

# EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS SCRUTINY REVIEW – ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM RECOMMENDATIONS

December 2023 v2

For the purposes of referencing Item 7 pages 35-144

[-\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee, 12/09/2023 10:00 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Budget and officer time has been allocated from the Funding and Investment Team (F&I) to manage and coordinate the cross-council activities set out in this Town Centre Action Plan. This includes the role of oversight of partner and stakeholder activities in order to maintain the relevance of the actions set out in the plan and to keep them up to date and applicable. A cross-council virtual officer working group will also support the strategic overview of the agreed action plan and report on the delivery of the recommendations to Members.

The main focus of external partner engagement will be through a series of town centre focused Local Transport Board meetings to gather intelligence and local views on key towns. It is envisaged that this will help generate additional actions and areas of local focus where the County Council can ring strategic leadership and where relevant intervention. The creation of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) and single point of entry within the Council will support engagement with town centre issues and opportunities and help crystallise activity and needs as they evolve.

The creation of a town centre fund to support town centres with direct member involvement will support small scale animation and activities to improve footfall in market towns and high streets and will provide information and evidence of ‘what works’ for further review and consideration. The same is true of pilot activities in particular the two pilots around the digitalisation of the high streets. The product can be scaled, tailored and adapted to other town centres and will enable the ‘celebration of distinctiveness’ in our town centres.

Moves to support indigenous businesses with advice and digital skills together with supporting inward investment to our high streets will with other investments underway and planned, develop holistic actions around town centre viability and vitality.

The focus on ‘place-making’ and quality environments used by the whole community and its widest demographic, and visitors will develop opportunities for use and diversified offers around leisure, retail, heritage and hospitality. Further opportunities to address barriers to use (including parking and accessibility) will support the overall package of actions to position Lincolnshire market towns as places of local value, providers of jobs and services and as key contributors to growth.

Recommendation	Recommendation Accepted ? Yes/No	Initial Response	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer
<p><b><u>Recommendation 1</u></b> <b><u>Leadership and Policy</u></b></p> <p>That Lincolnshire County Council engage annually with each of the established 8 Local Transport Boards (LTB) to discuss town centres. This will bring together local strategic partners to discuss and agree actions to address local town centre issues and opportunities and will promote cohesive action with short, medium, and long- term outcomes.</p> <p>This builds on the Panel’s conclusions set out in section 3.3 of the published report, that recognises the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive cross-sectoral partnership activity which is being informed by local needs</li> <li>• Proactive planning and collaboration as an</li> </ul>	YES	<p>The Executive Councillor Highways, Transport and IT has agreed the principle to trial an annual town centre focused meeting using each LTB (for which he has responsibility) as the foundation for discussion with expanded local attendance.</p> <p>This is in recognition of the priority the Executive attaches to holistic, partnership activity to address issues in town centres including but not limited to their connectivity, their relationship to their economic hinterland and creating an environment for their economic vitality and viability as drivers of growth.</p>	<p>Utilising an existing partnership to move forward at pace is recognised as the most viable option and <b>8 pilot meetings will be convened.</b></p> <p>These will be created in 2 stages taking lessons from the first 4 and applying to stage 2 meetings to improve the engagement and impact continuously learning from the meeting format and output. At the end of stage 2 the process will be evaluated.</p> <p>The 8 meetings will cover the following LTB areas:</p> <p>Louth Gainsborough Boston Grantham Skegness/Mablethorpe Sleaford Spalding and Holbeach Stamford</p>	2024 delivery within agreed LTB programme	Vanessa Strange

