

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

**UPDATE ON TIVERTON TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT  
MASTERPLANNING WORK**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Councillor Graeme Barnell, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration  
**Responsible Officer:** Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

**Reason for Report:**

Members will be aware that this authority has undertaken work with regard to regeneration and investment masterplanning for Tiverton town centre. This work commenced prior to the current pandemic. Given the implications of the COVID19 pandemic upon the local economy and town centre activity, and the opportunities to embed tackling climate change within our approach to town centre regeneration, this report sets out a way forward to encapsulate these issues with regard to strategic planning for Tiverton town centre. This report seeks to both update members on work to date, but also critically to provide an indication of future direction in response to the pandemic and the climate change declaration. It also provides an indication of when future reports will be considered by Cabinet and identifies key potential geographical areas for strategic intervention.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That the direction of travel of the emerging work including the potential locations for intervention be endorsed and informs the next stage of work in preparing a draft Masterplan document and accompanying documentation including a Delivery Plan.**

**Financial Implications:** This report does not require any additional financial resource above existing budgets and staff resource at this time. However the financial implications in the production of the wider work outputs over and above the masterplan SPD referred to in section 2.3 will need further consideration in light of the service budget and whether they can be produced in house or will require further work to be commissioned externally. Once particular projects are developed these will need to be subject to financial costings and subject to Cabinet consideration and approval.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** This report relates to strategy formulation which is currently budgeted for; however any resulting projects will need subsequent decision making and approval by Cabinet. It is not considered that there will be any direct impacts on the policy framework.

**Legal Implications:** There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

**Risk Assessment:** The impact on the economy as a result of the pandemic has been significant and has exacerbated economic and regeneration challenges in the town centre. Ongoing work will be focussed on mitigating risk to aid recovery. Individual projects arising from the masterplanning work will be the subject to their own individual risk assessments.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** There have been unequitable impacts of the pandemic with it being felt greatest by vulnerable individuals and households. Recovery impacts and masterplanning will need to consider equality issues carefully.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The masterplanning and regeneration of the town centre contributes particularly to the following four themes: economy, community, homes and environment and is central to the delivery of many of the aims identified within the Corporate Plan. This work is a significant intervention to assist the interests of our residents, visitors and businesses and crucial to our economic recovery.

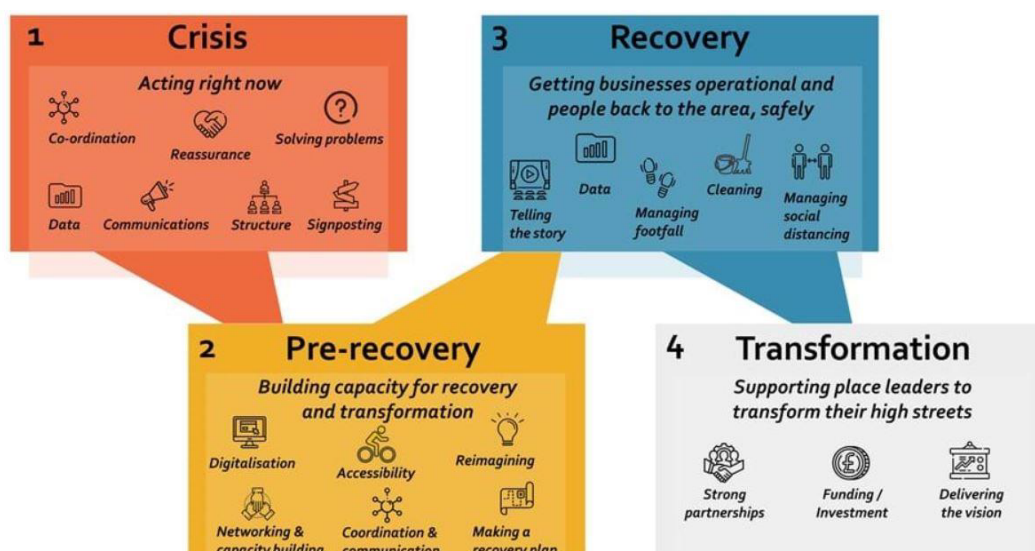
**Impact on Climate Change:** Revisiting the approach to the regeneration of Tiverton Town Centre will provide a valuable opportunity to put the Council’s commitment to the Climate Change Declaration at the heart of recovery and investment plans. Opportunities exist for encouragement of sustainable travel options, exploration of low carbon construction opportunities and tree planting. On a more fundamental level revitalising Tiverton Town Centre and encouraging local residents to ‘buy local’ and undertake trips by more sustainable means including walking and cycling will assist in reducing the area’s carbon emissions.

