

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

11 FEBRUARY 2016

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

TOWN CENTRES PROGRESS UPDATE

1. Summary

This report updates on the progress of regeneration, economic development and infrastructure projects across the Borough's town centres. The report contains details of infrastructure works on Stockton High Street, progress on initiatives to support retail and business growth, enhancements to Stockton's market offer, economic development projects and business support along with details of works in Yarm, Norton, Billingham and Thornaby, town centres.

2. Recommendations

1. Members note progress on infrastructure and economic development projects across town centres.
2. Members note the production of a draft Stockton Town Centre Prospectus and delegate final agreement of content and use in public to Leader, Deputy Leader and Director of Economic Growth and Development.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Improving the economic performance of Stockton Town Centre is a key priority for the Council. Delivery of the projects and interventions identified within this report will play a key role in achieving improved economic performance and changed perceptions of Stockton town centre.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with

knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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2. Members note the production of a draft Stockton Town Centre Prospectus and delegate final agreement of content and use in public to Leader, Deputy Leader and Director of Economic Growth and Development.

DETAIL

Background

1. Cabinet were presented with reports in 2013, 2014 and 2015 which set out progress made on Stockton High Street public realm and infrastructure along with a broad range of projects, aimed at improving the economic performance of Stockton town centre, supporting new and existing business growth, improvements to the market offer and support for a growing programme of events.
2. The development and delivery of infrastructure works on the High Street is now complete and new and established business support and development initiatives and interventions have been implemented to support economic growth along with further development of markets and events on the High Street.
3. During this time, significant progress has also been made on the regeneration of Billingham town centre and continued development at Thornaby town centre, and Yarm and Norton High Streets.

Stockton Town Centre

High Street Infrastructure

4. Work was carried out on the most challenging section of the High Street, the central area, throughout 2014. The central area was the final section of the High Street to be completed meaning that main infrastructure and paving works on the High Street were largely completed by Christmas 2014 with a period of minor repairs, snagging and commissioning of the state of the art lighting and fountain installation carried out in early 2015, in advance of the official opening event held in March 2015
5. The opening event, held in March 2015 was a huge success with large crowds gathered to see the large scale street theatre performance which marked the official opening of the central area and fountains, with the public invited to enter the central area and play in the fountains for the first time.
6. Since opening, the High Street is functioning as designed, with dedicated space for the market performing a dual use when used as car parking on non market days, new car parking on the north of the High Street as well as a varied programme of events, and specialist markets along with the annual Stockton Sparkles festivities in the lead up to Christmas
7. North East Market Surveys (NEMS) have undertaken a study of Stockton Town Centre seeking views from users and non-users of the town centre about their views and perceptions of the centre since the completion of the redevelopment works in March 2015. This has enabled a direct comparison to be made with the results of the previous study undertaken in 2011.
8. A final report has not yet been issued by NEMS but the emerging themes from the 2015 study are;
 - In the last 4 years (since the last study) there has been a notable and measurable increase in the perception ratings for Stockton Town Centre;
 - The extensive redevelopment work undertaken during the intervening time has had a positive impact on the town centre;
 - There has been a slight reduction in the number of visits to the centre (in line with the national trend for reduced town centre visits);
 - There has been an increase of 30 minutes in the length of stay in the centre;
 - spend has remained constant at £38 per visit;
 - Visitors specifically approve of improvements made to the outdoor market, the cleanliness and environment of the High Street and accessibility by public transport.
9. The other key finding is that programmes of high quality specialist markets and events remain one of the most effective means of attracting visitors from the wider catchments areas, with over half of visitors to such events coming from areas beyond a 15 minute drive time from the town centre. The full survey will be made available to Members upon issue from NEMS.
10. In 2015, 24 specialist markets were held across 35 days, with highlights including the 3 times per year Chic Vintique Market which regular attracts over 2000 visitors, the first full size Continental Market and a Sci-Fi Family Fun Day (Kapow!). The specialist markets programme is set to continue in 2016 with a focus on ensuring that the specialist markets that are held are of sufficiently high quality and variety to ensure that they continue to attract visitors to the town centre.

11. The regular market has benefitted from a settled layout, revised open market regulations and the provision of uniform canopies which present a more orderly appearance and allow for greater control over quality and standards.
12. A footfall counter has now been installed on Dovecot Street giving hourly, daily and weekly footfall totals in the centre of Stockton. This intelligence enables comparisons to be made with other towns and cities, as well evaluation of the impact of specific events and markets upon footfall.