<p>important mechanism to bring together other ingredients of success to high streets such as car parking, cycle storage and public transport: and</p> <p>The vital role of neighbourhood plans which can bring together the local community's input and help support local shopping areas that meet local needs and will therefore drive ongoing use.</p> <p>Further the LTB approach will provide opportunities for towns and villages, in close proximity, to work together to best effect.</p>			<p>Lincoln is excepted from this work in line with the Scrutiny Panel's scope and inclusions.</p> <p>Using the end evaluation, a review will then be undertaken by the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning on the efficacy of the pilot including the purpose, impact and use of LTBs as effective vehicles for focused action to address immediate town centre/high street issues and options for LTBs to develop and plan longer term interventions targeted at the specific needs of each place and where any shared themes are identified, to develop an appropriate costed programme of activities to promote growth to be considered by the Executive as relevant</p>		
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<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> <u>High Street Business</u></p> <p>(a) That the County Council lobbies those organisations that restrict businesses and support further streamlining of administrative processes for town centre businesses, including licencing.</p> <p>(b) That the County Council be supportive of High Street businesses by developing a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for town centre matters; and streamlining processes internally to support businesses.</p> <p>(c) That the County Council seeks to provide businesses with business support and continues to seek funding to enable this.</p> <p>(d) That opportunities be considered through regulatory services, such as Trading Standards, to offer</p>	YES	<p>The SPOC is seen as an effective solution to provide co-ordination and good customer/stakeholder management, providing effective communications.</p> <p>The SPOC however cannot just be a reactive role responding to external queries and should be tasked with co-ordinating responses to known issues (as raised by the Scrutiny Panel) and immerging intelligence. This in turn will need to be reviewed to help inform services going forward including opportunities to be effective in supporting town centres.</p>	<p>A dedicated email account will be created to receive town centre related <i>communications</i>. This will be monitored by the SPOC. The Customer Service Centre will be advised and work with Communications Team will be undertaken to drive awareness and uptake of this as an entry point to raise town centre related issues and opportunities.</p> <p>Working with Comms and relevant service areas visibility of the SPOC (to external customers and partners and internal colleagues) will be undertaken to raise the role/profile to ensure effectiveness. This should include (led by Funding and Investment):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a short comms plan and Social Media campaign/awareness raising (external)</b></li> <li>• <b>a method of reporting to/engaging with key service areas</b> that is light touch and manageable so that the SPOC role is effective in developing a 2-way knowledge share and</li> </ul>	<p>Feb 24</p> <p>Feb 24</p>	<p>Mandy Ramm (interim SPOC linking these activities together)</p>
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<p>selected business advice to support town centre business start-ups.</p> <p>(e) That a pilot be explored to <i>'keep the local spend local'</i>, working with Lincolnshire County Council's procurement, partners and existing <i>'buy local'</i> initiatives.</p>			<p>building effective, outcome focused relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creation of a cross council Virtual Officer Town Centre Group</b> to review and support the town centre work (this applies to all actions in this plan)</li> </ul> <p>The SPOC should also be given the responsibility to scope and develop an <b>internal Action Plan</b> that harnesses the following areas of work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Lobbying Framework</b> to HMG to support streamlined business administration and regulatory reform with the aim of supporting economic growth in town centres. This should capture evidence and business input, be agile but support overarching objectives of LCC economic strategies and policies and align with key CCN/LGA messaging to achieve scale and impact but focusing on the Lincolnshire story/case studies to animate the town focused areas of concern – lead Funding and Investment (F&amp;I)</li> <li>2. Through Business Lincolnshire, ongoing development of town centre business support offers</li> </ol>	<p>Feb- March 24 scoping, delivery 24/25</p>	<p>Samantha Harrison</p>
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			<p>under current arrangements and <b>post 2025 scoping opportunities to deliver a consolidated package of town centre business support</b> – lead Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. As Rec 4 below to also align digital skills development focused on retail and hospitality and</li><li>b. Align the Multiply Adult Numeracy programme and any forthcoming literacy/other skills opportunities to support skills pipelines for retail/hospitality sectors</li></ul> <p>3. <b>A 'buy local' proposal</b> to involve internal (Economic Development, procurement) and external partners (in particular Destination Lincolnshire, the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and local business organisations) to look at options to build on existing activity and add value via add-ons, pilots or branding and messaging to support enhanced but cost effective outcomes. Lead Economic Development</p>		Samantha Harrison