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Work on the Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan for Tiverton commenced in 2017. The intention of the Masterplan was to set a basis for enhancing the economic prospects of the town including improving the look and environment of the town centre. Its scope was broader than a purely spatial plan, focusing on wider issues such as the role and function of the town centre, Tiverton’s identity and its unique selling points.
- 1.2 Initial public consultation was undertaken between 30th April and 10th June 2018. The purpose of that public consultation was to inform the scope of the contents of the masterplan and shape the draft document for future consultation. The material contained a number of suggestions for key town wide initiatives and options for development.
- 1.3 A summary of the consultation feedback was presented to Cabinet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018. The emerging themes from the public consultation fell under the following headings:

Parking	Funding	Signage
River	Public Toilets	Bus Station / Drop off
Museum	Green Infrastructure	Cinema
Shops	Dementia/Elderly Friendly places	Clean up
The Pannier Market	Town Hall	Cycle Ways
Old Blundell’s	Event / Performance Space	Site Boundary

- 1.4 The results of this consultation has informed both the emerging draft Masterplan work and a 'quick win' proposal for Fore Street which was subsequently paused following concerns raised by the Town Council and in recognition that the opportunity for a proposal in this location could receive further consideration through the wider masterplanning process.
- 1.5 Since this masterplanning work commenced, the Premier Inn has been opened and the Multi-storey car park has been refurbished. An overhaul of the pedestrian signage has also been initiated with designs agreed with the Town Council and the Town Centre Partnership; however implementation has been delayed owing to a sparsity of available staff capacity owing to the need to implement emergency COVID19 business support and response activities.
- 1.6 On 26 June 2019 Mid Devon District Council adopted the Devon Climate Change Declaration. This incorporated a commitment by the Council to work to the Devon-wide target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. In light of this it is proposed that work on the Tiverton Town Regeneration Masterplan would need to be reassessed to take greater consideration of climate change issues.
- 1.7 In recent months our high streets have suffered the biggest decline in their fortunes in living memory. The implications of the COVID19 pandemic have been seismic with regard to the effect on our local economy and particularly with regard to our high street businesses. Any regeneration plans for the town need to consider these impacts if they are going to be fit for purpose in a changing high street environment. The recently established 'Reopening your High Streets Safely' fund is an early step with regard to economic recovery. Officers are currently engaged in working closely with partners on wider economic recovery plans. The Government recommends using the High Street Task Force COVID-19 Recovery Framework as a guide to help formulate and deliver recovery. This framework is made up of four phases shown below. The Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan will need to take account of this work, along with the recently produced Devon Economic Recovery Plan, if it is to maximise opportunities to be successful.



- 1.8 This report sets out a process to develop a long term town centre recovery plan which describes a range of outputs including prioritisation of strategic interventions and crucially recognises the importance of identifying proposals that can be delivered in the short term that will make a meaningful and lasting contribution towards COVID19 related recovery. This work will complement current work being undertaken to enable

the town to reopen and operate safely during the pandemic. Importantly, recovery does provide opportunities for us to put our commitment to the climate change declaration at the heart of the town centre's role, function and regeneration.

## 2.0 TIVERTON TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT MASTERPLANNING

### Documentation

2.1 Given the scale of the challenge and the complexities involved in town centre regeneration a suite of documents are to be produced some of which already benefit from a substantial amount of existing work.