Artistic Installations

13. **Stellar**, a floorscape lighting installation designed by artist Simon Watkinson referencing the stars who performed at The Globe in an artwork inspired by the cosmos and the trajectory of stars as they move through space was installed in December 2014. The work, installed on the paved area in front of the Globe features arcs of different moving coloured lights punctuated with stars, each a spotlight with the face of a famous Globe performer. Residents were consulted on the selection of which bands/acts to highlight on the stars with people invited to nominate a star with their reasons why.
14. Throughout 2014 and 2015 two different pieces of artwork have appeared on the side of the Castlegate centre as part of the **REFOCUS Castlegate Mima Photography Prize**. Arripare was the first piece which was replaced by the current image which depicts the original moment of John Walkers invention of the friction match. The project is a partnership between Ellandi, (owners of Castlegate shopping centre) Stockton Council and Mima art gallery.
15. **Heritage Plaques** to mark people, places and events that have played a significant part in the history of Stockton have been laid across the High street along with a bronze cast **Relief Map**, providing a historic 3D visualisation of the southern section of the High street across to the River Tees
16. During 2014, the plinth on the northern section of the High Street was installed. The plinth will house the '**Stockton Flyer**', an automaton that will act as a major artistic element within the wider High Street and provide an entertaining, daily spectacle for visitors to the town centre as it emerges from the plinth. The artist, Rob Higgs, has been working on the complex installation throughout 2015, undertaking numerous mechanical trials and design modifications to ensure that the hand engineered piece will be both attractive and durable. Installation and opening of the Stockton Flyer is planned for June 2016 to coincide with national celebrations of the 90th birthday of HM The Queen.

Economic Growth and Business Support

17. Throughout the period of inevitable disruption associated with the large scale of physical change undertaken on the High Street and beyond completion, a wide range of projects and interventions were undertaken to ensure new and existing businesses are in a position to capitalise upon the improved environment and vibrancy within the town centre, maximising the impact of investment across a range of physical and business support initiatives in the town centre.
18. **Stockton Enterprise Arcade** proved to be a successful means of developing and supporting new businesses to test trade in a High Street retail environment before moving on to commercial premises in the town centre. As a consequence of this successful approach to business support and growing demand for space, 35-37 High Street was acquired in early 2014 and, using Heritage Lottery funding, was refurbished and opened as Stockton Enterprise Arcade, providing space for start up businesses.

19. Since opening in November 2014, the Enterprise Arcade has accommodated a total of 24 start-up businesses, bringing the total number through the model to 49 since its inception in 2011. Of this 8 are current tenants, with the building currently 100% let. There are currently 7 retailers currently trading in Stockton Town Centre, who started their journey in Stockton Enterprise Arcade. The facility continues to be marketed to both the public and potential businesses to maintain a healthy occupancy level and encourage visitors to the arcade.
20. Specialist business support and advice to assist aimed at supporting independent retailers across the town centre and within the Enterprise Arcade is also provided to ensure that businesses can access advice, guidance and support as frequently as they may need to.
21. Digital and creative businesses continue to take up space within **Digital House** with 12 businesses currently occupying space in the building and a total of 19 businesses occupying space within the building since opening in spring 2013.
22. The **Business Rate Discount Scheme**, introduced to support new and expanding businesses continues to be a success with 23 businesses gaining approval for support via the scheme since January 2014.

Ongoing Investment

23. As reported to Cabinet in June 2014, the Council has been working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Jomast Leisure Properties Ltd, owners of the **Globe**, to redevelop the Globe and bring it back into use as a live music and entertainment venue. The Council has taken on the role of accountable body for the Development Phase of work, and is leading the procurement and management of expert and specialist support.
24. Highly technical preparatory work has been carried out behind the scenes; most of it out of sight, including digitally recording every inch of the building and preparing the technical specifications for the work required. The level of advice and support needed for a building of this nature is fairly extensive and the design team will complete detailed proposals, which, subject to approval of the Development Appraisal and Round 2 funding application, would see HLF approve their remaining £3.5M allocation and work start on site in spring 2017.
25. Whilst there have been a number of areas under discussion to get this complex project off the ground, resulting in some delays to programme, all parties remain committed to delivering a successful scheme
26. Proposals to deliver 138 bed, serviced student accommodation in the former **Swallow Hotel** are almost finalised between Ellandi and operator, Urban Student Living. The target date for opening will coincide with the beginning of the academic year in 2017, improving the appearance of a prominent building on the High Street and increasing footfall and activity at the southern end of the High Street
27. Progress on the redevelopment of the Georgian Theatre and former **Courtyard Hotel** is advancing. The scheme comprises the combined redevelopment of the ground and first floors of the Georgian Theatre and former Courtyard Hotel to form a much improved 300-capacity music venue, destination bar and offices
28. The improvements will enable the venue capacity to increase, which along with new artists' accommodation, will enable Tees Music Alliance to attract more high profile artists. The enlarged bar and toilet provision will support this raised capacity for music events, but will create a destination bar offering food and drink throughout the day and evening.

