

REPORT TITLE: SHOP APPY

1 MARCH 2022

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Martin Tod, Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This report provides the Policy Committee with a progress report on the delivery of an e-commerce platform offering virtual high streets across the district, funded by the Welcome Back Fund and which forms part of the Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Policy committee are asked to:

1. Note the progress made on delivery of this programme of work to date.

1. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 The e-commerce platform is being delivered by ShopAppy and the contract is being overseen by the Economy Team.
- 1.2 The delivery of this project has been made possible by aligning the activity to that of the funding the council received under the Government and ERDF programmes:
 - 1.2.1 Reopening High Street Safely (RHSS) - £110,972 from June 2020 to March 2021 and extended to July 2021
 - 1.2.2 Welcome Back Fund (WBF) - £110,971 from April 2021 to March 2022
- 1.3 ShopAppy was awarded the contract following a competitive quotation process in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules and ERDF procurement rules. The value of the delivery contract was £16,600 plus VAT and an additional marketing contract of £4,000 plus VAT
- 1.4 Support for business engagement on the platform has been provided by local bodies including the Winchester BID via its Independents Group.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

2.1 Background

- 2.2 The requirement for a district wide e-commerce platform aligns with the Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan priorities and in particular including:

- Build on our high streets' brand and build confidence.
- Create a better connection between residents and their local centres.
- Foster business resilience so that our high street businesses survive, capitalise on change, grow and prosper.

2.3 Stakeholder input

- 2.3.1 The concept was market tested with stakeholders across the district prior to inception. The feedback was extremely positive about the need for a platform to support independent businesses who either did not have an online presence or for those that did, an additional online route to market. Respondents both from the independent business community across the district, including the city centre independents group along with representative stakeholders supported the approach proposed.

2.4 Selection of supplier

2.4.1 ShopAppy was selected following a competitive quotation process in line with ERDF procurement rules and the councils contract procedure rules, against the following requirements:

- Offer an effective and economic e-commerce solution to businesses.
- Be complementary to and operate effectively with businesses existing website and e-commerce systems.
- Offer a simple solution to establishing an on-line e-commerce presence to those businesses who currently do not offer this service to their client base.
- The priority should be on offering retailers a collaborative on-line presence. However additional functionality which would support other sectors located on the high street and similar locations, such as the food and drink sector providing an online route to market supported by a local delivery service would be considered as added value.
- Offer a free of charge service to those businesses and consumers engaging on the platform for at least the first 6 months of operation.
- Ideally offer a co-ordinated approach to on-line payment transactions, consumer ordering and delivery.

2.3.2 The service provider was required to meet the following delivery and outputs:

- Actively engage businesses to ensure an effective number and type of businesses/product offer are achieved in order to offer a viable and attractive range to consumers at launch.
- Continue to engage more businesses and retain effective and helpful operating relationships with all business operating on the platform.
- Support businesses with profile set up, product photos and getting live on the platform quickly and effectively.
- Support businesses in terms of their own promotion of this additional service.
- Ensure an effective volume and range of businesses are operating on the platform at the end of the initial 6 month funded period to ensure that it will operate sustainably in the future. ShopAppy matched this free funding period and businesses and consumers are able to access this platform for free for one year from launch.
- Promote the service directly to a priority local audience across the district ensuring that traffic generated makes it viable for businesses to retain their

presence on the platform. Promotion of the service to a wider audience would be seen as added value.

2.5 Virtual High Streets launch

2.5.1 Businesses were engaged initially during the summer 2021 via a range of engagement activities. A soft launch to consumers took place in July 2021. The full platform was actively promoted to consumers from September 2021.

2.6 Marketing Activity

2.6.1 *Posters and banners*

A banner across the city high street was in place for the weeks of 20 September 2021, 04 October 2021 and 08 November 2021. Posters were displayed in key locations where available.

2.6.2 *Print Media*

The Winchester Magazine carried a display advert and associated editorial along with FB coverage (circulation 8500 print copies and exposure to 10,000 Facebook followers) and the story was also carried in The Chronicle and website coverage (circulation 344,000 print copies and exposure to 2.7m website users per month). Business to Business and Business to Consumer postcards were produced and given out directly to businesses as a leave behind following initial engagement meetings. The consumer postcard was used to raise awareness via various channels including the Hampshire Farmers Markets, where ShopAppy took a presence.