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<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> <b>Placemaking, Funding and Skills</b></p> <p>(a) That Lincolnshire County Council work with North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council to recognise the vital role of market towns in Greater Lincolnshire and to review opportunities for appropriate funding and budgets to support their viability and vitality (including infrastructure provisions) as a key ingredient in growing the economy of Greater Lincolnshire (referenced in Section 4 – Leadership and Strategy).</p> <p>(b) That the County Council encourage good design across town centres through its development management functions and through partnership working with teams at Local Planning Authorities and other stakeholders.</p>	YES	<p>The Executive concurs with the Panel’s assertion on the vital importance of market towns to the wider economy of GL. This is being progressed at all levels of Devolution discussions and remains an integral part of LCCs economic strategy to support inclusive and sustainable growth including our towns and villages and the rural hinterland that they serve.</p> <p>Further, the Council has long held that the uniqueness of Lincolnshire is founded on its local distinctiveness , heritage and character creating beautiful, diverse places to live, visit and do business. This is something that should be capitalised on further in an effort to help create growth and opportunities in our towns.</p> <p>To enable LCC Members to coordinate and help catalyse locally focused interventions, a pilot pot of funding will be created and reviewed for impact and inclusions. Creating</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote connectivity opportunities to/from and within our town centres (including digital, public transport, vehicular, pedestrian and cycle) the key deliverables of the GL Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework will be reviewed for town centre opportunities and an <b>Action Plan to support Town Centre Infrastructure</b> drafted for consideration after consultation with communities and businesses. This will be informed by the LTB process. Lead F&amp;I</li> <li>2. Through the work of the Development Management and strategic planning Teams a <b>focus on place excellence and design quality</b> will be pursued in new development, new planning policies and local plan input with <b>options for Design Guides etc</b> – lead Development Management</li> <li>3. Development Management, Highways, Environment to work proactively with local</li> </ol>	<p>To be determined by the programming of the LTBs</p> <p>February 24 ongoing</p>	<p>Mandy Ramm</p> <p>Warren Peppard</p> <p>Warren Peppard</p>
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<p>(c) That design excellence, local distinctiveness, and character of town centres are encouraged through partnership working (under guidance from the Historic Places Team); and that quality public realm offers/green spaces are created to provide residents and visitors with the opportunity to increase dwell time and to support health and wellbeing objectives and help develop Lincolnshire’s visitor economy (this links to recommendation 2b).</p> <p>(d) That consideration be given to each County Councillor receiving a £3,000 budget to support local activities aimed at increasing town centre footfall. Funding to be allocated through an established criteria and aligned to the work and findings of the LTBs (this links to recommendation 1)</p>		<p>a combined pot rather than individual allocations will enable co-ordination and help achieve maximum impact for local areas and avoid duplication. There will also be opportunity to align with the views of the LTBs (town focused activity) as relevant.</p>	<p>stakeholders wherever possible to <b>promote enhanced public realm schemes</b> (design, capital enhancements and policies). Schemes and impacts to be reviewed annually for effectiveness with input and support from LTB pilots. – lead Development Management</p> <p>4. F&amp;I will scope a <b>programme of investment support for towns</b> to a value of up to £50,000 commencing April 2024. Funding will complement existing activity in the town centres and high streets of Lincolnshire, to help animate spaces and events and to bring together the local community to use their local market towns and high streets throughout the year. Activity will seek to increase town centre footfall, and thereby support viability of local businesses. It will also increase take up and use of public sector/funded services including public transport, libraries and children’s centres. The types of activities expected to be funded (based</p>	<p>February 2024 ongoing</p> <p>April 24</p>	<p>Mandy Ramm</p>
