

Andover Masterplan – Cultural regeneration, meanwhile events and activities

Report of the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

- 1. That the temporary curation and management of a programme of meanwhile events and activities (as set out in section 6.3 of the report) be approved.**
- 2. That the necessary resource allocation of £90,141 be approved (as set out in section 8 and confidential Annex 2 to the report) and the new posts be created for a period of 18 months.**
- 3. The Head of the Community and Leisure Service in consultation with the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder be delegated authority to agree the detail and content of the programme.**

SUMMARY:

- As we move from various states of lockdown during the height of the pandemic, toward ‘recovery,’ Andover is set to embrace a new era.
- Following the adoption of the Masterplan, the establishment of pop-up Markets, events and activities for Summer 2021 (as restrictions ease), and the commencement of the Place Branding project - now is a critical time to create a positive noise around Andover. This will help encourage consumer confidence and interest in returning to, using and enjoying their town. It is hoped this will also create momentum to move forward with the regeneration plans for the town over the next decade or so.
- The proposal is to curate, programme, market and manage an extensive and diverse series of events, activities and meanwhile (temporary) use of spaces, in and around the town. This will complement the Masterplan and Place Branding project to help promote Andover to a range of audiences. It will spark a buzz around the town, and get the town talked about further afield and in the regeneration sector.

1 Introduction

- 1.1** Discussion about ‘meanwhile use’ opportunities started pre-lockdown, and now, as part of encouraging confidence to return to town centres, this proposal is intended to support economic recovery, and encourage a broad range of people to return, or to start to think about if and how they might use their town, now and in the future.

- 1.2 At its meeting of 18 August 2021 (minute 139 refers) Cabinet approved the allocation of Welcome back Funding to initiatives across Test Valley. In that report, reference was made to allocating over £62,000 towards “*an extended programme of diverse cultural events and activities, in keeping with the direction of travel for regeneration, and aspirations set for the town centre masterplan*”
- 1.3 The same report also highlighted that ...”*the detail and resource plan for this work is still being prepared, and it will be the subject of a future and more detailed report to Cabinet.*”
- 1.3.1 This proposal goes farther beyond the allocation of Welcome Back Funding, and is proposing a significantly greater commitment of time, energy and resources to deliver an extended and extensive programme of events. This will raise aspirations for the town, and set the tone for cultural regeneration as a catalyst for the Masterplan.
- 1.4 This proposal considers Andover Town Centre as a whole, linking events and marketing with the place branding work and longer-term delivery of the Regeneration Masterplan, building on the positive perceptions of the town as an attractive and vibrant place to visit, where there is always something interesting to see and do.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council adopted the Andover Regeneration Masterplan in September 2020. This ambitious document sets out a series of proposals for the development and improvement of Andover Town Centre that will ensure it develops as a vibrant place that will be attractive and inviting for users and investors. The delivery of the Masterplan objectives is one of the Council’s top strategic priorities
- 2.2 While the Masterplan deals principally with physical changes, it also sets out a clear case for the need to encourage and grow cultural and leisure activity in the Town Centre as an integral part of the strategy. It is the combination of an attractive place and lively, active atmosphere that will encourage repeat visits and ensure long-term economic sustainability

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The proposal responds and contributes to one of the Council’s prime corporate objectives; to enhance our town centres.
 - 3.1.1 Growing the potential of town centres to adapt and be attractive, vibrant and prosperous places.
 - (a) Future proofing our town centres to be accessible places where people live, shop, work and spend their leisure time.
 - (b) Enhancing public realm and improving the appearance and environment of our town centres.

- (c) Making our town centres attractive places for inward investment to attract more jobs and increase footfall.
- (d) Working with Andover Vision and Romsey Future to ensure that growth within our town centres benefits all of our communities.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The proposals contained within this report have been put forward with the support and endorsement of the Andover Vision board. Andover Vision partnership is made up of a broad mix of statutory, local and charitable stakeholders for the town.
- 4.2 Hemingway Design have also been formally engaged to support the development of the programme both for their professional expertise and for ensuring coherence with Place Branding and the Masterplan itself.