2.6.3 *Social Media and online content*

ShopAppy and the Tourism team undertook a number of promotions via Facebook and Twitter, including location based campaigns for the city, Alresford, Bishops Waltham and Wickham. The reach of the activity undertaken by the council is 6478 consumers to date. B2B promotions were included in editions of the Business Bulletin between August and December 2021 (circulation 850 business email addresses each edition). The council are partnering in ShopAppy's national on line #lovelocal campaign to drive business around Valentine's Day.



Visit Winchester - King Alf
22 Jan · G
Our Virtual High Street in Alresford is here to support our independents with ShopAppy.

Why not see what you can find? <https://bit.ly/306FHkT>

#ShopLocalShopWinchester



Visit Winchester - King Alf
11 Jan · G
Independent businesses in Bishop's Waltham are ready for you to order through ShopAppy, start your shopping here: <https://bit.ly/3y6g20R>

#ShopAppyWinchester.



Visit Winchester - King Alf
15 Jan · G
Our independent shops in Wickham are ready to take your orders through ShopAppy.

Start your shopping here: <https://bit.ly/3DxBagF>

#ShopAppyWinchester



Visit Winchester - King Alf
20 Jan · G

Have you checked out ShopAppy Winchester yet? <http://bit.ly/3dy1y00>

Visit the Winchester high street or order products to be delivered by a Zedify bike or electric vehicle in the City.

Support independent local businesses, whilst helping the planet!
#ShopLocalShopWinchester #ShopAppyWinchester



2.7 Performance of the Virtual High Street

2.7.1 As at 31 January 2022 there are over 176 independent businesses from across the district registered to ShopAppy, offering over 3669 products and services. The number of businesses by location is reported as outlined in the table below:

Winchester City	98
Alresford	34
Bishop's Waltham	21
Wickham	23

2.7.2 Between the trading period of 1 October and 31 December the ShopAppy Virtual High Street attracted over 1800 consumers viewing over 20,000 pages on the ShopAppy website.

2.7.3 The average number of page views per consumer using the site is 9. ShopAppy report that this is significantly higher than the average 5 across their other platforms in destinations across the county.

2.7.4 Over £9,000 of transactions have been undertaken from 1 October to 31 December directly on the platform. Delivery has been available via click and collect, aggregated delivery, organised by the Visitor Information Centre with sustainable delivery offered by Zedify e-bikes. ShopAppy's economic modelling illustrates that the platform has influenced over £17,000 of additional spend in independent businesses across the district from 1 October to 31 December.

2.7.5 The owner from Alfred Brewery, who operates his business on the platform says "ShopAppy has been a brilliant initiative for local people to buy easily from local businesses. Zedify, the electric van and bike courier have also helped us to adapt our collection and delivery offer for customers in Winchester. More than 90% of what we brew is enjoyed Winchester or within 5 miles and we'll get behind anything that gets local people connected with local produce."

2.8 Next Steps

2.8.1 The free period for businesses and consumers to use the virtual high street platform will cease during the summer 2022. Ongoing marketing activity will aim to continue to:

- raise awareness of the platform to both consumers and local businesses,
- drive consumer traffic and transactions,
- increase number of independent businesses engaged on the platform from across the district.

2.8.2 We are in discussions with ShopAppy with regard to the long term future of the platform beyond the funded period ending in the summer. We will jointly liaise with independent business currently engaged and those that have not engaged to date, to garner opinion around the long term future too. Our joint priority is marketing and promotional activity to encourage as many independent businesses to actively trade on the platform and to continue to raise awareness locally and drive consumer traffic to the site

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3.1 No intervention into this trading space. It was considered crucial, given the concept feedback, anecdotal intelligence and alignment with the objectives of the Winchester District High Streets' Plan

3.2 The development and delivery of a platform from within the City Council was considered but it was felt that we did not have the expertise in this field or resources available

3.3 ShopAppy were selected from a group of similar e-commerce platform suppliers. Their submission offered the most economically advantageous; met the mandatory requirements against an agreed specification and evaluated against a series of delivery outputs as outlined in 2.3.2.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

None

Other Background Documents:-

Request for Quote for the provision of an e-commerce platform offering a virtual high street opportunity to businesses and consumers across the Winchester district.

Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan – revised Sept 2021

APPENDICES:

None