

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
-------------------------------	------------	-----------------------------	------------

CABINET

13 SEPTEMBER 2019

JOINT REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS FOR BUSINESS & ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CORPORATE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

A.2 REJUVENATING CLACTON TOWN CENTRE

(Report prepared by Gary Guiver)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To update the Cabinet on the outcomes from the Clacton Town Centre Working Party and the progress of the Council’s successful bid to the government’s ‘Future High Streets Fund’ in respect of Clacton Town Centre; • To seek the Cabinet’s endorsement of the future vision for Clacton Town Centre and for the ‘Love Clacton’ brand; • To seek Cabinet approval for a ‘Plan of Action’ for Clacton Town Centre containing short, medium and long-term measures developed from the ideas of the Clacton Town Centre Working Party; and • To agree the approach to ongoing engagement with businesses, residents, visitors and partners in respect of Clacton Town Centre.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p><u>The work of the Clacton Town Centre Working Party to date</u></p> <p>The Clacton Town Centre Working Party was set up by the Leader of the Council in 2018 to provide a focal point for public bodies, businesses and the community to be able to develop a new, long term vision for the town centre and to recommend actions for rejuvenating the area. The Working Party comprises representatives from local businesses, partner organisations, community groups and relevant TDC Officers and was chaired by the previous Cabinet Member for Investment and Growth.</p> <p>Initially the Working Party identified many of the key issues and challenges that are affecting Clacton Town Centre’s footfall and spending. The main concerns include a lack of conveniently located on-street car parking; issues with the way traffic is currently directed; the presence of street-</p>

drinkers; a negative perception of the town centre amongst its own residents and businesses; and a lack of positive engagement with younger people.

Having identified some of the issues and challenges, the members of the Working Party were then invited to put forward and discuss ideas for tackling those issues. Some of the main ideas include creating more parking spaces in the core of the town centre and easing parking time restrictions; enabling more residential development to be built in the town centre; promoting Clacton's heritage and seaside credentials as a USP; tackling the causes of street-drinking and increasing the police presence; holding more events and activities in the town centre; and setting up a voluntary body of 'Ambassadors' to take an active role in the management and promotion of the town centre. Officers have considered all of the various ideas and many of them now form the basis of the proposed Plan of Action described below.

The Future High Streets Fund

The 'Future High Streets Fund' was announced as part of the government's 2018 Autumn budget to support local authorities in bringing about transformational change to their town centres that will enable them to adapt to the changing nature of shopping and how people spend their money and their time. Because of its economic challenges, Officers considered that Clacton Town Centre was well placed to qualify for some of the Future High Street Fund and have been working with Essex County Council's Localities Team and the members of the Clacton Town Centre Working Party to build the case for funding.

Because the Future High Streets Fund is aimed at delivering transformational changes, the Clacton Town Centre Working Party has been considering ideas for major development and innovative improvements that could potentially qualify for funding. These include proposals to create under-cover pedestrian friendly areas, the relocation of bus and coach facilities, new multi-storey car parks and associated interactive signage and a hub of community and educational facilities.

In March 2019, the Cabinet agreed the submission of a stage 1 (expression of interest) bid to the Future High Streets Fund which was duly submitted to the government with the written support of a number of local businesses and partner organisations. Initially, in July 2019, the Council received a letter from the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth to advise that the proposal for Clacton Town centre had not been selected for the current round of funding. However, the proposal was one of more than 300 received throughout the country and the Ministry was impressed by the standard of the Council's application; offering bespoke feedback and support for the Council in re-applying for funding as part of the next round in 2020. However, in August 2019, the government announced that the 2019 Future High Streets Fund would be extended to include an additional 50 town centres and Officers are delighted to report that Clacton Town Centre has been included.

The next stage of the process is to develop a more detailed business case upon which the final award of funding will be based. Up to £150,000 of capacity funding will be made available to the Council initially to assist with this process and support and guidance will be provided by a

nominated government official. Appendix B to this report contains the letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirming Clacton Town Centre's progress to the business case stage as well as the guidance for the next stage which sets out key milestones.

