

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL****CABINET – 18 OCTOBER 2018****PRIDE IN OUR HIGH STREETS – SUPPORTING BUSINESS****REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT****LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR LEE CARTER****PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Pride in Our High Streets Programme, which since the original programme launched in 2015 will see more than £1.5m invested into supporting businesses in the Borough's high streets recognising their value to local communities and economies.
- 1.2 Phase one of PIOHS was completed in March 2018 and saw nearly 30 projects supported across the borough, with the Council's investment of over £800,000 matched by £400,000 in in-kind and financial contributions from local organisations delivering activity. One of the most high profile projects funded was 'Let's Go Quackers' which brought fun, creativity and a significant increase in visitor numbers and social media interest in Ironbridge and Southwater generating £32,000 for charities Severn Hospice and the Jayne Sargent Foundation
- 1.3 Phase 2 of PIOHS is investing a further £700,000 directly in our High Streets, providing grant funding to bring empty properties back into use, improving shop fronts and facades and working with Parish and Town Councils to market and promote their High Streets. PIOHS is taking place alongside significant investment being made by a number of Town Councils. This includes Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley who are investing in excess of £1m in high street regeneration projects.
- 1.4 Notable successes include the engagement of almost 1,000 young people in the innovative Young High Street Challenge, a unique project that is involving young people directly in the future of our high streets. Such was the interest from schools and the quality of proposals to reinvigorate the High Street that 3 schools are due to see their ideas delivered in their local High Street supported by funding of £10k- £20k apiece.
- 1.5 The Empty Unit Retail Grant has attracted over 60 initial enquiries. The first grant award was made in Oakengates to support the establishment/expansion of Gems Haberdashers, with another award pending for a new shop to open in Wellington and a number of other investments in the pipeline. The Property

Façade Improvement programme is now underway and will be transforming key parts of 6 of our borough town high streets over the coming months.

- 1.6 PiOHS is also delivering a pilot scheme for high street wi-fi to meet a public demand for wi-fi over and above that already available through public buildings, cafes and other hot spots.
- 1.7 This targeted activity is complemented by the wider Community Pride programme, which is delivering further investment across all our high streets and local centres to encourage growth.
- 1.8 The success of the Programme and particularly its engagement of young people has attracted national interest from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government. On the 19<sup>th</sup> September, the Department's Head of the Thriving Towns and High Streets Team visited Wellington with representatives from the newly formed panel of industry experts. They met with students from the winning YHSC team from Wrekin College to hear about their project idea and how it is going to be brought to life over the next few months.
- 1.9 The investment reflects the findings of national studies into high street regeneration which have shown that targeting resources to address 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.

<b>2. <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b>	
2.1	That Cabinet notes the progress made to date in the Phase 2 Pride in Our High Street programme
2.2	Cabinet approves the inclusion of Ironbridge in the Empty Retail Unit grant programme for the reasons set out in this report

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority 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.
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</b>	The programme will deliver through to March 2020.	
<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes/No	The Council's Service and Financial Planning Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 included £700,000 additional revenue funding for Pride In Our High Streets Phase 2. Finance have been supporting the Service Delivery Team as funding allocations are determined and have advised on assessments and their terms as appropriate. DR 17/9/18
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	Any decision made by the Authority can be subject to challenge in respect of its reasonableness or lawfulness. Therefore a robust and transparent assessment procedure was developed so as to avoid challenge of either the process followed or recommendations made by Officers and the Assessment Panel . The assessment and award process also sought to ensure that a breach of the State Aid Rules does not arise either directly or indirectly by the award of grant funding to individual organisations or joint ventures which could distort competition and affect trade by favouring certain undertakings. The risk of this is very low due to the grant values involved. Legal Services have developed a standard form of grant agreement that will be used in each award of funding
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	No	
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	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**

- 4.1 Mirroring the national picture, our high streets are threatened by changes in household spending patterns, shopping culture and recreational trends. Whilst there have been national programmes such as the Portas Pilot that have tried (with mixed success) to address these challenges, many of the most successful schemes are the result of investment into local projects and initiatives that aim to increase footfall and the attractiveness of high streets.