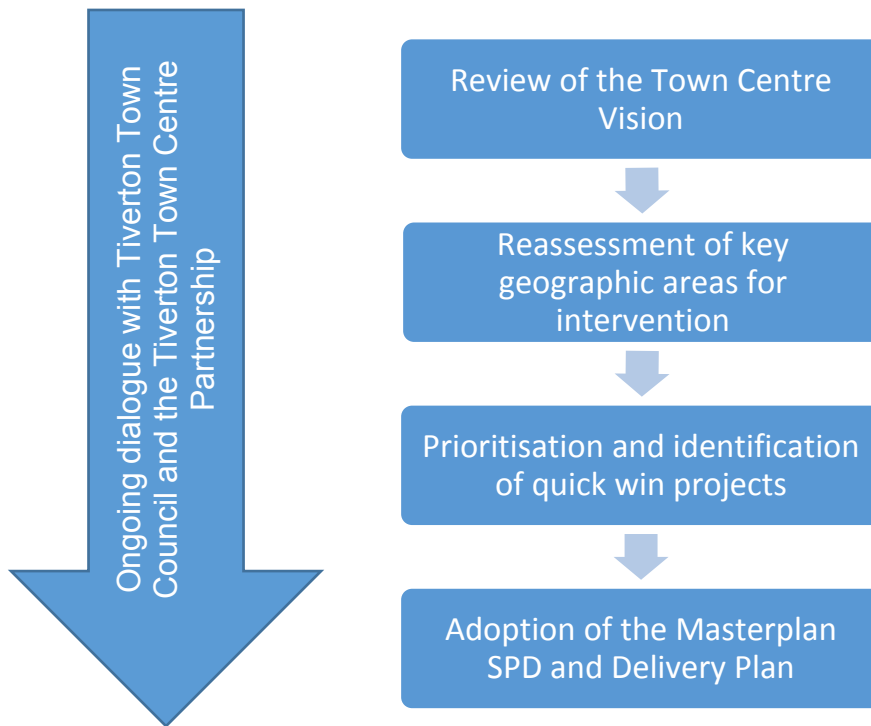
2.2 An important issue to bring to Members' attention is that it has always been the Council's intention as part of this regeneration work to produce a Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). SPDs are land use documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Importantly SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are limited in their scope, in that they cannot change or amend planning policy but should merely add detail to the policies in the Local Plan. With this in mind the SPD will not be the appropriate document to set out some of the wider non-land use aspirations, or introduce any changes to our existing planning policies. If the work on revitalising the town centre was to identify any proposed change to planning policies this would need to be considered in future reviews of the Local Plan; however it should be noted that work to date does not suggest that any significant changes to the District's planning policies are required to enable town centre regeneration and redevelopment opportunities. It should also be noted that many of the likely proposals for regeneration in the town will not be directly land use related and should form part of an accompanying Delivery Plan.

2.3 The range of documentation that will need to be produced includes the following:

- Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan SPD
- Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Delivery plan (including priority actions)
- Public Realm Strategy and Facilities Plan
- Concept plans for proposed development sites
- High level viability for each proposed development site
- Regeneration and Vitality Strategy
- Branding and marketing
- Tiverton Town multimodal and movement study

### The need to re-centre, re-profile and re-evaluate

2.4 Given the scale of the impact of COVID 19 and the need to ensure that the Council's commitment to climate change is adequately reflected in Tiverton's regeneration plans there are a number of initial steps that need to be taken.



### Review of the Town Centre Vision

- 2.5 Visioning has taken place as part of the first stage of the masterplanning work. Officers have identified a need to relook at this work and ensure that the climate change and COVID 19 recovery aspects are adequately reflected.

### Emerging key themes

- 2.6 Work to date has considered a series of emerging key themes:
1. Ensure an environmentally aware / responsible town with an emphasis towards lowering carbon impact.
  2. Celebrate the town's heritage and historic character.
  3. Improve town centre gateways to create a strong sense of arrival and identity.
  4. Increase footfall and enhance vibrancy in the town centre by supporting new and existing uses, activities and independent traders.
  5. Develop a mix of uses to achieve town centre leisure and cultural activities during the day and night.
  6. Create quality pedestrian and cycle routes through the town centre, improving way finding and increasing town centre footfall.
  7. Enhance Tiverton's river frontage on the Rivers Exe and Lowman.
  8. Seek opportunities through funding and collaborative working to ensure streets and properties are well maintained.
  9. Redevelop the bus station to create a high quality environment with improved links between Tiverton Parkway railway station and other modes of transport.
  10. Ensure a greener, healthier town with connected and accessible green spaces and streets.
  11. Seek opportunities to increase residential occupation and its quality, including the number of new residential properties and residential use of upper floors.

