

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 19 OCTOBER 2017

PRIDE IN OUR HIGH STREETS – SUPPORTING BUSINESS

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT

REPORT OF LEAD CABINET MEMBER, CLLR LEE CARTER

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Borough's strategy for economic growth (Enterprise Telford), recognises the importance of our high streets and local centres. They are valuable assets that support strong local communities and many small businesses and a number are also important contributors to Telford's visitor economy.
- 1.2 Nationally high streets are under threat and experience has shown that the most successful high street regeneration schemes are the result of local action and small projects. That is why in 2015 the Council launched the Pride in Your High Street (PIYHS) Programme which to date has supported nearly 30 projects across the borough, investing some £800,000 matched by £400,000 in in kind and financial contributions from across the organisations delivering activity. Alongside projects to improve the attractiveness of the High Streets e.g. via façade improvements, painted shutters, directional signage, improvements to local focal points and communal spaces and the establishment of the Forge Wellington and the Wakes, Oakengates a programme of business support has engaged with a further 76 individual high Street businesses across the Borough. The programme is due for completion by March 2018
- 1.3 Despite the Council having to deliver £96m of ongoing savings in response to Government cuts, investing in our High Streets and local communities remains a priority and this report sets out proposals to invest a further £700k into the six high streets of Wellington, Ironbridge, Newport, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley. This will focus on the findings of recent high street audit work that has shown targeting resources to address problems of empty retail premises and poor property condition will have the greatest impact to increase footfall, support local and new businesses and attract visitors – both local and from out of the borough.
- 1.4 These high streets are also the focus of the Young High Street Challenge, an exciting and complementary programme engaging young people in the revitalisation of our high streets which will launch in the Autumn and continue through to the end of 2018.
- 1.5 Alongside this targeted activity as part of the wider Community Pride programme, there will be further significant investment across all of our high streets and local centres to encourage growth. This will include continued investment into the physical environment, co-ordinated with wider Council programmes of enforcement and also with community and cultural events as part of Telford's 50th birthday celebrations, delivering support to all parts of the Borough.
- 1.6 The report sets out the initiatives that will be delivered by PIOHS, the eligibility criteria for each and also how we will support the branding and marketing of high streets to

make the most of the market role and potential of each high street and maximise the footfall from both the local and regional visitor markets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees that Pride in Our High Streets is implemented as set out within this Report.
- 2.2 That delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director Business, Development & Employment in consultation with Assistant Director Finance & Human Resources and the Cabinet member for Finance and Service Delivery to approve grant funding packages as set out within this Report.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	YES	The programme will contribute directly to the following priorities: -Protect and create jobs as a 'business supporting and business winning Council'. -Ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well-maintained. -Regenerate those neighbourhoods in need.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	NO	By contributing to high street regeneration the programme has the potential to have a positive impact on a wide cross section of the community.
TARGET COMPLETION /DELIVERY DATE	The programme will deliver across the period December 2017 through to March 2019.	
FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	YES	The Council's Service and Financial Planning Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 includes £700,000 revenue funding for Pride In Our High Streets Phase 2 of which £100,000 is already committed to Young High Street Challenge. Finance will support the Service Delivery Team as funding allocations are determined and advise on assessments and their terms as appropriate. DR 14/09/2017
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	The Council has a number of powers available which enables it to carry out the recommendations contained in this report. As any decision made by the Authority can be subject to challenge in respect of its reasonableness or lawfulness it will be necessary to ensure that a robust and transparent assessment procedure is developed. This will assist in avoiding a challenge of either the process or decisions made in considering any applications made.