Officer will now liaise with the nominated government official and will work with partners to develop the detailed business case for Clacton Town Centre which will need to be submitted to government by 30th April 2020.

The 'Love Clacton' brand and vision

One of the main ideas arising from the Clacton Town Centre Working Party was to adopt a consistent approach to branding and marketing, building upon the successes of the 'Love Clacton' brand created by the owners of Clacton Pier working with Clacton Pavilion, the Council and other businesses. Whilst the Love Clacton brand is already used throughout the town centre, Officers are seeking the Cabinet's formal endorsement of 'Love Clacton' as the brand to be adopted for the purposes of future branding and marketing for Clacton Town Centre and the town's other attractions.

Alongside a distinctive brand, a clear long-term vision for an area is critical to the success of any town centre rejuvenation project or any bid for funding. For Clacton Town Centre, a vision statement was prepared incorporating the ideas and aspirations of the Working Party and this was agreed by the Cabinet and submitted to government as part of the Future High Streets Fund bid along with numerous letters of support from businesses and partner organisations. The Cabinet is asked to re-affirm the Council's support for the updated version of the vision statement, attached as Appendix C, as we move towards delivering action in Clacton Town Centre.

Plan of Action for Clacton Town Centre

The recommendations arising from the ideas put forward by the Clacton Town Centre Working Party include a series of short, medium and long-term actions which are contained within a 'Plan of Action' attached as Appendix C which the Cabinet is asked to endorse. For the most part, Officers are seeking the Cabinet's agreement for Officers to progress some of the ideas in more detail to enable further consultation with businesses and residents and to enable them to be properly costed before they are implemented. Some of the actions, including those relating to planning, on-street parking and anti-social behaviour have the potential to be delivered fairly quickly within existing budgets, whereas others will require more work and are likely to require additional funding through the Future High Streets Fund.

Some of the notable short-term actions include:

- Making changes to the parking and access arrangements in the core of the town centre, on a trial basis, to increase parking provision and help boost town centre trade;
- Developing a more detailed plan for the future development of key locations in the town

centre in line with the overarching vision;

- Developing a performance area on the town square to be used for a variety of events and entertainments;
- Designing and installing more prominent 'no-alcohol' signage to help discourage street-drinking in prominent parts of the town centre;
- Establishing a 'Clacton Town Centre Ambassadors' group to work with the Council and alongside the Clacton Town Centre Partnership;
- Increasing the physical presence of the 'Love Clacton' brand in the town centre through additional banners and window stickers and also through digital and social-media channels;
- Preparing a bid for government funding to roll out fibre-optic cabling along the seafront and into the town centre to improve the area's digital capabilities and provide a platform for wifi services and the increasing use of mobile apps;
- More active engagement with the public, with a particular emphasis on younger people, to develop ideas for the town centre further.

It is proposed that a fund of £250,000 from the Council's budget is made available to progress the short term actions in the 2019/20 financial year, including physical improvements on the ground and necessary technical studies.

Future engagement

In establishing a vision for the future and a set of practical ideas, the Clacton Town Centre Working Party has already succeeded in its initial purpose. Moving into the future, it will be important to maintain continuing engagement with businesses and partner organisations in seeking to implement some of the actions for the good of the town centre. Businesses in particular are anxious to see positive changes in the town centre to demonstrate the Council's commitment to rejuvenating the area and to give residents and other businesses confidence in Clacton as a place to spend and invest.

The original Working Party has essentially served its purpose and delivered the outputs originally envisaged. It is now proposed that the role of any working party moving into the next phase of work will be primarily to maintain ongoing engagement between the Council, businesses, community groups and residents in developing proposals for the Town Centre in more detail, consulting upon such proposals and addressing issues and challenges that will arise as the role and character of the Town Centre changes. The meetings will continue to be attended by Officers, including the Planning Manager and Town Centre Coordinator to provide technical and administrative support to the members of the Working Party – but will be less technical in nature and more about engagement. It is proposed that the Working Party will be re-named the Clacton Town Centre

Ambassadors and meetings will commence from October 2019.

