

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

23 MARCH 2022

TOWN CENTRES UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 In January 2022, a report was presented to the Economic Development Committee to update on the ongoing activities and proposals for the year ahead. This report intends to give an update on two of those key workstreams, the Newark Town Centre Strategy / Masterplan and the High Street Diversification Fund. Further key activities relating to the High Street Task Force, Newark Cycle Race, and Tour of Britain are also introduced.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Newark Town Centre Strategy / Masterplan

2.1.1 In January, the Economic Development Committee were informed of the intention to develop a Newark Town Centre Strategy / Masterplan (a working title at this stage, as this will be more than a land use plan), which will allow the Council to capture, in a single document, a holistic approach bringing together existing and future strategies. It will also address the current disconnect between extant town centre policy and the direction of travel to accept, curate, and offer market clarity on what high street changes and reduction of retail may mean.

2.1.2 The Town Centre Masterplan for Newark will emphasise the importance of Newark's heritage and cultural assets and how the town centre will be shaped and supported to support its future vibrancy in what are challenging times for traditional High Street retailing. It will seek to retain the positive qualities that the Centre possesses, but to promote and allow for new, repurposed and experience led activity and uses (alongside others) to flourish. With the aim being to reposition Newark as a quality place to live, work and visit providing what is needed for future generations. The Masterplan will support work already underway on the Towns Fund Investment Projects and the preparation of future funding submissions and opportunities. It also sets a planning blueprint for public and private sector development and investment via the identification of 'opportunity areas', something consultations on the revisions to the Newark Conservation Area is already exploring.

2.1.3 Whilst the Newark Town Centre Masterplan itself is focussed specifically on Newark Town Centre, it does offer opportunities for wider discussions to take place with partners around interventions in other Town Centres within the District. Supporting Centres beyond Newark will remain high on the agenda.

2.1.4 A scope for insertion into a specification to procure a multi-disciplinary team of consultants has been prepared. This scope includes a recommendation for a 9-12 month contract to undertake the delivery of the strategy/masterplan. This will include public and partner engagement throughout the development and publication periods.

2.2 High Street Diversification Fund

- 2.2.1 For the past 20 years, having an online presence has been a vital element of promoting a business and connecting with customers. The Covid-19 pandemic propelled the need for having an online presence further up every business owner's priority list, as the world transforms and adapts to a hybrid way of living, working and shopping.
- 2.2.2 In October 2020 the High Street Diversification Fund was launched to support independent High Street based retail and hospitality businesses. To qualify for the grant each business had to be independently owned and to trade in Newark, Southwell, Ollerton or Edwinstowe.
- 2.2.3 3 rounds of the High Street Diversification Fund and 1 round for Social Media funding were run over a period of 10 months ending in August 2021. Rounds 1, 2 and 4 were matched funded at £250 and round 3 was match funded by the businesses at £125.
- 2.2.4 The impact was more successful and beneficial to the independent retailers and hospitality businesses in Newark and Southwell but less so in Ollerton and Edwinstowe as shown in the table below. Of the total grant funding received this generated a private sector investment of £36,065.11

Town	Total number of applications	Total number of payments made	Total spend by businesses to complete works
Newark	138	81	£43,815.01
Southwell	54	26	£13,477.50
Ollerton	8	1	£577.60
Edwinstowe	17	7	£3820.00
Total	217	115 (£25,625.00)	£61,690.11

- 2.2.5 The Experian report for October 2021 suggested that 81% of people search online for a product or service; 78% of consumers want brands to use social (media) to help people connect with each other and 93% of consumers used the internet to find local businesses in 2020, whilst 87% said they read online reviews before making a purchase. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 26.6% of the total retail sales were made online in December 2021
- 2.2.6 Having a good online presence allows businesses to be very visible on the internet and social media, making them more "discoverable" to potential new clients. At its very basic format having a website and being active on social media platforms are key to target an audience, creating new avenues of traffic to the products and services for potential new customers.