Community Safety and Enforcement

29. From April 2015, two full time, dedicated **Town Centre Operations Officers** have provided a highly visible presence on the High Street acting as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour and a point of contact for the public and businesses to report any concerns or seek information on a day to day basis. The officers liaise with existing enforcement activities, Council officers and the Police to ensure a joined up approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour alongside public information and business engagement.
30. Since April 2015 to December 2015, Town Centre Operations Officers have undertaken 160 visits to businesses to make them aware of the service they offer and the availability of the ASB hotline and have assisted in resolving a wide range of incidents either through requests for assistance or issues which officer identified whilst on patrol.
31. Preventing, deterring and assisting is the approach officers have adopted across the High Street area. This is the officers preferred way of working as it helps build a working relationship with the public and businesses. There continues to be an increase in these methods being used to deal with issues and increasing confidence from the public and businesses in the use of the ASB Hotline to raise any problems that may occur.

Rediscover Stockton

32. A wide range of work has been undertaken to promote activities and events, support businesses and the public through the period of extensive change on the High Street and to attract new visitors to the town centre under the banner of Rediscover Stockton.
33. The Rediscover Stockton website www.rediscoverstockton.co.uk continues to be popular source of information, receiving over 20,000 visits in 2015. A marketing approach to maximise the impact of digital and social media and increased business engagement to reach a wider audience of people who may not have visited Stockton is currently under production for implementation under the Rediscover Stockton banner in 2016.
34. Rediscover Stockton promotional activities have also been prominent in supporting major events and activities throughout 2015 including SIF, the High Street opening event, regular and specialist markets, Sparkles and Stockton Cycling festival and continues to provide a point of contact for visitors and business seeking information and help.

Town Centre Prospectus

35. A third version of the Stockton Town Centre Prospectus, building on the 2011 and 2013 documents has been produced. The Prospectus identifies priority areas and interventions for the town centre moving forward and celebrates the success of recent years investment in public realm, infrastructure, events and specialist markets alongside interventions to support economic growth.

Business Improvement District

36. Businesses in the town centre have been exploring the possibility of creating a Business Improvement District (BID) in Stockton town centre.
37. A BID is a precisely defined geographical area of a town, city, or commercial district where business ratepayers are invited to vote to invest collectively, through a levy on their existing business rates, in local improvements that are additional to those currently provided by local government.

38. Throughout 2015, A BID steering group made up of representatives of town centre businesses has undertaken consultation with all businesses across the town centre to establish a level of interest in pursuing the establishment of a BID.
39. Proposals for the BID focus around promoting Stockton town centre, supporting effective partnerships and enterprise, and support for welcoming visitors and improving accessibility to the town centre for all residents.
40. In January, the BID steering group informed the Council and Secretary of State of their intention to go forward with a ballot of town centre businesses to establish whether there is a majority of businesses in support of the creation of a BID.

North Shore

41. Progress continues to be made on North Shore with the opening of the digital innovation centre, **Fusion Hive** in September 2015. Operated by Teesside University, the building provides space for newly established businesses from the digital, scientific and creative sectors. Occupancy is currently 35%, which exceeds the projected occupancy after five months when the development was planned.
42. This follows on from the completion and opening of the new headquarters for the Thirteen group in summer 2015 and the ongoing popularity of the **Vivo** housing development with 100 of the 125 houses in phase 1 & 2 now sold. Plans for further residential development on the site are now being developed.
43. At Cabinet in December 2015, members approved the use of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to acquire the former Kwik Fit building on the North Shore Gateway site. Work on the CPO is underway alongside proposals for the wider development of the gateway site, including exploring the concept of a Hotel development which will help link wider North Shore site to the town centre and will represent ongoing progress on the redevelopment of North Shore. A further detailed report on the concept of a hotel development will be brought to Cabinet later in 2016.

