Wiltshire Towns Programme

Action Plan Workshop

July 2022

Wiltshire Towns Programme

- Town centres have faced a number of concurrent challenges over the previous years, including:
  - Impact of Covid-19 and related shifts in shopping patterns
  - a historic reliance on a shrinking retail offer which is vulnerable to changing consumer habits such as opportunities for online shopping and out of town retail
  - long term empty units/high levels of occupant turnover and a shrinking retail offer driven by the rise in on-line shopping; absentee landlords; mixed quality redevelopment and conversions into living space; and, in some instances, problems of anti-social behaviour.

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- Retail supports approximately 20,000 jobs in Wiltshire and is a top 3 sector by employment and specialisation. This does not include services, leisure (including food and drink), or tourism businesses which are located on the high street and are also affected.

- After the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, one study judged that close to half of Britain's retail businesses carried a significant risk of failure.

- Following an initial rise in spending in Q1 2022, retail spend fell 35% in April. This was balanced by an increase in leisure spending.

In light of this challenge and recognising the contribution of these sectors to Wiltshire's economy, Wiltshire Council allocated £1M a year between 2021-2025 to support activity on the high street, providing meaningful support to grow businesses, support employment and transform Wiltshire's high streets to meet the needs of the local community.
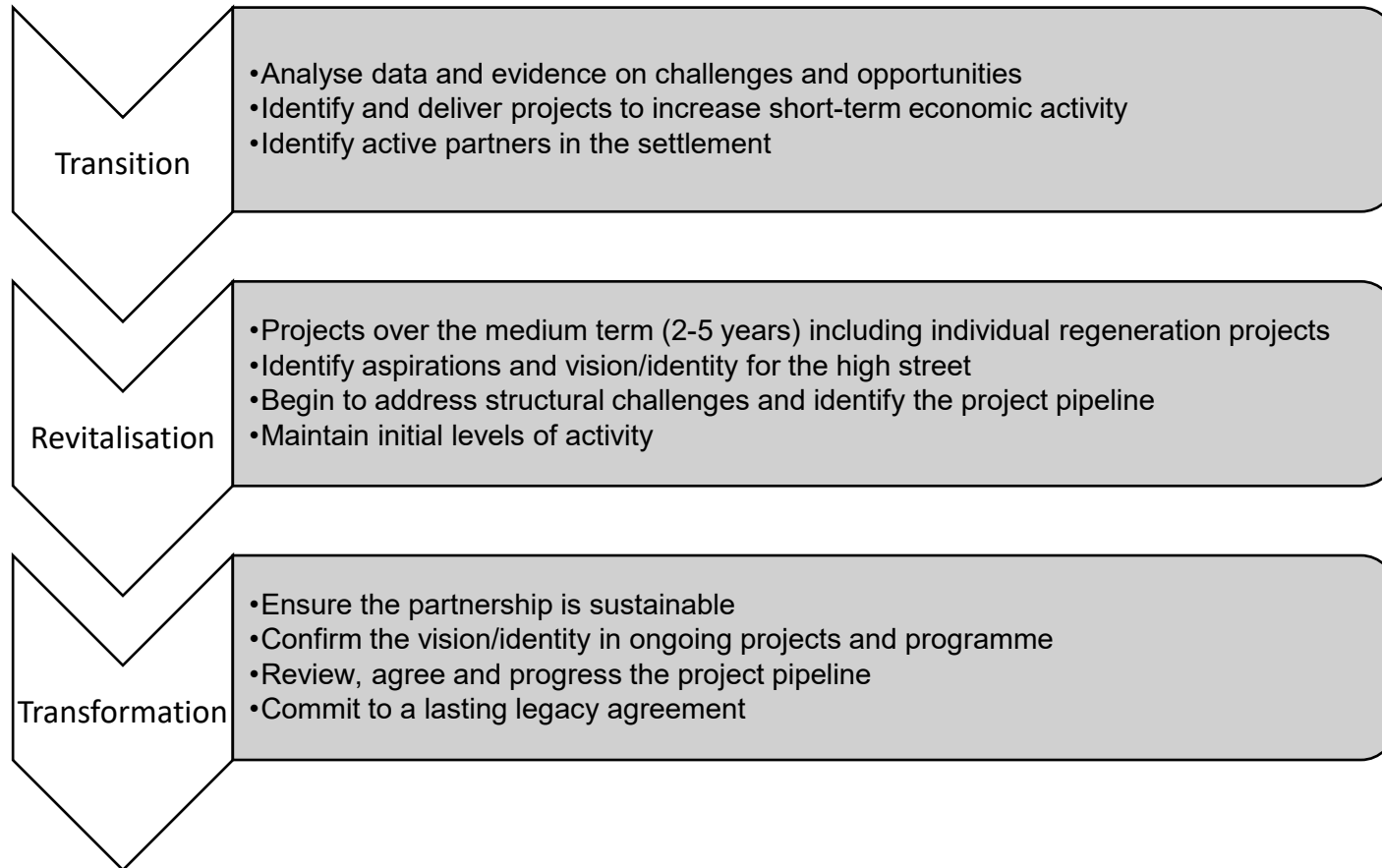
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The Institute of Place Management identified <u>25 factors </u>that most influence the vitality and viability of the high street