		<p>Although any grants awarded are unlikely to trigger State Aid issues due to being too low value or because of the nature of them not meeting the relevant criteria it is important the measures are put in place to avoid unlawful aid being granted.</p> <p>Ongoing legal advice will be provided in respect of the development of the scheme and advice will also be provided in respect of individual projects, if needed.</p> <p>Legal Services can provide a template Grant Agreement to assist in streamlining the process.</p> <p>EH 14/09/2017</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	NO	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	YES	The project will focus on 6 borough town high streets with the greatest potential to benefit from investment.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Background

4.1 The first phase of the PIYHS programme comprised two elements of funding that supported events and activities around high streets and local centres funding c.30 projects to increase footfall and achieve economic outcomes. Projects continue to be delivered with all projects envisaged to be complete by March 2018 at which point it is projected that projects will have benefited from c.£800,000 of Council funding and will have generated match funding through cash contributions and in kind activity of a further c.£400,000. The following section outlines just some of the success stories:-

Success to Date

4.2 In Dawley the focus has been on both the environment of the High Street and community spaces. Dawley Town Hall and Dawley House have had new kitchen facilities installed. This allows for more people to attend the Great Dawley Dinner and provides the community with a venue hire opportunity. A number of retail shutters have been professionally designed and painted making the high street a more attractive, welcoming and safer place to visit.



4.3 Newport invested in its Stafford Street Car Park, improving the lighting and CCTV. This provides a safer place to park when visiting and shopping in Newport. Newport still has projects to deliver to enhance the street scene with additional planters and wayfinding. The town also benefited from a significant fund to invest in new events

and in enhancing existing events – Facebook reflected the overwhelming success of the events with huge support for a repeat in future years.

- 4.4 Madeley renovated its War Memorial and this included extending the paving which has created a flow for pedestrians between Russells Square and Park Way and has helped with increasing footfall to the High Street.



- 4.5 Wellington has had an art mural trail created and The Forge Pop Up Shop has left a legacy of a permanent café/craft shop in Crown Street.
- 4.6 Oakengates have created a catering kitchen within the new Town Council The Wakes Building and The Forge has opened a permanent café within The Wakes. Oakengates Carnival was a huge success attracting over 10,000 people and creating a legacy of an annual event.
- 4.7 Other high streets have created or improved communal spaces with soft and hard landscaping (see below in Ironbridge) and invested into modernising public services on the High Street e.g. the investment into Donnington Library.



- 4.8 A series of business workshops delivered across the borough towns has supported 76 High Street businesses to develop their business plans, understand and engage with their customers and improve their brand and marketing. This has attracted both local and regional PR for the project and received a very positive response from businesses who benefited from the project:

"Couldn't be happier with the whole course and with Sally's dedication and delivering. I have learnt so much and know that Sally and Good2Great are, and will continue to be, a real asset to me and my business" (Deborah Reck, Wellington)

“The course has helped me improve on various business skills as I'm still relatively new to retail!” (Meg Prince, Ironbridge)

Pride in Our High Streets – Supporting Business

- 4.9 The projects above illustrate the value and impact of the Council's investment but also that there remain challenges and opportunities to make our High Streets stronger and more vibrant. High Streets nationally continue to be under threat from changes in household spending patterns, shopping culture and recreation trends. Spending on the accumulation of 'things' is dropping, with nationally between 2010 and 2014 weekly spending on clothes and footwear in the average household dropping while spending on recreation and culture rose by 16% and this trend is continuing. Meanwhile, on-line shopping is growing by more than 11% per annum and it is estimated that it will represent a fifth of all sales by 2020. To survive, it is being suggested that high streets must be a collection of 'experiences' where people can engage in social interaction through food and drink outlets, but also go for education and healthcare amongst other things.
- 4.10 Empty retail units and retail property condition are important indicators of the health of a high street. In 2016 a survey was conducted in each of the six borough town high streets (Wellington, Ironbridge, Newport, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley) to identify the number of empty units and also identify where there were gaps in existing retail and service provision. This survey was repeated in June 2017 and the results are summarised in Appendix 1. This demonstrates that there has been an encouraging improvement in occupancy rates in three high streets (Madeley, Newport and Ironbridge), but that the number of empty units remain a concern in Oakengates, Wellington and Dawley. Across all of these high streets the condition of some retail premises remains a concern and a negative impact on the overall impression of the high street.
- 4.11 The findings indicate the greatest impact can be achieved by the next phase of PIOHS taking a focussed approach, concentrating additional resources where investment can have a strong and measureable impact on addressing problems of empty retail premises and poor property condition in order to increase footfall, support local businesses and attract visitors.