Billingham Town Centre

44. The **Customer Service Centre and Library** in the heart of Billingham town centre opened in January 2015 and has proved to be a very popular resource for users of Billingham town centre. The former Roseberry Library site, adjacent to the town centre, was marketed for sale in 2015. Final agreements between the Council, NHS and the buyer are in the process of being completed.
45. This represents the latest phase of investment in Billingham following on from significant investment in public realm improvements and refurbishment of the Billingham Forum.
46. In the summer of 2015, work began on the demolition of the Billingham Arms public house to accommodate the construction of an Aldi foodstore and parking. Work is underway on construction of the store which will be complete in April 2016 along with the addition of a final section of paving to join the car park to the newly paved section of town centre.
47. The £3.5m **Care Ready Housing** facility on Kingsway opened in November 2015 with occupancy of the 38 unit facility steadily increasing.

Thornaby Town Centre

48. At Cabinet in November 2015, members agreed the disposal of land to facilitate the development of an Aldi foodstore. Work on access to the site is due to begin in spring 2016 with work on the construction of the foodstore beginning upon completion of access

works. Thornaby town centre continues to perform well with lower than average vacancy rates across retail units.

Yarm

49. Works to Yarm High Street to improve the paving area around the Town Hall, provide heritage-style and new lighting, enhance CCTV coverage, clean the war memorial, and upgrade pelican and puffin crossings are now all completed.
50. Yarm library will close in mid-February 2016 to allow a complete refurbishment to be carried out. Work will include a new layout, including improved access from the street, furniture and fittings. It will also see the introduction of new self-service kiosks and better computers for public use and is due to re-open in September 2016
51. In 2014 Pay and Display parking was introduced into Yarm. A study in 2011 had identified a number of issues around the car parking provision in Yarm for which Pay and display parking and the increase in long stay parking provision were introduced to address. Using the same approach in 2015 a study was carried out to measure the impacts of these changes in car parking arrangements and the opportunity to identify any issues that emerged.
52. The key results from the 2015 study are:
 - It is easier to get parked in Yarm;
 - Visitor numbers have grown, against a wider trend for declining visits in comparable centres
 - The number of “lost visits” where people can’t find a parking space and leave has reduced;
 - The purpose of the visit has shifted where more people are visiting for eating or a day out rather than purely shopping, this has been made possible by the flexibility of the pay and display allowing a longer stay than the disc parking restricted to two hours;
 - Growth in visitor numbers has come from the areas outside of the immediate Yarm centre;
 - Perception by people who do not visit Yarm is that it is still difficult to park;
 - Average spend has reduced, but the large spend items identified in 2011 were predominantly holidays booked via travel agents which are now more commonly booked online and the prevalence of restaurants and coffee shops on the High Street produces a lower spend in comparison.
53. In conclusion, pay and display and the introduction of additional long stay parking coupled with the investment in the public realm has shown measurable improvements and benefits to the community and to business in Yarm. There is still some work to be done to promote and market the town to overcome some of the negative perceptions around parking availability.

Norton High Street

54. Norton High Street continues to show positive signs of growth in the retail and leisure sector. This is highlighted by the opening of a number of quality bars and restaurants in the, strengthening the evening and leisure economy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

55. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

56. There are no legal implications arising from this report

RISK ASSESSMENT

57. A Risk Register has been developed for individual projects as part of the Document Control suite and will be monitored and reviewed by the Workstream Steering Groups. Major risks will be reported, on a regular basis, to the Project Board who will have overall control of the Risk Register.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

58. **Economic Regeneration and Transport** – supports the development of a key regeneration site within the Borough via the Northshore regeneration masterplan contributing towards providing a quality town centre environment.

59. **Environment and Housing** – the purchase of a site will lead to the demolition of a dilapidated building in a Town Centre location and the redevelopment of a brownfield site.

Supporting Themes:-

60. **Stronger Communities** – A greater sense of pride in the local area will be fostered through the delivery of the redevelopment proposals.

61. **Arts Leisure and Culture** – the Northshore redevelopment proposals incorporate high quality design standards and improve access too and onto the river Tees.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

62. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment because it does not relate directly to a change of policy strategy or service delivery.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet January 2013, February 2014 and Globe Theatre report June 2014

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Stockton Town Centre Ward - Cllr Mrs Di Hewitt & Cllr Paul Kirton

Billingham Central – Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy & Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Yarm – Cllr Mrs Elsi Hampton, Cllr Mrs Julie Whitehill & Cllr Ben Houchen

Mandale & Victoria – Cllr Mrs Sonia Bailey, Cllr Mrs Tracey Stott & Cllr Paul Rowling

Norton North – Cllr Mrs Kathryn Nelson & Cllr Steve Nelson

Property

As detailed within the body of the report.