5 Options

- 5.1 Option 1 - Do nothing
- 5.2 Option 2 - The Council (and other event organisers / interest parties) manage their own events and activities in the town centre.
- 5.3 Option 3 - The Council lead on the curation, management and marketing of an events and meanwhile activities programme for the town centre for the next 18 months (recommended)
- 5.4 Option 4 - Consider alternative options

6 Option Appraisal

6.1 Option 1 - Do nothing

- 6.1.1 The Council has a good track record for leading, organising and managing high quality cultural events and activities that bring a diverse mix of people into the town. At a time when 'doing what we can' to encourage public confidence in returning to the High St to promote economic recovery, is at an all-time high, to do nothing going forward would seem to be counter-intuitive.
- 6.1.2 Further still, it would actually be a step back from the Council's current commitment - and therefore is not the recommended option.

6.2 Option 2 - The Council (and other event organisers / interest parties) manage their own events and activities in the town centre.

- 6.2.1 The Council, the Lights, BID, Chantry Centre and other key stakeholders in the town, all contribute to a greater or lesser extent, to the creation of an eclectic mix and scale of events and activities throughout the year. There is no reason this should not / will not continue, but what also comes with this is the potential for inconsistent quality of events which ultimately affects their

perceived impact and overall success. Come to a great event one week, and residents are more likely to come to the next – come to a poorly conceived event, and the likelihood of coming to the next reduces.

6.2.2 On the basis of wanting to collaborate, coordinate, and set high standards and aspirations for events and activities going forward, clear leadership is needed (which will not simply happen if event management continues to be ‘ad-hoc’) - and therefore this is also not the recommended option.

6.3 **Option 3 - The Council lead on the curation, management and marketing of an events and meanwhile activities programme for the town centre for the next 18 months (recommended)**

6.3.1 The Council has demonstrated its competence and capability at organising creative and exciting events and activities for a mix of audiences, over a number of years. Some examples include the recent opening (family friendly) event at the newly created Riverside Park, Artisan Markets, open-air theatre, four-fun-Fridays, chilli fiesta, and annual Christmas Lights Switch On events (to name a few).

6.3.2 Building upon these events, and working with Hemingway design (to ensure coherence with the Master Plan and the new town centre ‘Place-Branding’) it is proposed to inject significant further expertise and resources, to re-energise events and activities in and around the town.

6.3.3 In doing so, the Council will set out a plan for a diverse programme of cultural events, activities and ‘meanwhile uses’ of, for and across our town centre for the next 18 months. This will require a dedicated curatorial and event co-ordination resources, as well as a delivery budget for events, initiatives and activities themselves.

6.3.4 Appendix 1 provides further details of the proposed concept, vision and values, as well as draft event and activity programme. In summary these include;

- (a) Extending and enhancing the already successful Artisan Markets, and the encouragement of cross-over from daytime to night-time events with ideas such as;
 - Food and drink fayre
 - Cheese and wine festival
 - Chilli festival
 - Vegan Market
 - Vintage / Thrift market
 - ‘Summer live’ programme, and
 - ‘Family friendly’ festivals (focus on art / music)
- (b) Establishing precedence for quality / values for artisan, pop-up markets and external events to ensure high standards and ‘fit’ with vision for masterplan, and to raise ambition / aspirations generally going forward.

- (c) Further explore proposals for temporary use of vacant Chantry Centre units for pop-ups, workshop / gallery / exhibition / creative studio space.

6.3.5 Subject to Cabinet approval, this programme will be crystallised and promoted with as near to immediate effect as possible.

6.3.6 Programme creation and establishment of reach and feasibility for pop-up / temporary / meanwhile uses, and events and activities, will look wider than the Upper and Lower High Street and include the Chantry Centre, Riverside Park, Pocket Park, as well as potential for including St Mary's Garden of Remembrance and wider.