Community Pride Programme & High Street Regeneration

- 4.12 While it is proposed that the next phase of PIOHS will be targeted at the 6 Borough Town high streets, the Community Pride programme will deliver further investment across all our high streets and local centres to encourage growth. There will be continued investment in the physical environment including the road network and, structures such as bridges and retaining walls and street lighting as well as CCTV.
- 4.13 The Council is also considering the benefits of publicly available Wi-Fi for customers in our high streets; informed by high street surveys carried out to understand the demand and need for Wi-Fi over and above that already available through public buildings, retail outlets such as cafes and hot spots already in place through main providers such as BT Hotspots or Business Broadband available to retailers.
- 4.14 Physical improvements to all of our high streets and local centres will be complemented by community and cultural events as part of Telford's 50th birthday celebrations where there will be a focus on community capacity building and legacy projects.

Pride in Our High Streets – Supporting Business

- 4.15 PIOHS – Supporting Business - will comprise £700,000, incorporating £200,000 of underspend from the first programme. The importance of engaging more young people in revitalising and visiting our local high streets has already been identified and Cabinet has already approved the use of £100,000 of this funding to deliver the Young High Street Challenge.
- 4.16 The new programme will encompass specific areas for investment, detailed below. These will focus on encouraging new high street businesses to open, improving the appearance of retail premises in high streets and, together with the wider Pride programme, will create a strategy for improvement and growth. PIOHS will include the development of a clear marketing strategy for each high street that reflects its target customer market whether that is locals, borough wide shoppers and/or regional visitors.

Empty Unit Incentive Package

- 4.17 A number of successful high street regeneration initiatives (for example Whitchurch Wolverhampton, Bexley and Winchester) have created small, grant based packages to encourage the take up of empty retail units. The Empty Unit Incentive Package will be available in Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley where levels of empty retail properties are equal to or above national levels (average national levels 11%). Eligibility for the Package will first be assessed against the results of the 2017 retail survey to ensure that there is no duplication or displacement of existing retail or service activity. Applicants for the Package would then need to provide a business plan to demonstrate that they have thoroughly researched the need and demand for their product or service and also provide evidence of need for financial assistance. The Package would include:
- A grant to support start up revenue costs such as utility/phone connections and capital expenses such as internal shop refurbishment and fit out. The level of grant would be assessed based on a number of criteria including the size, condition and location of the business premises, with the highest level of grant being awarded to those businesses which would have the greatest impact on the high street and which would create local employment.
 - A business support package that would include support with business planning, financial management and marketing. This support package would be available through the Enterprise Telford Growth Hub and all new businesses would be eligible for support.
- 4.18 Where it would support high street regeneration and revitalisation, consideration would be given to awarding grant support to bring property above shops back into use and also for the conversion of retail into residential where there is a clear over provision of retail property.
- 4.19 It is anticipated that grants will range from a minimum of £2,000 to a maximum of £10,000, although it is recommended that there should be flexibility to increase this level to support a significant investment or property conversion in a key location. All applications will undergo a due diligence check by the Council's finance and legal teams before applications are approved by the Cabinet Lead Member and Assistant Directors for Finance and Business, Development & Employment. All grants will be subject to the signing of a formal Grant Agreement.