### Key Geographic Areas for Intervention

- 2.7 Work to date has identified a number of key geographic areas for intervention which could be subject to review as part of the post COVID 19 and climate change future proofing assessment:
- Southern Gateway and the immediate surroundings (i.e. the bus station / Phoenix Lane area)
  - West Exe and the Riverside
  - The Pannier Market Area
    - Market Walk
    - Fore Street and approach to Pannier Market
    - Pannier Market environs
  - Eastern Gateway (land off Western end of Blundells Road)
  - Angel Hill (including area to the front of the Town Hall)

### Prioritisation and identification of quick win projects

- 2.8 Given there will always be a finite amount of resource and staff capacity to progress actions there is a need to prioritise those measures which need to be undertaken as first steps towards regeneration of the town. Prioritisation is likely to be informed also by issues such as Council land ownership and willingness of third party land owners to ensure opportunities for swift delivery. Quick win projects would also need to consider the longevity of their benefits.
- 2.9 Other schemes which may not have immediate prospects for delivery owing to a lack of funding, involve third party land or require land assembly, but which are nevertheless important, could also be developed ready to benefit from any future funding opportunities which may become available.

### Adoption of the Masterplan SPD and Delivery Plan

- 2.10 The above activities will feed into a review of previously undertaken masterplanning work to formulate a draft masterplan which will form the basis of a formal public consultation. As explained above this will be in the form of a supplementary planning document which will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It is also intended that in parallel projects be developed which could be implemented at the earliest opportunity which are aligned with the emerging masterplan principles.

## **3.0 ENGAGEMENT**

- 3.1 It is proposed that this work stream is developed closely between officers, Cabinet and Ward Members, drawing on input from the Town Council, the Tiverton Town Centre Partnership and other stakeholders. This work will involve both informal discussions with partners over the coming months and also opportunities to formally respond as part of the consultation on a draft masterplan.
- 3.2 A critical stage in engagement will also be further public consultation on the draft masterplan.

## **4.0 FUTURE REPORTING**

- 4.1 It is envisaged that a masterplan will be drafted for consideration at the Cabinet's December 2020 meeting. A public consultation would follow early in the New Year. It is anticipated that Cabinet would consider public comments and proposed amendments in April 2021 with a view to its Adoption by full Council in May 2021.
- 4.2 In parallel officers will seek to identify opportunities arising from the emerging masterplanning work which could be capable of early delivery. These potential

projects will be the subject of formal Cabinet consideration as, and when, proposals are formulated.

4.3 Section 2.3 of this report outlines current thinking on the range of work outputs envisaged. These areas of work will complement the masterplan and aim to comprehensively set the basis for the regeneration of Tiverton town centre. They too will need to subject to a process of engagement and reporting.

## 5.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

5.1 Planning Policy Advisory Group considered this emerging work at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Members of PPAG discussed the following:

- Whether any of the active travel funding could be targeted for the town
- The opportunities that might arise in Westexe and the relationship between Westexe and the wider town centre
- The need to carefully consider the southern approach to the Pannier Market from Fore Street and redevelopment opportunities in this area, coupled with Phoenix Lane.
- The need to prioritise projects and ensure delivery of schemes in the short term that can make a meaningful contribution to regeneration
- Tiverton needs a clear identity. Can it continue to be known as a historic market town and take a more environmental approach?
- Angel Hill acts as a link between the Westexe and the town centre. Could a previous project there be reconsidered?

PPAG Members endorsed the direction of travel of the emerging work including the potential locations for intervention.

### Contact for more Information:

Adrian Welsh, Group Manager – Growth,  
Economy and Delivery  
[awelsh@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:awelsh@middevon.gov.uk)

Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy  
and Regeneration  
[jclifford@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:jclifford@middevon.gov.uk)

### Circulation of the Report:

Cllr Graeme Barnell

### List of Background Papers:

Cabinet 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, 28<sup>th</sup> September  
2017, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018