It is proposed that there will be separate group dealing with more technical matters which will include key Council Officers and technical staff from partner organisations including the NHS, Police, Essex County Council and transport providers. Given the importance of having high-level buy-in, cooperation and coordination between key partners in, it is also proposed that there be a further 'strategic' group aimed a Chief Executive and Director level in key organisations to ensure that public-sector funding and resources are directed to the project in a coordinated manner given the high priority to bring about positive changes in the area.

Alongside the three working groups outlined above, it is proposed that there will be more direct engagement with residents, visitors, the wider business community and younger people as well as tailored market research to inform future branding and marketing efforts.

Appendix D to this report contains more details on how it is proposed that engagement will continue into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the summary of issues and challenges facing Clacton Town Centre identified by the members of the Clacton Town Centre Working Party, along with ideas and suggestions for addressing those issues and challenges;**
- 2) Notes the inclusion of Clacton Town Centre in the government's 'Future High Streets Fund' as indicated in the August 2019 letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government attached as Appendix 1 and the requirement to develop a more detailed business case as part of the next stage of the process;**
- 3) Endorses 'Love Clacton' as the brand to be adopted as part of a consistent approach to the branding and marketing of Clacton Town Centre and other attractions in Clacton;**
- 4) Endorses the 'Vision for Our Town Centre in 2030' attached as Appendix B as the overarching vision for the future of Clacton Town Centre;**
- 5) Endorses the Plan of Action for Clacton Town Centre attached as Appendix C and authorises Officers to work with relevant partners to deliver the actions within it;**
- 6) Agrees a fund of £250,000 be allocated to the delivery of short-term actions within the Action Plan, as detailed within the resources and risk section of this report;**
- 7) Agrees the approaches for both delivery of actions and ongoing public engagement in**

relation to the Town Centre as detailed in Appendix D; and

- 8) Delegates authority to the Director for Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to submit a detailed business case for Clacton Town Centre to the government's Future High Streets Fund by the deadline of 30th April 2020.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Economic growth is one of the Council's main priorities and Clacton Town Centre is the single largest concentration of economic activity in the district. Maintaining the town centre's vitality and viability is critical to the local economy and the health and wellbeing of residents both in Clacton and the wider district as well as helping to address issues around deprivation.

RESOURCES AND RISK

Resources: To date, the costs involved in running the Clacton Town Centre Working Party have been met through existing staff resources and existing budgets and the time and effort given generously and voluntarily by the representatives of businesses and other external agencies. Whilst the project had been led by the former Cabinet Member for Investment and Growth with direct support from the Planning and Regeneration Team, this has been a corporate project that has drawn upon the time and expertise of staff across all sections of the Council.

In moving forward, there will be costs associated with the implementation of the recommended actions and Cabinet's authorisation is sought to develop the ideas further with a view to fully establishing the relevant capital and revenue costs in due course. Decisions as to the cost effectiveness and the potential funding of some of the ideas will therefore be taken at a later date once more detail is known.

It is proposed to utilise funds from existing Council budgets to undertake and commission any necessary technical evidence to support projects going forward (including the next bid to the Future High Streets Fund) and seek approval for additional funds implement short term actions identified in the Plan of Action contained within Appendix 3 to this report – relating to the delivery of physical projects on the ground and technical / feasibility studies for major sites.