*How much influence each factor has on the vitality and viability of town centres/high streets? In other words, **what matters?***

*How much local control there is over each factor? In other words, **what can you do about it?***

TH	Management	Experience	Retailers	Physical	Programme
IPM 25 Factors	Experience Appearance Necessities Walking Accessible Safety/Crime	Activity Place Marketing Markets Experience Appearance Non-Retail Offer Retail Offer Innovation	Retail Offer Anchors Merchandise Attractiveness Barriers to Entry Adaptivity	Necessities Walking Accessible Recreational Space Liveable Redevelopment Functionality	Vision and Strategy Data and Analysis Place Management Networks and Partnerships Functionality
AIM	Ensuring the existing aspects of the town centre are well managed and maintained	Driving a quality experience for residents and visitors Delivering new experiences to drive consistent footfall	Supporting small-medium Wiltshire businesses to access the high street and its opportunities.	To reduce vacant or space in town centres and deliver sustainable mixed-use centres which attract residents and visitors	Build an understanding of local high streets, and developing sustainable models of place leadership

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Transition
- Analyse data and evidence on challenges and opportunities
- Identify and deliver projects to increase short-term economic activity
- Identify active partners in the settlement

Revitalisation
- Projects over the medium term (2-5 years) including individual regeneration projects
- Identify aspirations and vision/identity for the high street
- Begin to address structural challenges and identify the project pipeline
- Maintain initial levels of activity

Transformation
- Ensure the partnership is sustainable
- Confirm the vision/identity in ongoing projects and programme
- Review, agree and progress the project pipeline
- Commit to a lasting legacy agreement

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Transition Stage: Existing Projects

a) Footfall Data: working with town councils to provide data

b) Town Centre Spaces: short-term support to create appealing high streets, through provision of facilities, green spaces, street dressing.

c) Digital Training: Fewer than 20% of Wiltshire's high street businesses have a social media presence. This provides training for businesses on creating and maintaining a digital presence.

d) What's on in Wiltshire App: Officers are working to develop the What's on in Wiltshire App, a platform to bring together events and activities that will attract visitors into one convenient location.

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Proposals

Vibrant Wiltshire	Funding to support new businesses opening on the high street and existing businesses to upgrade their offer and become more resilient.	500,000
Business Support	Support for businesses in receipt of grants to access good advice and ensure business plans are robust and tested	50,000
What's on in Wiltshire App	Events app with supporting marketing activity to support residents re-accessing the high street	80,000
Heritage App expansion	Increasing performance of heritage app and expanding county wide	80,000
Town Centre Strategy	Work to develop masterplans and projects for principle settlements	50,000
Pipeline Development	Funding to support developing a pipeline of projects to support further bidding activity, with particular consideration for workspaces	150,000
Staffing, monitoring and evidence	Resource to support the programme across the number of settlements and manage projects, monitor progress and develop evidence on what works	100,000
Generating Activity Programme	Fund for TCs to bid into to create activity on the high streets, looking at events, marketing and promotion, supporting new businesses and increasing the access for the local community.	300,000
Wiltshire Visitor Promotion	Campaign to promote Wiltshire as a destination to our residents and catchment area and bring footfall back to the high street	150,000

Transition - Generating Activity

To increase capacity and support immediate work to encourage people back to the high street, officers are working with town councils to develop and fund activity generation plans to:

- Drive footfall and spend to town centres

- Reach a wider catchment, with a focus on new audiences and inclusion

- Support an increased retail, community and social function that encourages visits during the day and evening.

- Support perception of the town centre as a place that will create a convenient and attractive destination for both local residents and visitors

- Extend the visitor season for town centres – providing support through quieter periods.

Transition - Visitor Promotion

What's on in Wiltshire App: Officers are working to develop the What's on in Wiltshire App, a platform to bring together events and activities that will attract visitors into one convenient location.

Heritage App Trails: provision of free heritage trails to drive footfall

In addition, the programme will support a promotion campaign that focuses on generating additional visits and spend to our towns and high streets, and restoring consumer confidence. The campaign would focus on these priorities:

- To encourage locals to visit Wiltshire towns and high streets.

- To drive additional visitors and spend, achieving a ROI

- To improve sector productivity by increasing visits to our towns and high streets during key off season and shoulder season periods.

