

<b>Title</b>	<b>Ways in which the vibrancy of town centres can be measured: methods of monitoring (including costings and value for money)</b>		
<b>Report of the Head of</b>	<b>Estates and Economic Development</b>		
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<b>Report to</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	

### Briefing Summary

There are various ways in which the vibrancy of town centres can be measured including vacancy rates, surveys of shoppers, businesses etc and pedestrian footfall monitors.

### Main focus of the document

#### Vacancy Rates

The Council has monitored retail vacancy within the Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas (PSA) of Andover and Romsey town centres for more than 10 years and Stockbridge for the last two. Surveys are undertaken in May and October of ground floor premises and an excellent time-series of data has been built up which enables comparison with other town centres and a national average.

As well as noting which units are vacant the survey collects information of the use of occupiers (introducing charity shops).

At October 2016 the vacancy rates were: Andover 10.3% and Romsey 4.7% compared to a national average of 12%.

#### Pedestrian Footfall Monitoring

Types of counter (technology & characteristics)

- *Heat sensitive counter* – e.g. Powered by Irisys' infrared technology and using body heat to track the presence and direction of movement. Quite expensive and accurate but needs a big mount for it. The unit itself has to be mounted at least 50 feet high. The problem can be that you have to get a shop/landlords permission to have the system mounted.

- *Infrared* – very efficient; cost about £750 plus installation (e.g. rent to landlord) plus 5 year maintenance contract. Currently used in Andover and Romsey, ideally located at a pinch point (where the flow of people is brought down) as the problem lies in the fact this unit wont pick up individuals so if you have a group of people walking through the beam it will detect that as one person.
- *Macnode* – e.g. used by Winchester BID; cost about £600 per node; small rent to landlord; minimal maintenance cost. Monitors smart phone use (on or off); aggregate not personal data, encrypted, sent for analysis, re-encrypted, sent to BID customer then deleted by contractor and analyst. Discreet: small, plugs in to a shop front. This detector will then start to count and collect smartphone signatures. Of course, not all visitors will have a smartphone or have Wi-Fi enabled. 95% accuracy. Flexible: can be moved from location to location. All the big chains such as Debenhams, Next etc. use this system within their stores. However a problem may arise in a few years time in the fact this system maybe banned due to privacy implications.

Every smart phone contains a unique identifier known as a MAC address that in effect shouts out “I am here” to anyone who has set up the right Wi-Fi receiver technology. It is consistent with Data Protection legislation because users have chosen not to shut it off.

- Cameras *Springboard* and *TYCO* (American firm who recently acquired Experian's business intel arm)
  - Bath BID – use cameras
  - Reading BID – use cameras
  - Sutton – 3 feet cameras (motion detectors)
  - Weymouth BID – 4 feet cameras (motion detectors)
  - Springboard used by British Retail Consortium (in shops)
  - Salisbury BID – use 3 cameras (motion detectors)
  - Eastleigh BID – use 2 cameras (motion detectors)
  - Newbury BID – use 1 camera (motion detectors)

Springboard have access to a large amount of comparison data from their national network. Infrared and smart phone solutions both involve a static mounted counter requiring a power connection and provide a basic footfall count. Therefore several locations might be needed to obtain a comprehensive picture of movement around the town.

*The means* (town centre management consultancy) are currently exploring a more sophisticated offer with a firm called *Movement Strategies* who are able to use mobile data to track footfall which is being piloted using Wi-Fi on the London Underground: <http://www.gizmodo.co.uk/2017/02/heres-what-tfl-learned-from-tracking-your-phone-on-the-tube/>

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**Proposed Outcomes for consideration**

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## Conclusions

Andover and Romsey each have one infrared motion sensor counter which provides excellent time series data covering the last three years. They provide hourly, daily, weekly and monthly records therefore can show whether footfall is influenced by specific events, weather, holidays etc.

It is also advantageous to be able to compare Andover and Romsey on an equal and consistent basis.

Regarding value for money, given current discussions about a possible Andover town centre Business Improvement District (BID), it would seem appropriate to await the outcome of that process (Spring 2018) before deciding the need for and best technology for any replacement or additional counters for Andover.

Any such decision would require a comprehensive comparison exercise liaising with potential suppliers and perhaps visiting adjoining centres to fully appreciate the capabilities and limitations of the various technologies.

Having informally consulted Romsey's town centre manager there is no urgent need to upgrade or replace the current counter; the priority, through Romsey Future, is to continue to develop events and marketing to attract more visitors into the town centre.

## Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	
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