

Council

Annual Meeting



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Thursday, 23 May 2024 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill,
Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Agenda Supplement

7. **Communications (including Chairman's Announcements)** (Page 3)
17. **Grantham Market Place - Possible interventions to encourage footfall and support businesses** (Pages 5 - 16)
To consider the potential for using budgets, reserves and UK Shared Prosperity funding (UKSPF) in a variety of ways to support the project and businesses.

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List of Chairman's Engagements

1st March to 23rd May 2024

Event Date	SKDC Ref	Organisation and Event	Location
08-Mar-24	GJ0027	Mayor of Bourne's Civic Dinner	Bourne Corn Exchange, Bourne
16-Mar-24	GJ0022	Grantham Mayor's Dinner Dance	Faraday House, Grantham Masonic Centre, Chambers Street, Grantham NG31 8BL
22-Mar-24	Civic04	SKDC Chairman's Civic Dinner	Ballroom, Bourne Corn Exchange Bourne
20-Apr-24	GJ0026	South Holland Chairman's Charity Ball	Marquee Suite, Springfields, Spalding PE12 6ET
23-Apr-24	GJ0034	Grantham Rotary Charter Dinner	Woody's Bar & restaurant, Willoughby Road, Ancaster, Grantham NG32 3RT
08-May-24	RGP2024	Royal Garden Party	Buckingham Palace, London
09-May-24	GJ0035	Launch of Happy to Chat Benches	Wyndham Park, Grantham

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**SOUTH
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Council

Thursday, 23 May 2024

Report of Cllr Ashley Baxter
Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member
for Finance and Economic
Development

Grantham Market Place - Possible interventions to encourage footfall and support businesses

Report Author

Nick Hibberd, Head of Economic Development and Inward Investment

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Purpose of Report

To consider potential support measures for local businesses that may be adversely affected by the redevelopment of the Market Place in Grantham through the Future High Street Fund.

Recommendations

That Full Council considers the options set out in paragraph 4 of this report in respect of potential support measures for local businesses who may be adversely affected by the current works of the Market Place in Grantham.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Connecting communities
Sustainable South Kesteven
Enabling economic opportunities

Which wards are impacted?

Grantham St Wulframs;
and neighbouring wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Council has the authority to create a specific reserve but the use of the reserve will need to be underpinned by clear and transparent criteria to ensure its use is in accordance with the stated aims.
- 1.2 The Council has no power to suspend or waive business rates where businesses may be affected by temporary disruption. However, the businesses have been notified that they are able to contact the Valuation Office Agency and seek a reduction in their rateable value. Details can be found here: [Business rates: If your business or premises change - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/business-rates-if-your-business-or-premises-change)
- 1.3 The Council has committed over £379k of its own financial resources towards the FHSF projects so any further contributions will be additional to this amount.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.4 A clear criteria would need to be set associated with the allocation of any funds from the Council to independent businesses via an application process, as outlined in option 1 of this report under paragraph 4. The Council would also need to satisfy itself that any requirements associated with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 were met prior to the allocation of any funding being made through such a scheme.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 In February 2021, Cabinet agreed a £5.56m Programme of Works in respect to the Future High Street Fund (FHSF), which would support a programme of improvements to Grantham Town Centre. This included £1.8m for the redevelopment of the Market Place. All schemes had to be financially complete by 31 March 2023.