2.3 High Street Task Force

- 2.3.1 In February 2022, it was announced that Newark and Sherwood was one of 68 local authorities to receive direct support from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities High Street Task Force (HSTF). The support runs to 2024.

- 2.3.2 The HSTF was commissioned by the government in 2019 and is run by the Institute of Place Management. The HSTF brings together a range of organisations that specialise in repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring places.
- 2.3.3 The HSTF provides expert advice, training and data directly to local stakeholders and its aim is to support place leaders to make the best decisions on the future of their high streets to best service their communities and build long-term capacity for local transformation.
- 2.3.4 As an authority the challenges of our town centres and high streets were acknowledged in the adoption of the original Community Plan in 2018 and the current 2020 – 2023 Community Plan continues to emphasise this need through the specific objectives to ‘deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth’ and ‘create vibrant and self-sufficient local communities’.
- 2.3.5 It is widely acknowledged that the challenges to town centres and high street have intensified as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. There remains a need for intervention and support from national and local government for businesses, residents and visitors who are crucial in the running of our town centres and high streets. Access to the HSTF funding offer would greatly enhance all of the above aims.

2.4 **Newark Cycle Race**

- 2.4.1 In 2020 the Council was approached with a request to fund (via an underwrite model) a pilot ‘annual’ Newark Town Centre circuit race event, that will form a critical part of the British Cycling, National Circuit Series, for both Men and Women. This event will also be the series finale in the British Cycling calendar. The event will also comprise multiple youth races, a regional semi pro and junior race, and an informal community ride aimed at younger children and their families, creating an energetic and inspirational cycling festival atmosphere within the Royal Market Square and town centre on a Friday evening in the summertime. The date to deliver this event is scheduled for 29th July 2022 and has been ring-fenced in British Cycling’s national calendar making Newark the central focus of the British cycling world.
- 2.4.2 The event organisers are seeking to promote cycling as a cultural town centre offer, alongside a sporting offer. To deliver the event the organisers have asked that the Council take on the responsibility of underwriting the cost of the event which has been set at £30k. The role will also include the council procuring infrastructure, stewarding, traffic management & road closures, communications & marketing, prize funding, and headquarters costs which are included in the £30K cost envelope. Therefore the event will be a joint venture between the event organiser - Mr Chris Lawrence, who is a significant and experienced figure in British Cycling who already organizes the well-established and highly successful town centre event, The Barnsley Town Centre Races.
- 2.4.3 The organiser has stated that entry fees and commercial sponsorship will be sourced into the event and any surpluses from year one, will in effect, reduce the underwritten value for any future years and the ultimate objective is to use this as a pioneer event in order to create a catalyst for a reoccurring annual cycling showpiece. The Organiser will take the lead responsibility for the management of all technical aspects and cycling logistics which will be contained in the Event Management Plan which will include appropriate RAMS.

2.4.4 What will this involve?

2.4.5 The event will require the secure closing roads to create a 1.2km professional cycle racing circuit. The likely highlighted route is at **Appendix 1**. This route will require a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) in order to close the roads. Any event of this nature will require careful planning and liaison with the highway authority and businesses. That is what is intended, should the event be supported.

2.4.6 The organiser has confirmed that the course is sanctioned by British Cycling, complies with their risk assessment protocols, and the event is managed by a thorough Event Management Plan with support from the District's Safety Advisory Group, which included 'blue light services and highways representation'. The event will host 400 + riders (from Under 12s, to Senior UK Olympic hopefuls) through a thrilling night of racing, and attract upwards of 100 younger families in a community ride. This event is created based on equality, therefore there will be equal standing, and equal prize funding for both the Men's and Women's Events, both of which have 'National Series' headline status.

