



**AGENDA ITEM: 10**

**SUMMARY**

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>10 November 2015</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Town Centre Management Strategy Update, including Outdoor Trading</b>
Contact:	<p>Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning &amp; Regeneration</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers: Chris Taylor, Group Manager (Strategic Planning &amp; Regeneration)</p> <p>Kevin Langley, Assistant Team Leader, Regeneration Team</p> <p>Pennie Rayner, Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer</p>
Purpose of report:	To update Members on the work that has been undertaken on the Town Centre Strategy since it was adopted in October 2014 and the approach to be taken to the management of the town centre post March 2016.
Recommendations	Members to note the updates and current activity
	<p>The regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre forms a key part of the “Regeneration” &amp; “Dacorum Delivers” corporate objectives.</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy details the plans for the town centre until 2017. It delivers the potential to maintain and grow the economy of the town centre by enabling opportunities to come forward, attracting new inward investment, continuing and enhancing business support services and looking to maximise the financial contributions of council assets within the town centre.</p>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>*****</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p>

'Value For Money Implications'	*****
Risk Implications	With the additional funding for the town centre soon to be finished certain services/activities will have to be resourced if they are wanted to continue or will have to cease from happening.
Equalities Implications	None
Health And Safety Implications	None
Consultees:	None
Background papers:	<b>Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy 2014-2017 and Associated Action Plan cabinet</b>  Hemel Hempstead Masterplan  Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy Report
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<i>BID – Business Improvement District</i>  <i>HHTCP – Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Partnership</i>

## BACKGROUND

1. From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, a new Town Centre Team was created using finance allocated by the Council for a two year period. It has been delivering the objectives identified in line with the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, including investigating and testing if a Business Improvement District (BID), or other self-financing formal partnership, for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre could be established.

A Cabinet Report in June 2014 sets out the strategy and the associated action plan and in October 2015 Cabinet noted the action that had been taken delivering this action plan to date and how this will be taken forward in the year ahead.

The Town Centre Strategy details actions that need to be taken to develop a robust and thriving town centre economy. Partnership and joined up working are key to achieve the project objective which is:-

*To create a safe, clean, child friendly, vibrant and exciting destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and inward investment. Creating a culture that encourages business to grow and take greater ownership for their town centre/trading environment, to make Hemel Hempstead town centre a destination of choice for visitors, shoppers and business.*

2. Resources are in place to continue working on the action plan set out in the Town Centre Strategy until March 2016. From then, and in the absence of resources from a future BID levy, there will be a need to prioritise what the Council is able to continue to provide in the town centre from established core budgets. This will include:

- Events, limited to:
  - Old Town Halloween Event 2016 and Firework Display
  - Christmas Lights Switch On 2016 and Firework Display
  - Christmas Lights in Hemel Hempstead, Old Town, Tring and Berkhamsted
- Management of the market and Town Centre promotional space contracts:
- Maintenance and footfall checks/monitoring for Town Centre:
- Town Centre and Old Town Partnership representatives
- Town centre filming enquiries
- Point of contact for town centre enquiries and referral on to appropriate bodies/organisations
- Business support/development work, including focus on skills and encouraging investment
- Enhanced town centre cleansing through the expansion of the town centre Clean, Safe and Green resource and use of the new cleansing machine now in operation.

It is anticipated that approximately £38,000 can be generated through promotional space bookings each year, and this is being considered as part of the ongoing budget setting process for 2016/17.

Update on progress of delivery of strategy and next steps to continue post March 2016

Members will recall that the Town Centre Strategy is comprised of a number of key action areas. This part of the report provides an update on progress on each one. i.

### **Partnership Working**

Officers have worked closely with the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Partnership to encourage and secure new membership from a range of retailers and stakeholders within the town centre. The partnership has primarily focused on investigating and progressing a BID within Hemel Hempstead town centre. After growing the partnership a decision was taken by the group that they did not feel there was enough 'buy in' or engagement from the wider business community and as such the partnership wanted to take time to focus on this and delay work on the BID.

The Town Centre Partnership is now taking a period of time to rebrand and focus on growing their membership. A number of options to create a self-funding town centre model have been explored but this can only succeed if driven by a strong partnership. Once this has occurred, proposals to re-consider establishing a BID with the support of the town centre business community will be taken forward.

### **ii. Business Support and Engagement**

The Town Centre Team has nominated officers who work closely with businesses to assist them with any town centre related issues, ranging from assistance with planning queries, commercial premises searches and business support.

Increased inward investment has seen a number of new businesses coming into the town and existing businesses growing into larger premises. This has seen the vacancy rate in the town centre decrease from 22% in May 2013, prior to the regeneration works in the town centre to its **current level of 13%** at the point where the Marlowes Shopping Zone improvements are nearing completion. The regeneration would appear to be stimulating more welcome investment in the town centre.

