

Report subject	High Streets and District Centres Strategy
Meeting date	29 September 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) has created a High Streets and District Centres Strategy (Appendix 1) to ensure high streets and district centres are fit for the future, becoming vibrant, thriving and enjoyable locations for everyone. At its heart is the intent to positively and proactively intervene where and if appropriate.</p> <p>The Strategy looks at our high streets and district centres through the lens of economic growth, focusing on creating an environment for economic vibrancy and enabling a high quality, world-class visitor experience. It is designed to set the objectives and form the framework for a series of more detailed project-specific Action Plans.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Support and adopt the High Streets and District Centres Strategy as a framework for the future of the high streets and district centres in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area (BCP area) (b) Recognise that delivery of the Strategy using Action Plans is an evolving process (c) Understand that the Strategy could be subject to further consultation (d) Enable the Strategy to be made into a visually appealing document for publication (e) Delegate responsibility to the Director, Economic Development to analyse the ‘Reimagining Your High Streets’ Engagement HQ report and, if required, commission activities to create Action Plans for high streets and district centres in the BCP area (f) Authorise the Director, Economic Development to apportion £100,000 to undertake these initial Action Plans and fund appropriate projects, in accordance with the Officer Decision Record for Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG4) dated July 2021, and identified in part 2 (c) of Stream 4 – ‘Funding partners to provide Town & District Centre Support (£275k)’

Reason for recommendations	The Strategy will help deliver the Council's strategic aims and objectives including the Dynamic Places, Connected Communities and Sustainable Environment objectives in the Corporate Strategy. It is therefore recommended that BCP Council supports the High Streets and District Centres Strategy.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Phillip Broadhead
Corporate Director	Adam Richens, Chief Finance Officer and Director of Finance
Report Authors	Liz Orme, Economic Development Officer Paula Sales, Economic Development Officer Hannah Porter, Poole Town Centre Operations and Marketing Manager
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. Across the country, high streets and district centres are changing, and the BCP area is no exception. Some will need assistance to change, to help curate the commercial offer and further develop communities in those locations. Others are developing without any intervention. The future of high streets and district centres is one of community where people will live, work, and play in a vibrant, mixed-use and sustainable environment.

Introduction

2. This Strategy looks at our high streets and district centres through the lens of economic growth, focusing on creating an environment for economic vibrancy and enabling a high quality, world-class visitor experience.

To do this it will:

- intrinsically link to the Economic Development Strategy
- support and inform BCP Council's Local Plan
- be supported by and link with other BCP Council strategies, including those focusing on development, regeneration (including the emerging Urban Regeneration Company and their High Streets Renaissance project), housing, communities, transport, destination, Smart Places and culture
- make connections with BCP Council's operational delivery of current and planned interventions, and any other projects that focus on high streets and district centres
- assume the Government's roadmap and re-opening post-pandemic will continue to progress as planned.

It will not:

- replace or duplicate other BCP Council strategies
 - deal with site or area-specific issues, but recognises that these will contribute to creating successful high streets and district centres
3. The Strategy is designed to set the objectives and form the framework for a series of more detailed project-specific Action Plans that will be produced for each high street and district centre. Initially, audits of each centre will be undertaken to allow a fair assessment of each area, identify options and which projects could be meaningfully funded. The Action Plans will be flexible working documents and will evolve as the high streets and district centres themselves evolve, and future iterations may be required.

Engagement process

4. The following engagements have been undertaken:
- BCP Council 'Reimagining Your High Streets' Engagement HQ survey (March 2021) (Appendix 2)
 - Information Officers engagement and feedback from high street businesses (July 2020 – ongoing)
 - internal officer/service evidence gathering by interview (April – August 2021)
5. This is not a fixed piece of work and will need constant review and evolution through regular communication and consultation processes. To provide ongoing support and ensure a fair assessment of each centre, Action Plans will include consultation with, for example, Ward Councillors, Neighbourhood Forums and local business and community representatives.
6. Public consultation will be considered for the more detailed proposals which will be taken forward through individual high street and district centre Action Plans.

Rationale

7. As a nationally recognised alliance of place making experts providing support to local leaders of high streets in England, the High Streets Taskforce (HSTF) was commissioned by Government in 2019 to develop a Covid 19 recovery framework and a route map to transformation.
8. The HSTF has identified the top 25 priorities that local place leaders should focus on to achieve vitality and viability, create sustainable high streets and meet the needs of their catchment communities. These priorities form the basis of the strategic themes:
1. **Vision and Strategy / Networks and Partnerships**
 2. **Adaptability and Experience**
 3. **Appearance and Attractiveness**
 4. **Place Marketing**
 5. **Activity and Innovation**
 6. **Liveability and Functionality**

Objectives and Framework

9. A full explanation to support each of the following objectives is detailed in the High Streets and District Centres Strategy (**Appendix 1**).