2.4.7 What will be the impact for Newark?

2.4.8 The event will be highly visible and impactful and a part of the Newark Cultural Heart roll-out. It is envisaged that Newark Town Centre Races will attract 2-3,000 spectators throughout the event, both from casual enthusiasts, the cycling community, and the wider public who desire live sports and cultural events. Currently footfall stands at approximately 8,000 people a day, which would therefore increase footfall by up to 38% on the event day. Further data from Visitor Market Insight for Newark has shown that an average day visitor would spend £63, this would equate to a potential additional increase of £188,000 increase to the local economy.

2.4.9 The event will also support town centre retail and business involvement and will showcase the town centre offering and stimulate business growth. The event has the potential for national and international publicity via British Cycling's media publicity platforms could drive a new audience to Newark. Further local media will use the event to promote the town, including local television.

2.4.10 Why support this event?

2.4.11 Cycling in the UK has been the growth sport for the last decade, and in particular over the Covid19 pandemic there has been a notable increase in 2020 for cycle usage with a 26% increase in cycle trips made across the UK and 62% increase in distance covered in that same period.

2.4.12 Great Britain is the world number one cycling nation combined from both sporting success and a nationwide passion for the bicycle with over 47% of adults have access to a bike. The Newark Town Centre Races, delivered entirely by volunteers on a non-profit basis, gives Newark a true, high calibre national cycling event, leveraging the media profile (both UK and overseas) that a national British Cycling event brings to it by bringing to the streets of Newark current and future Olympic and World stars.

- 2.4.13 As part of the town fund, The Town Investment Plan was published to 'work with a range of partners to transform Newark into a '20-minute town', giving people the ability to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or local public transport trip from their home'. The Newark Town Centre Races compliments the NSDC commitment to make Newark a cycling town. Brompton Bikes will also be involved, with a likely business racing event taking place between key leaders of industry and NSDC, who have been volunteered!
- 2.4.14 The Newark Town Centre Races is a show piece event to the towns civic calendar, but more than that, it gives the town a community event to use as inspiration to its younger residents of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, which in turn reducing the impact on our health services both locally and nationally. This project will also align with the Newark Heart Programme that will start a delivery phase in summer 2022.
- 2.4.15 Officers have identified a budget that could support this event for 2022. Officers have informed the event organiser that this is a one year offer only to ascertain and prove the model and therefore no commitment, at this stage, has been made to fund future years.
- 2.4.16 In order to ensure successful co-ordination the event will also require a project team to deliver the event with the organiser. This will be led by the Health Improvement & Community Relations, with involvement from key officers including; Tourism Manager, Town Centre Development Manager, Business Manager (Heritage, Culture & Visitors) as well as the Town Council Events Team.

2.5 **Tour of Britain 2022**

- 2.5.1 Members will be aware that Nottinghamshire successfully hosted a stage of the Tour of Britain in 2017 and 2018 and following the success of the two events Nottinghamshire County Council and its districts and boroughs (as a consortium) will have the privilege of once again hosting a stage of this premier professional cycling event in 2022. Stage 5 will take place on Thursday 8th September and will cover approximately 175kms of the County's road network with a significant amount of the racing taking place in Newark and Sherwood.
- 2.5.2 The hosting of the event is a partnership between The Tour of Britain Team, Sweetspot Promotions and the hosting authority. The previous stages in Nottinghamshire were very successful and created a significant economic impact for the area on the back of a fantastic sporting spectacle and therefore the County consortium were keen to see the event return.
- 2.5.3 In order to secure the Tour a stage hosting fee of £180K is required and this cost will be shared across the consortium depending on the level of exposure the event brings to the each partner. In terms of Newark and Sherwood the contribution will be £10k and officer support to the project team tasked with delivering an outstanding event that ensures the maximum profile and benefit to the County.
- 2.5.4 The benefit to Newark and Sherwood is tri-fold, in the first instance the event will generate visitors and additional spend in the local community , through tv coverage the county will be showcased to an international audience with coverage an highlights being broad cast to many countries and thirdly, the event will provide an opportunity for local communities to engage with the Tour to welcome the event and the riders as they pass through their communities and be part of a unique sporting experience.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Newark Town Centre Strategy / Masterplan

3.1.1 It is proposed that NSDC support the development of a Newark Town Centre Strategy / Masterplan by the end of 2022, to be integrated into planning policy in 2023. The commission will include requirements for partner and public engagement and the intention for any final document produced to be capable of statutory adoption.