A programme of retail skills events is being planned to take place in the town centre during autumn/winter 2015 as part of the Dacorum Celebrates Business Festival, alongside a number of other Economic Development initiatives and a health and wellbeing day is planned for July 2016.

### **iii. The Old Town**

After the completion of the regeneration works the Old Town Partnership reformed with a new Chair, Sean Fletcher owner of Travel Four Seasons. The Partnership now has a clear ambition detailed in an action plan tackling their main priorities, including financing a joint marketing campaign.

Saunders Markets have been running a market in St Mary's Close Car Park in the Old Town on the first Sunday of every month, which has been received well by the public and has grown steadily. A weekly Saturday Food Market has recently been agreed which will begin in the autumn.

A deep clean of the Yorkstone paving and algae treatment took place along the length of the Old Town High Street in June 2015, which has helped to keep the new public realm works looking fresh. Another deep clean has been scheduled by Hertfordshire County Council for 2016.

### **iv. Hemel Hempstead Market**

Saunders Markets Ltd operates markets in the Marlowes pedestrian area on Wednesdays (antiques/bric-a-brac), and on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The market has had some disruption through the public realm improvement works, but trading has remained vibrant on the whole. Arrangements have recently been made to purchase new gazebo style stalls that will complement the newly regenerated town centre. An amended market plan will be submitted for planning permission purposes by spring 2016.

Regular monitoring meetings take place with Saunders Markets to review progress against their KPIs and discuss improvements to the market. The current individual markets are assessed as well as looking to see if there are any new opportunities for new markets within Hemel such as with the Saturday Old Town Market as mentioned above. This Saturday market will complement the market offer in the Marlowes pedestrian area of the town centre and help to drive footfall to the Old Town High Street, supporting businesses in that area.

As detailed above, Saunders Markets have also been running an Old Town Market on the first Sunday of each month. This has grown steadily and has been received

well by the public. Saunders Markets sit on both the Town Centre and Old Town partnership to ensure market offer is embedded within the whole town offer.

#### **v. Events**

With the support of the Town Centre Partnership's Events and Marketing Sub Group, the following events have been facilitated since April 2014.

- Old Town Festival – July 2014
- Old Town Halloween Party – October 2014
- Christmas Light Switch On – November 2014
- May Fair – May 2015
- Live @ New Town Square – September 2015

The Old Town Halloween Party 2015 will be taking place on 25 October 2015 and the Christmas Live @ Hemel Hempstead event 29 November 2015.

#### **vi. Marketing and Communication**

Clear marketing and communication channels are utilised to publicise activity in the town centre. A regular email newsletter, About Town, is distributed to town centre residents, businesses and visitors informing them of events, news and information relevant to the town centre. Web pages on both the Dacorum Borough Council and Dacorum: Look No Further websites have been created to assist the public to find relevant information about the town centre. Communication plans are utilised for all events which include Social Media channels (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn)

#### **vii. Good Environmental Management**

Town centre and old town maintenance have been carried out on a weekly basis since the team has been formed with records of litter, fouling, abandoned trolleys, vandalism and fly posting all reported weekly. Processes have been created to enable issues to be reported swiftly and action taken where possible with these reported to the relevant internal or external areas that need to action.

We have also been working closely with the Regeneration and Clean Safe and Green Teams in ensuring that the appropriate maintenance regime is adopted for the recently regenerated areas of the town centre. A new street cleaning machine has been purchased for use in the town centre, which adds a scrubbing function which is necessary to keep the new public realm clean. Work is ongoing with Clean, Safe and Green to ensure that the new public realm is continued to be cleaned to a high standard and that appropriate resourcing is available to ensure this can be achieved.

A new team leader has been recruited to the Clean Safe and Green service to provide additional capacity and capability for cleansing activities.

### **viii. Monitoring and Evaluation**

In addition to the monthly environmental reports regular health check reports are produced in partnership with Riverside Shopping Centre and Marlowes to monitor key performance indicators such as vacancy rates, car parking statistics, footfall data, sales information and market performance amongst other information within the town centre. This information is reported on quarterly to the Town Centre Partnership.

The footfall counters in the town centre will be switched on when the new UKPN power supply is connected. When available, the data will be analysed to report on trends, impact of events and other information deemed valuable.

### **i. Pavement Strategy**

A Pavement Strategy has been written to complement and expand on the Hemel Evolution programme, encouraging a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere in the town centre. By making use of the outside space around the town centre, we will be encouraging a sense of community and vibrancy where visitors want to spend time, thus increasing both footfall and dwell time leading to a successful town centre.

The strategy details income generators for the Council, such as the letting of promotional space that could be reinvested into the town to facilitate more events and promotion of the town centre.

It is requested that Cabinet approve this strategy. Work is taking place with Hertfordshire County Council to progress a Memorandum of Understanding for the issuing of Pavement Licences as currently under the planned Pedestrian Zone Order and Traffic Regulation Order within the town centre Hertfordshire County Council will need to be consulted as part of the process.