The Future High Streets Fund seeks to award up to £25million per area for capital investment in the acquisition and amalgamation of land and property and the delivery of infrastructure aimed at bringing about transformational change in town centres. Following confirmation that the Council's stage 1 expression of interest bids has been successful, up to £150,000 of additional revenue funding will be provided by government to support the ongoing technical research and preparation

of more detailed business case for the Stage 2 submission. Officers also intend to bid for money through the next round of the 'One Public Estates' (OPE) fund which could also assist in that aim. An overall fund of £400,000 for the Clacton Town Centre Project is proposed and this includes a £250,000 contribution from the Council Business Investment and Growth budget (which currently has available funding of £1,915,000):

Budget	Proposed use	Totals
Business Investment and Growth Budget	Town Centre projects	£150,000
Business Investment and Growth Budget	Technical studies in support of major projects (and a bid to the Future High Streets Fund)	£100,000
Future High Street Fund Grant	Development of Future High Street Fund bid	£150,000
	Total	£400,000

It should be noted that additional funding contributions for the development and delivery of projects within the Plan of Action will be sought from partners and external grant sources as opportunities arise.

Any changes to the planning policy framework arising from the recommendations in this report will be met through the approved Local Development Framework (LDF) budget and will be overseen by the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee. Officers intend to explore the potential for the recommended 'Ambassadors' concept to be established and/or part funded as part of Sport England's Essex Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) aimed at getting people more active. The opportunity to deliver increased broadband coverage and bring free wifi to the town centre and seafront has the potential to be part funded through the government's 'Local Full Fibre Networks' (LFFN) programme and Officers will work towards the preparation of a bid to that fund.

Risks: The success or otherwise of this project will be highly dependent on securing necessary funding through the various channels outlined above and the continued support and constructive engagement of local businesses, external agencies and our residents.

It will be critical to ensure that the vision for the town centre developed through the Clacton Town Centre Working Party achieves buy-in from the wider business and resident community and Officers consider that engagement needs to be extended further to ensure that any proposed changes in Clacton Town Centre have local support.

The continued constructive engagement and support of all Clacton Town Centre Stakeholders will only be maintained if the members see positive action in the short-term. There are immediate concerns for example relating to parking issues, street-drinking and support for the work of the Town Centre Partnership on events, activities and promotion. Officers therefore consider it essential that some of the actions are implemented in the 2019/20 financial year.

When proposals are developed in more detail, there are potential risks arising from differences in

opinion as to how certain measures are implemented. In progressing the recommended actions in this report, Officers will endeavour to engage constructively with relevant businesses, bodies and residents to minimise any conflict and to bring about positive change in the interest of our communities.

LEGAL

Legislation: The recommendations for action contained within this report will, in due course, require full consideration of any legal implications. However, the majority of the proposals are understood to be deliverable within the known legislative framework.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Crime and Disorder: Anti-social behaviour has been identified as one of the key issues currently facing Clacton Town Centre and some of the recommendations emerging from the Working Party will relate to tackling this issue. Continued support for the work of the Tendring Community Safety Partnership will be key to maintaining a safe and secure environment in Clacton Town Centre. The overall aim of making the town centre more busy and vibrant will assist in providing increased natural surveillance and reducing the likelihood and temptation of crime and disorder.

Equality and Diversity: The recommendations in this report are aimed at benefitting all who live, shop, work and visit Clacton.

Health Inequalities: Any enhancements carried out to the town centre following recommendations in this report will assist in promoting a healthier lifestyle for those who live, shop, work and visit Clacton. The proposal to establish the Love Clacton Ambassadors in particular is a positive means of getting local people more active.

Area or Ward affected: The Pier Ward and St. James' Ward directly, but all wards indirectly – particularly those within Clacton and the wider catchment.

Consultation/Public Engagement: The recommendations in this report have been derived from positive engagement with businesses, external agencies and community groups through the Clacton Town Centre Working Party. It is however important that public engagement is widened to include more local businesses, residents of Clacton and the surrounding area, visitors and younger people in particular.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in respect of Clacton Town Centre's inclusion in the Future High Streets Fund.

Appendix B 'Love Clacton' – The Vision for Our Town Centre in 2030.

Appendix C Plan of Action for Clacton Town Centre.

Appendix D Proposed programme of engagement for the Clacton Town Centre project.