3.2 High Street Diversification Fund

3.2.1 It has been recognised that the previous grants were paid to predominantly Newark High Street independent retail and hospitality businesses. There is, therefore an opportunity to undertake additional support work with the independent retail and hospitality businesses solely in Ollerton, Edwinstowe and other rural independent retailers within the Newark & Sherwood area, with the launch of a further round of the grant funding. The grant would run for 1 year from April 2022 to March 2023 and would assist in investment towards e-commerce. Web investment and Social Media Advertising would be encouraged where this is lacking.

3.2.2 Businesses would be encouraged to do the work that perhaps they had been thinking about but not had the impetus or money to do so, with case studies and local advocates who have already benefitted promoting the scheme.

3.2.3 It is hoped that specific changes can be brought about for the independent retailers within Ollerton, Edwinstowe and the rural retail communities as a result of participating in this project. The grant would not wholly exclude Newark businesses but to gain the greatest traction Community Champions from Ollerton and Edwinstowe would be instrumental in the promotion engaging with the businesses for the better outcomes.

3.2.4 As with the previous rounds, the grant will again be administered by members of the Economic Growth team who will oversee the applications and notify the businesses if they have been successful or not. Payments will be a maximum value of £250 to be match funded by the applicant. All the funding must be used solely for the E-Commerce purposes and the grants would not be paid until receipted invoices for the completed work have been submitted. Only 1 grant will be awarded per business and any business that has previously applied will not be eligible. The grant is anticipated to run for the next year with an allocation of £10k from the existing service budget.

3.2.5 A major relaunch would not be required but a request to the Communications and Marketing team to promote the grant across all communication channels including Twitter and Facebook would be necessary. A social media post every couple of weeks and links from the NSDC and Invest Newark & Sherwood websites to the application form and terms and conditions would be required and promotion through the Economic Growth e-newsletter.

3.2.6 Over the 1 year period the success of the grant specifically for independent High Street retail and hospitality businesses in Ollerton, Edwinstowe, and rural retail communities within the District will be assessed.

3.3 High Street Task Force

- 3.3.1 NSDC have accepted the offer of support from the HSTF and the next stage is to advise the location(s) to benefit. Whilst the HSTF encourages the submission of a single high street it is considered there is a strong case for the towns of Edwinstowe and Ollerton to be supported.
- 3.3.2 It is recognised that interventions are well established in Newark with various plans and strategies within current and planned workstreams. Southwell is also supported through both the Tourism Action Groups and Shop Southwell forums.
- 3.3.3 Edwinstowe is recommended for support due to lack of perceived connectivity and failure to capitalise on wider footfall with Sherwood Forest and the key tourist attractions within the town, such as the Arts and Crafts Centre and Thorsby Vale. Edwinstowe has the potential of benefitting from its gateway position to both Sherwood Forest and the intended reopening of the Robin Hood Line station. Access to the HSTF would enable an enhanced level of practical and immediate support to be offered to key stakeholders within the town to identify the opportunities and interventions needed to overcome current challenges.
- 3.3.4 Ollerton faces challenges like many other high streets. Discussion and focus on how best to capitalise on emerging opportunities from the Ollerton Town Centre Hub and extension to the Robin Hood line are likely to unlock further vibrancy and co-ordination across traders and landlords.
- 3.3.5 NSDC Officers will put forward Edwinstowe and Ollerton for support. If this is accepted, the next steps will be for the HSTF team to undertake an 'Unlocking Place Potential' site visit to understand the key barriers and opportunities to the town(s) (due Summer/Autumn 2022). Further, a mentor will be appointed, workshops will be carried out and interventions identified and delivered throughout the support programme (up to 2024).