Theme 1 - Vision and Strategy / Networks and Partnerships

Objective 1: to support a broad variety of uses in our high streets and district centres

Objective 2: to make full use of our high street properties

Objective 3: to ensure successful partnership working

Theme 2 - Adaptability and Experience

Objective 4: to make our high streets and district centres culturally rich destinations for experiences and events

Objective 5: alternative and future uses for our high streets and district centres

Theme 3 - Appearance and Attractiveness

Objective 6: make our high streets and district centres cleaner and greener

Objective 7: keep our high streets and district centres safe and secure

Theme 4 - Place Marketing

Objective 8: market and promote our high streets and district centres to showcase their full potential

Theme 5 - Activity and Innovation

Objective 9: use our high streets and district centres as data-rich locations that are easy to navigate

Objective 10: futureproof our high streets and district centres as Smart Places

Theme 6 - Liveability and Functionality

Objective 11: diversify our high streets and district centres as mixed use, dynamic places to live, work and congregate

Next Steps and Conclusion

10. In recognition of the changing nature of our high streets and district centres, the objectives identified will set the framework for stakeholders and partners to be involved in localised solutions.
11. Action Plans will be developed collaboratively and will use the Strategy objectives as a framework. They will be working documents, with a shared aim of revitalising, reimagining, and supporting our town and district centres. Defined KPI's to identify measurable outcomes will be included in the Action Plans.
12. There is already an incredible amount of activity and focus on ensuring the longevity of our high streets and district centres that needs to be harnessed, co-ordinated, embraced and acted upon. This will take careful managing and collaborative working between internal partners and stakeholders. The effects of the pandemic will be felt for years to come, and this Strategy will be the framework for future proofing our heritage, vibrancy and unique characteristics that make the town and district centres stand out as destinations.

Options Appraisal

13. To support the recommendations, thereby supporting vibrant high streets and district centres, which are supported by their heritage and distinct characteristics that make them stand out as unique destinations.
14. To not support the recommendations which will mean there is no positive leadership, co-ordination or investment in the high streets and district centres across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Summary of financial implications

15. The Strategy and resultant Action Plans will be funded through a combination of business-as-usual budgets and identified external funding such as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG4) as approved in the Officer Decision Record dated July 2021. Specifically, £100K will be allocated from the £275K identified at part 2(c) of Stream 4 – “Funding partners to provide Town & District Centre Support”, to carry out further research and fund appropriate projects, following guidance provided by Government in relation to the expenditure of ARG funding. The £100K is the first tranche of the £275K to be determined. Further details of the remainder will be developed in due course in line with part 2(c) of the Decision Record. Bids to upcoming government funds such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will also be explored.

Summary of legal implications

16. There are no legal implications in relation to this Strategy, however, should there be legal implications as the action plan develops, legal colleagues will be instructed accordingly.

Summary of human resources implications

17. Currently 3 officers in the Economic Development team (2.5 FTE) are working on and will lead on the Strategy and Action Plans. With 19 defined centres and 15 district centre audits to commence, the projected workload is significant. Some

areas of the Council will need to assist with developing the projects in addition to their current workloads. It is likely that these requirements will continue if high streets and district centres need ongoing intervention. Officers will work with external stakeholders and partners regarding delivery of actions under the objectives.

Summary of sustainability impact

18. Sustainability will be taken into consideration as part of the development of the Strategy and Action Plans. A Decision Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

Summary of public health implications

19. Developing a Strategy that delivers positive interventions to attract people back to high streets and district centres and enjoying public spaces will enhance the health and wellbeing of all who use them.

Summary of equality implications

20. Equalities implications and an Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken in the development of the Strategy. Specific benefits and positive impacts will depend on the proposals and objectives outlined in individual Action Plans, which will follow in due course, and cannot be defined at this stage. They will depend on the projects and actions identified for the high street or district centre in question. They will be guided by the need to consider equality and the experience of different groups as a result of the changes proposed.
21. The nature of high streets and district centres and the objectives of the Strategy are that future proposals will be inherently beneficial to all – more accessible and creating multifunctional community hubs, which will sit positively within the aims of creating equality across all groups.

Summary of risk assessment

22. As the High Street and District Centres Strategy develops, we will create a risk register for this work. Initial risks identified include:
 - not being able to secure the required budget which will lead to a restricted scope with slower implementation
 - not being able to secure full member support, which may lead to disjointed / lack of delivery in certain locations
 - a reputational risk associated with non-delivery of the Strategy
 - the complicated landscape of the high street may make some initiatives costly and complicated to deliver.

Background papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1

High Streets and District Centre Strategy (September 2021)

Appendix 2

BCP Council 'Reimagining Your High Streets' Engagement HQ report (March 2021)