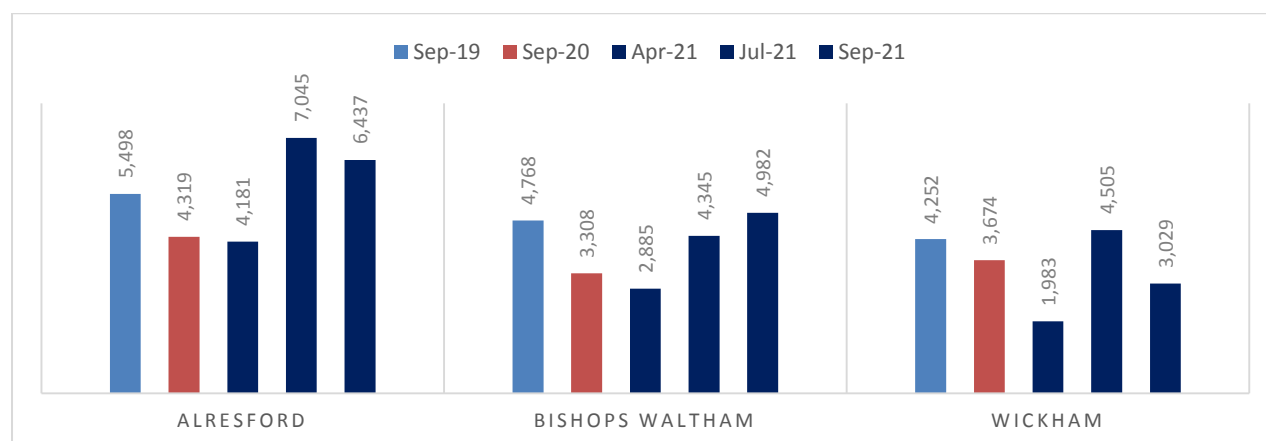
#### 4.10 Car parking use

Table 1. District Car Park Use

Location	Sep-19	Sep-20	Apr-21	Jul-21	Sep-21
Alresford	5,498	4,319	4,181	7,045	6,437
Bishops Waltham	4,768	3,308	2,885	4,345	4,982
City*	428,551	284,022	233,969	386,802	448,810
Wickham	4,252	3,674	1,983	4,505	3,029

\* The city car parks includes all car parks in city, park and ride and pay and display on street parking, but not residents permits.

Chart 3. Trend in Car Park Use in Market Towns Pre; during and post COVID-19 restrictions



#### 4.11 Marketing response rates and reach

4.12 Shop Local - Related Facebook and Instagram posts had a combined reach of over 6.1k and over 6.7k impressions on Twitter. Facebook ad secured a reach of 13,000.

### 5 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5.1 The Policy Committee report in June 2021 identified options considered and rejected in relation to the High Streets Priority Plan. This is an up-date and progress report so no additional options have been considered at this time.



## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

### Previous Committee Reports:-

BHP018      22 JUNE 2021      WINCHESTER DISTRICT HIGH STREETS' PRIORITY  
PLAN 2021/22 22

<https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/documents/s15764/BHP018%20High%20Streets%20Priority%20Plan%20FINAL.pdf>

### Other Background Documents:-

Reopening High Streets Safely Grant Action Plan, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Revised 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Welcome Back Fund New Activity Form, 28 May 2021

Winchester BID Business Barometer 40<sup>th</sup> Edition January to September 2021, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021

[winchester business barometer - Google Drive](#)

## APPENDICES:

Appendix 1. Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan – revised Sept 2021

Appendix 2. Action Plan progress report