3.4 Newark Cycle Race

- 3.4.1 It is proposed that Newark & Sherwood District Council undertake to support the Newark Town Centre Races with a financial commitment of up to £30,000 for the event in 2022. Further that the Council support the event with an active role in the delivery, promotion, and encouragement of sponsorship as detailed above.

3.5 Tour of Britain

- 3.5.1 It is proposed that Newark & Sherwood District Council undertake to support the Tour of Britain with a financial commitment of £10,000 for the event later this year. Further that the Council play an active role in the delivery, promotion, and sponsorship of the event.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 Newark Town Centre Strategy/Masterplan – A full equalities impact assessment will be undertaken during the development of the masterplan so that both the strategy, interventions and impacts are considered in its creation.

- 4.2 High Street Diversification Fund – The fund does not have any detrimental equalities implications. In this future round the project lead will implement an equalities assessment for each application form.
- 4.3 High Street Task Force – there are no equalities implications in securing the advice and specialist support. However through active engagement with partners equalities implications will be reviewed.
- 4.4 Newark Cycle Race & Tour of Britain – the event lead will ensure that an equalities impact assessment is undertaken as part of the Event Plan.

5.0 Digital Implications

- 5.1 Newark Town Centre Strategy/Masterplan – no digital implications
- 5.2 High Street Diversification Fund - A need to set up an online application form through the NSDC website by utilising a template previously installed by the ICT team.
- 5.3 High Street Task Force – no digital implications
- 5.4 Newark Cycle Race – no digital implications

6.0 Financial Implications (FIN21-22/9296)

- 6.1 This report has no direct financial implications.
- 6.2 The costs of the multi-disciplinary team of consultants to deliver the Newark Town Centre Strategy/Masterplan is being funded from Town Centre Management budget which had been previously transferred to reserves.
- 6.3 As referred to in paragraph 3.2.4, it is anticipated that £10,000 will be required to deliver High Street Diversification Fund grants to independent retailers within Ollerton, Edwinstowe and the rural retail communities. This will be funded from the original 2022/23 allocation for Professional Services within the Town Centre Management budget.
- 6.4 The High Street Task Force (HSTF) provides local authorities with non-financial support, in the form of expert advice, training and data.
- 6.5 As per sections 3.4 and 3.5 respectively, it is anticipated that £30,000 budget will be required for the Newark Cycle Race for 2022/23 and £10,000 budget for the Tour of Britain for 2022/23. It is proposed that these will be funded from the Change Management Reserve, subject to this Committee's recommendation to Policy & Finance Committee and subsequent approval by Policy & Finance Committee.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 7.1 The 5 activities listed all align with the objective to deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth by maximising opportunities for supporting the town centres, ensuring sustainable growth through government support, delivering increased footfall and providing businesses with financial assistance.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that Members:

- (a) support the commissioning and associated consultation on the production of a Newark Town Centre Strategy/Masterplan, the details of which shall be presented back under the new governance arrangements as the work progresses;**
- (b) support the continuation of a further round of the High Street Diversification Fund specifically targeted at independent High Street retail and hospitality businesses in Ollerton, Edwinstowe and rural retail communities within the District;**
- (c) support the submission of Ollerton and Edwinstowe Town Centres as the designated high streets to receive support from the High Streets Task Force and for Business Manager - Economic Growth & Visitor Economy to liaise with the HSTF and local stakeholders to progress works, providing regular updates back to the new governance arrangements; and**
- (d) recommend to the Policy & Finance Committee the approval of a budget of £40,000 for 2022/23 funded from the Change Management Reserve to deliver a pilot 'Newark Town Centre Race' in summer 2022 in partnership with British Cycling and local traders and partners and contribute towards the Tour of Britain in 2022.**

Reason for Recommendations

To support the Town Centre strategy and activities delivered to enhance the economic growth within the district.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Jane Hutchinson on jane.hutchinson@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

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Newark Cycle Race Route Map