Property Façade Improvement

- 4.20 Experience has shown that contributory grants for commercial property improvements suffer from poor take up, particularly from retail premises. This is often because retail premises are tenanted and landlords are frequently based elsewhere in the UK or overseas.
- 4.21 High Street regeneration schemes across the UK show that solutions such as the use of colour in the high street and of green space create an impression of safe and open streets and can have a significant impact on economic performance. The appearance of high streets can be radically improved by simple solutions.
- 4.22 The Property Façade Improvement scheme would be open to all 6 key borough town high streets of Newport, Ironbridge, Madeley, Wellington, Dawley and Oakengates. Eligible properties would lie within a defined area which would encompass the primary shopping areas as defined in the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan and agreed with the Town/Parish Councils.
- 4.23 Priority would be given to occupied premises, however empty premises will also be considered where these have a realistic prospect of occupation and are in a key location. The Council's Estates & Investments team will play an advisory role in assessing property eligibility.
- 4.24 There would be a simple enquiry/application process. Where a tenant is applying, they will have to provide evidence that they have the agreement of the property owner. The Council will also work with the Town/Parish Councils to identify premises that will be proactively targeted for the scheme.
- 4.25 The design, contracting and delivery of facade improvements will be overseen by the Council's biT architecture and design service and a simple form of agreement will need to be signed by the property owner. The biT service will design a range of façade styles in keeping with the style of the local high street and taking into account any special status such as a conservation zone. Facades can then be tailored to allow for any specific business branding. Owners of empty properties will also be encouraged to window dress unused retail spaces or to make them available to services, local attractions or Town/Parish Council to promote local events.
- 4.26 A cap of £10,000 would apply to any property façade improvement with the level of grant depending on the age, condition and size of the property. However there would be flexibility to increase the level of grant where a property is in a prominent or key location with a significant impact on the attractiveness of the high street. All façade improvements will need to be approved by the lead Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director, Business, Development & Employment.

High Street Marketing & Promotion Strategies

- 4.27 How a high street is perceived and how it markets itself to both locals, the wider Telford area and to regional visitors can have a strong impact on visitor numbers and economic growth. As part of the PIOHS programme, support will be offered to each Town/Parish Council representing the 6 key high street areas to help develop a branding and marketing strategy for their high street. This could include development of a brand identity, support to look at websites, use of social media and on-line retail and how to make the most of events programmes and opportunities created by local markets and other assets.

- 4.28 This opportunity will be open to Town/Parish Council's (who can engage with relevant local groups if they wish). The offer will include support from the Discover Telford team and from external marketing professionals who will help to profile and package the offer of each high street and to identify its potential customer base. This will be timely given the opportunities available to Town/Parish Councils for local celebrations of Telford's 50th anniversary.
- 4.29 The support will take the form of workshops as well as one to one support and the opportunity to secure dedicated pages on the Discover Telford website.

Timescales

After Cabinet approval it is intended to initiate engagement with the Parish & Town Councils and publicise the bid documents through innovative media channels. Delivery of the projects will be phased and will commence early in 2018 and all phases will be completed in 2020.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - None

5 PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cabinet 29th June 2017 Young High Street Challenge

Cabinet 13th July 2017 Investing in Telford @ 50

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Appendix 1: High Street Statistics for Empty Retail Premises

The table below compares the number of retail units and empty retail units in our High Streets in 2015 and 2017.

The average level of empty retail units for England (September 2017) was 11%.

Town	Number of Retail Units - 2015	Number of Empty Units - 2015	Percentage of Empty Units - 2015	Number of Retail Units - 2017	Number of Empty Units - 2017	Percentage of Empty Units - 2017
Wellington	208	26	12.5%	216	25	11.57%
Ironbridge	44	3	6.8%	66*	5	7.57%
Oakengates	120	14	11.7%	123	14	11.38%
Dawley	56	8	14.3%	56	7	12.5%
Newport	184	10	5.4%	190	6	3.16%
Madeley	67	13	19.4%	76	5	6.58%
Totals	679	74	Average across the Borough = 11.68% units are empty	727	62	Average across the Borough = 8.79% units are empty**

*significant increase in premises subsequent to the opening of the Co-Operative store on the Wharfage

**average national (England) level of empty retail premises 11% as at September 2017