6.3.7 Cultural regeneration has a huge role to play as a catalyst for change in place-making, and so it will be critical to ensure not just the alignment of objectives with the Andover Vision, Masterplan, the Chantry Centre and BID (and the businesses they support), but also their direct interdependency and potential to raise aspirations for our town-centre regeneration itself.

6.3.8 To 'make this happen' it is proposed to create a role for the curation and coordination of town centre events and activities, along with the creation of a new 'marketing and event assistant' post.

6.3.9 Appendix 2 provides details of the proposed temporary staffing changes and associated costs, but in headline terms the annual full year pressure cost to implement this proposal is summarised in section 8 below.

6.3.10 This proposal is intended to 'turbo-charge' events and activities in the town centre, as a means to promote both immediate economic recovery, and to lead by example to highlights the art-of-possibility with an injection of creativity and innovation to encourage more people to use and engage with their town centre.

6.3.11 The proposed programme and resource commitment is temporary (18 months). Subject to Cabinet approval, the programme, and its value for money / success will be monitored and reviewed through-out its 18 month life span in order to evaluate its impact and consider future (and/or exit) plans.

6.4 **Option 4 - Consider alternative options**

6.4.1 The current programme of events will come to an end in the build up to Christmas 2021. It is important that immediate momentum regarding economic recovery is not lost, as well as momentum towards the longer term aspirations for the Masterplan and town centre regeneration - and so 'pausing to consider other options' is not the recommended option.

7 **Risk Management**

7.1 Resistance from stakeholder / stakeholder groups as to the perceived value for money.

7.1.1 Evidence and research highlights the positive impact and improved vibrancy that creative events and activities can bring to a place (which translates to bringing more people into town along with secondary spend).

7.2 Future sustainability

7.2.1 This is currently a time limited proposal. As part of continual evaluation of the impact of these events and activities, continuation and/or an exit plan will be considered, and discussions will continue with the BID and other stakeholders to ensure future sustainability of events and activities going forward.

7.3 Individual risk assessments will be carried out in advance of each event, in the usual way.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 At its meeting in August (minute 139 refers) – an allocation of £62,403 Welcome Back Funding was made by Cabinet to this project.

8.2 The financial pressure implications for this proposal are detailed in confidential annex 2, but can be summarised as follows;

8.2.1 The total staffing and delivery budget over the 18-month project is estimated to be £213,444.

8.2.2 This cost can be partly mitigated by existing budget of £40,600 per annum (£60,900 over 18 months) and using the £62,403 allocation from Welcome Back Funding. This leaves a nett total pressure estimate of £90,141

8.3 It is proposed this pressure is met from New Homes Bonus reserve.

9 Legal Implications

10 Other Issues

10.1 Equality issues – none (although Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for individual events and activities as appropriate).

10.2 Property Issues – including the potential use of vacant units in Council ownership.

10.3 Wards/Communities Affected – All principal wards of Andover and surrounding area.

11 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

11.1 With A Vision for Andover, ambition for rapid post-pandemic economic recovery, the launch of Place-Branding and a masterplan for town centre regeneration, timing could not be better to think creatively about what we can do to encourage confidence for residents and visitors to return to our town centre with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

- 11.2 The way visitors and residents use their town centres is changing at an accelerated rate, and so we too are thinking differently about what our future town centre might look and feel like, and what we might need to do in the meantime / meanwhile.
- 11.3 The proposed programme of meanwhile uses, events and activities is intended to 'turbo-charge,' extend and enhance our existing programme. More importantly, it is also intended to encourage visitor and resident's confidence to return and entice people to think about how they use, or come into, their town, now and in the future.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
Whilst the report does not contain exempt information, it is considered that Annex 2 contains exempt information within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.			
No of Annexes:	2	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Community and Leisure) Councillor Ian Jeffrey			
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	29 September 2021