#### **Young High Street Challenge**

- 4.2 An element that has been missing from most national high street initiatives has been the direct engagement of young people who are key as the customers and high street entrepreneurs of the future. The Young High Street Challenge has built on the work the Council is already doing through the Life Ready, Work Ready Programme to engage school age children in enterprise and encourage future entrepreneurs.
- 4.3 The Challenge was launched to schools in September 2017 with almost 1,000 young people engaged in order to secure up to 200 students to participate in the Challenge programme. Those 200 students came from 8 schools across the Borough (Ercall Wood, Wrekin College, Charlton, Haberdashers Adams, Burton Borough, Madeley Academy, Telford Priory and Hadley Learning Community). :



- 4.4 Launched in November students were supported through workshops, visits, market research and business plan development to compete for two awards; the first for the best commercially viable idea to fill a gap in high street provision and the second award which was a design challenge to improve the look and feel of Wellington Market to attract a new generation of shoppers.

4.5 The finals event for the Challenge was held on the 21st June. The quality of the projects was outstanding and a panel of judges that included Telford's largest employer Capgemini, University of Wolverhampton, WMC Retail Partners PLC (owners of Wellington Market) and business advisors Good to Great had a difficult task to pick the winners. Such was the quality of projects that two schools jointly shared the award for the best Design Challenge Haberdashers Adams and Burton Borough while Wrekin College won the Commercial Challenge.

4.6 Haberdashers and Burton Borough are now working with the Council and the Marketing Team from the Wellington Market Company to bring their creative ideas to life, with a Council grant award of £10,000 to work with. The winning ideas included new branding for the market and new designs for entrance signage to bring vitality to the market, pop up markets including street food, music events, open air cinema and ghost walks.



4.7 The Wrekin College Team are already looking at premises in Wellington for their commercial business idea, which will link in with other businesses in Wellington and bring a unique retail offer – Retro Shack - that will attract young people into the town. The team has a Council grant award of £20,000 to launch their business idea, which the College intends to run as an enterprise training opportunity for students, but also to engage with and bring benefits to the local community.



4.8 The success of the Young High Street Challenge has been recognised by the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government. On the 19<sup>th</sup> September, the Department's Head of the Thriving Towns and High Streets team visited Wellington with representatives from the newly formed panel of

industry experts. They met with students from the winning team at Wrekin College to hear about their project idea and how it is going to be brought to life over the next few months.



### **Empty Unit Incentive Grant**

- 4.9 The Empty Unit Incentive Package provides a start up grant which is available in high streets where levels of empty retail properties are equal to or above national levels (around 11%); currently these are Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley. In recent months Ironbridge has seen an increase in vacant premises with 5 available to let which takes it above the national average. For this reason it is proposed that Ironbridge is included in the grant programme going forward.
- 4.10 The grant awards, which can range from £2k to £10k, do have the flexibility to support the bringing of property above shops back into use and also the conversion of retail into residential where there is a clear over provision of retail property.
- 4.11 Launched in June 2018 the Council received more than 60 requests for application forms. The Council's Growth Hub team have worked with those applicants who are at the right stage to develop a business plan and the Growth Hub has been providing start up workshops for those who still need to think about the viability of their idea. The number of requests is an encouraging sign of the number of potential entrepreneurs in Telford.
- 4.12 The first grant agreement was signed in September which will see a new haberdashery business – Gems - open and expand in Oakengates. Gems will have a significant impact on Oakengates as its customer base is regional and so will bring new shoppers to the town. Equally Gems support skills and learning through the workshops they offer. Their offer will include the sort of

service and on site activity such as craft workshops that will create new experiences for shoppers.

The owner of Gems said on confirmation of her grant offer *“Getting this grant makes a world of difference for us. The new shop is bigger than where we are now which means we have more display space and can offer new services. It’s an exciting time and we are really looking forward to welcoming new customers....”*.

Grant offers have been made to a further 3 applicants which are set to bring further new businesses onto the High Street in Wellington and Oakengates. Including potential applicants for Ironbridge, there are a further 5 applications in the pipeline. This will total up to £90k investment alone.

### **Property Façade Improvement**

- 4.13 The Property Façade Improvement Scheme is open to the 6 borough town high streets of Newport, Ironbridge, Madeley, Wellington, Dawley and Oakengates. In consultation with Town and Parish Councils a red line boundary has been established for each high street which sets out the primary shopping areas and target areas for improvement. The businesses within these red line boundaries will be eligible to participate in the programme; this includes a potential 112 premises. In Wellington, for example this will focus around the Market Square and surrounding streets.
- 4.14 The façade improvement programme will be operated by the Council’s biT architecture and design service.
- 4.15 Letters have already gone out to property owners within the eligible areas of Wellington and Ironbridge and these will be followed by letters to the remaining areas in December. Because many property owners are based elsewhere in the UK or overseas, the letters are being followed up by in person visits to tenants to secure their endorsement and assistance in obtaining the necessary approvals.
- 4.16 Once approval is received there will be surveys of any properties that require planning; generally listed buildings or buildings within conservation areas. Owners and tenants will be consulted on the design of improvements and colours and we anticipate that the first façade improvements in Wellington will have been completed by early in the New Year.