- To provide a campaign platform that Wiltshire tourism and hospitality businesses can get involved with via a 'Residents Campaign' initiative, that builds longer-term demand.

Revitalisation - Vibrant Wiltshire Programme

The programme will support the development of currently underutilised or vacant spaces located in Wiltshire market town centres. The focus will be on bringing new types of uses into the area, strengthening and diversifying the current High Street offer.

High Street Business Start Up Grant

- This grant will provide funding to businesses looking to open in a currently empty retail unit in the high streets. The aim of the grant is to bring empty retail premises back into use and the grant range is anticipated at £2,500 to a maximum of £10,000. Exceptional circumstances will be considered.

Business Diversification Grant

- It is important for a high street business to be able to adapt and diversify to survive. This grant will be available to high street businesses and is anticipated to provide a range of funding from £500 to £10,000. Applicants will need to set out a clear proposal for support.

Successful applicants will also have access to additional business support to assist them in developing their plans and becoming future proof

Revitalisation - Strategies and Workstreams

Officers will consider a number of workstreams that will link the high street to its wider economic or spatial impact including:

a)Public Art and the High Street

b)Design and the High Street

c)A Wiltshire Food and Drink Strategy (including the Wiltshire Marque and shop local/low carbon produce)

d)Evening and Night-time Economy

e)Workspaces on the High Street

These strategies will be progressed as projects emerge.

Transformation - Pipeline Development

Where high streets are most significantly exposed to a decline in retail, it will be necessary to plan for and encourage multi-use spaces that maintain community facilities while being commercially viable. Under the Towns Programme, officers will work to develop plans and projects where sensible, based on a combination of challenge and opportunity.

In addition, to successfully bring in capital funding for transformative schemes, a project pipeline is required that would allow officers to adapt to short bidding windows and any forthcoming opportunities. Under the banner of the Wiltshire Towns Programme, we propose providing support to develop the pipeline, including outline design, costings and resourcing for green-book business case development.

Action Plan Template

(INSERT TOWN CENTRE NAME HERE)

Wiltshire Council (INSERT LOGOS HERE)

Top three adjectives for your town centre

- . . .
- . . .
- . . .

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Strategic theme	Aims	Transition stage (Short-term actions)
Evidence	Analyse data and evidence on challenges and opportunities	
Economy and Place	Identify and deliver projects to increase short-term economic activity and safe return to the high street	
Partners	Identify active partners in the settlement	

Strategic theme	Aims	Revitalisation stage (Medium-term actions)
Management	Ensure the existing aspects of the town centre are well managed and maintained	*Consider and provide detail on issues and actions around:* *Design Policy/frontage improvement Evening and Late Night Strategy*
Experience	Driving a quality experience for residents and visitors	*Events* *Marketing and Communications* *Arts and Culture Public art* *Brand Positioning* *Wiltshire Marque*
Retailers	Supporting small-medium Wiltshire businesses to access the high street and its opportunities	*Food and Drink Strategy* *Skills and Support Workspaces on the high street* *Improvements to regulations and procedures Business support and training* *Working with partners* *Safety and cleaning*

Strategic theme	Aims	Revitalisation stage (Medium-term actions)
Physical	Reduce vacant spaces and deliver sustainable mixed-use centres which attract visitor and residents	*Consider and provide detail on issues and actions around:* *Design Policy/frontage improvement Evening and Late Night Strategy* *Events* *Marketing and Communications* *Arts and Culture Public art*
Programme	Build an understanding of local high streets and develop sustainable models of place leadership	*Brand Positioning* *Wiltshire Marque* *Food and Drink Strategy* *Skills and Support Workspaces on the high street* *Improvements to regulations and procedures Business support and training* *Working with partners* *Safety and cleaning*

Strategic theme	Aims	Transformation (Long-term actions)
Key projects	Work in partnership to develop under-used sites & work together to attract investment to deliver in strategic projects for the town	*Consider providing detail around:* - *What do you know about your town centre* - *What is the long need/development priorities* - *What are the challenges* - *What is the knowledge gap/barriers*

Next steps:

1. Over the summer the plan would be that the TC will be engaging and consulting with local stakeholders inc: key local partners, businesses org, user groups, etc. to develop and agree the draft Action Plans.

2. Submission of draft Action by 23rd September including nomination of a single point of contact.

3. WC will review and where necessary will advise on best practice and will put forward a draft budget.

4. Final version to be agreed by mid-autumn with a subsequent grant agreement, including key dates/deliverables.

Contact:

Wiltshiretownsprogramme@wiltshire.gov.uk

Helpful sources of information:

https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/25-vital-and-viable-priorities/

https://v1.placemanagement.org/news/high-street-changes-update-25-factors/

Wiltshire Council

(INSERT LOGOS HERE)