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			<p>on best practice in similar areas) include: Business directories, arts and heritage trails and actions, pop up shops and markets, pilot park and save schemes, events, buy local activities etc (all evaluated by a published criteria including local need/support and statutory requirements</p> <p>Agreed programme to be managed in accordance with approved activity, reviewed at 6 month point and subject to post-programme evaluation. Decisions on the impact and effect will then influence how the lessons from the pilot can be applied going forward (2025 onwards) -Lead Funding and Investment with support from Econ Dev (tourism)</p>		
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<p><b><u>Recommendation 4</u></b> <b><u>Technology, Innovation and Digitisation</u></b></p> <p>(a) That Lincolnshire County Council takes a firm view on developments and lobby government so that planning authorities have a greater say in the siting of 5G infrastructure.</p> <p>(b) That the County Council support initiatives to drive digital skills amongst people who work in town centres, where appropriate.</p> <p>(c) That Lincolnshire County Council test community and visitor opportunities to '<i>digitise the high street</i>', working in partnership with local areas to ensure content is created and managed in real time, along the lines of the pilots currently being developed in Holbeach and Mablethorpe (this will build on the work of the Council's Historic Environment Team and look at other opportunities to animate</p>	YES	<p>The Executive supports the recommendation as a key aspect of ensuring that town centre uses and options for growth, revitalisation or diversification are future proofed.</p> <p>Lincolnshire market towns should be enabled to meet changing customer trends and expectations including accessing information in new ways and supporting businesses to respond to this. Some Lincolnshire businesses are front runners in this field but to give opportunities to all businesses to explore and promote the use of technology will only enhance economic opportunities for our town centres.</p>	<p>See <b>Lobbying Framework</b> above to include issues related specifically to 5g lead F&amp;I</p> <p>See <b>consolidated package of town centre business support</b>, to include digital skills – lead Economic Development</p> <p><b>Digitalisation pilot launch</b> January/February 2024 with delivery Jan-Aug 24 and evaluation and review for lessons learned. Work with partners to cost and develop a wider programme of town centre digital opportunities based on the partnership with UoL and use and take up of available technology. Review opportunities to build in digital skills as part of this.</p>	<p>Feb- March 24 scoping, delivery 24/25</p> <p>Feb-March 24 scoping, delivery 24/25</p> <p>Jan-Dec 24</p>	<p>Mandy Ramm</p> <p>Samantha Harrison</p> <p>Mandy Ramm</p>
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spaces including the use of pop-up museums).					
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<p><b><u>Recommendation 4</u></b>  <b><u>Data-driven Decision Making and Targeted Investment</u></b></p> <p>That data and lessons captured through pilots, including digital highstreets and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund are used to inform better business cases to support interventions and investments in town centres.</p>	YES	This is supported in full	Officers to build this into all activities with case studies to encourage active learnings – lead Funding and Investment.	January 24 ongoing	Mandy Ramm
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<p><b><u>Recommendation 6</u></b> <b><u>Green Growth</u></b></p> <p>That Lincolnshire County Council: -</p> <p>(a) Develop a digital Green Retail/Hospitality Guide aimed at supporting independent businesses.</p> <p>(b) Improve facilities to encourage bike use on high streets (basic Sheffield stands) – linking to the work of the LTBs.</p> <p>(c) Encourage the use of service budgets to improve outcomes through investing in pilot activity, where benefits are aligned to the County Council’s aspirations for inclusive green growth.</p>	YES	<p>The Executive recognises the importance of developing town centres in a sustainable manner and welcomes in particular the focus on green tourism and opportunities to support other forms of access to town centres including walking and cycling.</p>	<p>Working with Econ Development (visitor economy) to build on lessons from coastal green tourism work supported by the wider decarbonisation and net zero agenda produce a digital <b>Green Retail and Hospitality Guide for town centre businesses</b> to launch ahead of the summer with supporting publicity using the green focus as a way to encourage increased visits and to leverage new markets.</p> <p>Undertake an <b>audit of current high street cycle facilities and assess demand/locational opportunities and establish a costed programme for consideration.</b></p> <p>Through the Virtual Officers Town Centre Group <b>champion green growth awareness and opportunities and develop appropriate measurements and evaluations</b> to complement work on the council’s Green Master Plan and the emerging Carbon Management Plan 4. This aligns with Recommendation 5 data led decision making and can, as appropriate, feed into the work through the LTB events.</p>	<p>February – May 24</p> <p>April onwards</p> <p>February - ongoing</p>	<p>Mary Powell</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>Dan Clayton</p>
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