### **Community Pride Programme and High Street Regeneration**

- 4.17 Complementing PIOHS the Community Pride programme continues to deliver further investment across all our high streets and local centres. PIOHS is taking place alongside significant investment being made by a number of Town Councils. This includes Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley who are investing in excess of £1m in complementary high street regeneration

projects. The benefits of partnership working in tackling high street regeneration has been recognised:

*Councillor Malcolm Randle said 'Dawley High Street has seen many changes over the years and sadly one of these changes is the decline in the number of visitors using the businesses and shops. The Town Council are extremely pleased with the partnership investment through Telford & Wrekin and Great Dawley Town Council, which has seen an increase in the number of visitors, as well as the development of the High Street and Friday Street market. The investment has promoted and impacted on both physical and social regeneration for our community.'*

*Councillor deLauney, Chair of the Wellington Regeneration Board said "Wellington Town Council welcomes the great partnership working with Telford & Wrekin Council which is delivering projects to regenerate Wellington and create the successful high street envisaged in our Vision 2020 report. The Town Council is not only enhancing Pride projects but is itself prepared to invest in new projects in the town centre to bring a huge boost to Wellington".*

*Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Mayor of Oakengates Town Council said "Oakengates Town Council has committed itself to improving Oakengates town centre and complementing the Pride in Our High Streets Programme. Recent regeneration of the town along with the opening of The Wakes, a new vibrant community hub in the centre of the town and home of Oakengates Town Council, has only added to the improved high street experience. Oakengates is fast becoming the place to visit, with a greater number of independent shops that fit in nicely with the long established businesses within the Town".*

- 4.18 The Council has undertaken public and business consultation and research into the benefits of publicly available wi-fi in our high streets. This would provide wi-fi cover 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.
- 4.19 Installation of wi-fi will take place initially at two points as a pilot: Oakengates and Ironbridge. These will be assessed to establish whether there has been good take up of the service and based on this it will then be decided whether or not it should be rolled out to further high streets or if alternative options should be considered such as chip and pin devices using 4G or QR codes. An order has now been placed for installation in Oakengates and Ironbridge is now in the design stage.
- 4.20 The first 5G mobile handsets will start to appear in 2019 and mobile operators will start to offer 5G in high traffic areas like stations and stadiums in 2020. While it will be a few years before consumers start to upgrade to new handsets, and for operators to build coverage in areas such as local high streets, the Council will monitor opportunities for Telford through pilot projects, in particular the roll-out of a network of 5G masts and equipment by the West Midlands Combined Authority, who have received Government funding.

- 4.21 In addition to these projects there are other initiatives being delivered by the Council's Highways, Transport and Engineering Service as part of the Pride in Our High Street Programme. In Oakengates the Service has worked in partnership with the Town Council to undertake significant improvement works to Market Street, Oxford Street and Limes Walk with new slabbed footways, pedestrian crossing points and bollard replacement:



- 4.22 In Dawley, working with Great Dawley Town Council, footways have been improved alongside transformation of loading and parking layby's and the entrance way to Dawley High Street from the car park:



- 4.23 Other High Street initiatives include upgrading street lighting to LED, installing additional streetlights along footpaths and around a school and improving lighting at points of interest. These include the Lychgate and All Saints Church in Wellington and other local initiatives designed to encourage high street visitors such as digital tourist information.



- 4.24 To celebrate Telford's 50th year, Telford & Wrekin Council has launched a campaign to create a lasting digital record of some of the town's favourite buildings. Fifty of Telford's favourite buildings will be captured in 3D, including some of the best loved buildings on the high street, and the film will be used to promote the heritage and history of our high streets to both locals and visitors. High Street buildings include Newport Guildhall and Library, Wellington Market Hall, Dawley Town Hall and Iron Bridge Tollhouse.



- 4.25 Earlier this year, one of the last projects to be funded through the first Phase of Pride In Your High Streets brought fun and creativity to Ironbridge, attracting higher than usual visitor numbers to the high street and ultimately generating a great success story for nominated charities Severn Hospice & Jayne Sargent Foundation.



## 5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NONE

## 6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cabinet 18th October 2017 Pride in Our High Streets  
Cabinet 29th June 2017 Young High Street Challenge  
Cabinet 17th November 2016 Pride in Our High Streets  
Cabinet 28th January 2016 Pride in Our High Streets

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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