- 2.2 The application was followed by a protracted grant acceptance process during which the Government issued and agreed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Council. Further delays were caused by the Pandemic. Consequently the Council, along with many other Local Authorities, sought an extension to the programme until 31 March 2025. This was granted in February 2024.
- 2.3 The 'Market Redevelopment' scheme will see public realm improvements at the junctions of Conduit Lane and Market Place where it meets at West Gate, as set out in **Appendix 1**. The highway is being re-constructed by removing the existing tarmac surface and replacing it with a York stone sett paving design to match existing materials. The project will raise the current road height to deliver a single level structured, interconnected space, capable of delivering a regular Market and programme of town centre events.
- 2.4 As the Highway Authority, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) are the Council's delivery partner and, following a competitive tender process, they have selected Taylor Woodrow as their contractor.
- 2.5 The works started on 7 May 2024 and are anticipated to take sixteen weeks. Assuming no delays, works should conclude by 19 August 2024. Whilst this is the advertised date 'on site', LCC have allowed for a longer programme of works, until 11 October 2024, to allow for any potential slippage in the scheme. Potential risks include unknown utility locations and ground conditions.
- 2.6 Since the contractors arrived on site the Council has received some criticism and concerns from businesses in the vicinity. These businesses feel the works are having a detrimental effect on their business, through reduced footfall and falling sales. This has led to concern over profitability and their ability to sustain activity over this period.
- 2.7 In applying to the FHSF the Council has committed £379,000 of 'match funding'. This funding provided for the employment of a 'Grantham Engagement Manager' and 'Support Officer', as well as the development of an 'Action Plan' to support businesses both during the works through engagement, marketing and events; and after; by creating opportunities to sustain activity to stimulate demand and interest in Grantham Town Centre. These activities would be devised with a stakeholder partnership known as a 'Town Team'.
- 2.8 Despite two attempts to recruit and retain a Grantham Engagement Manager, the post is currently vacant. A fresh recruitment process is underway, and it is hoped and appointment can be made by the end of May. In the interim, other Officers are progressing several activities to mitigate against any potential reduction in footfall including:
- 2.9 **Engaging with local businesses:**
- Officers have written to businesses to inform them about the works programme, distributed information through social media and regularly visited the locality to understand and respond to any raised concerns. The SKDC website has been

enhanced with information, news and will soon include a Frequency Asked Question section.

2.10 Engagement with LCC / Taylor Woodrow:

Officers continue to have bi-weekly meetings with LCC and Taylor Woodrow, to relay concerns and to gather up to date and accurate information on project progress. This enables Officers at SKDC to be able to disseminate this information to local businesses. These meetings will ensure that the Council is kept informed about any updates regarding the progress of the project.

2.11 Compensation:

Whilst no compensation is available from the Highway Authority, Officers have researched potential opportunities for temporary rate relief, which may be available from the Valuation Office, if their premises are affected by severe local disruption (like flooding, building or roadworks). Support will be offered to affected businesses to understand how this support can be accessed.

2.12 Communications:

In addition to the comprehensive Communication Plan, as set out in **Appendix 2**, Officers are developing a proposal to offer businesses in the vicinity of the Works, the opportunity of a short promotional video. Once produced, this will be available for use by individual businesses as well as the Council as part of the Communication Plan. The Council has already used social media to update residents about the roadworks and to clarify that the businesses remain open during the roadworks.

2.13 Events:

A street entertainment programme commenced on Saturday 18 May 2024 to support market traders and businesses in the vicinity of the works. This programme will run every Saturday between 10am and 2pm for a period of eight weeks until 7 July.

A wider programme of entertainment is being prepared for the Summer 2024 school holiday period. This will include a variety of events to encourage new and existing visitors to the Town Centre.

A launch event is being planned for the October 2024 school half term holiday. This will include events to encourage new and existing visitors to the Town Centre and will include a showcase 'Market Place Opening Event'.

2.14 Monitoring Footfall:

The Council has re-commissioned footfall data from a specialist provider, 'Visitor Insights', which will allow Officers the opportunity to continue to monitor footfall throughout the period of the works.

2.15 This activity represents a short to medium term approach, which will ensure economic activity is sustained, both in the areas affected and wider Grantham for

the duration of the works. Once the new Grantham Engagement Manager has been appointed, a medium to long term plan will be created. If additional funding becomes available, it could support this activity moving forward.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Works only commenced on 7 May 2024 and the Council is only just beginning to implement mitigation actions, which it anticipates will help continue to attract visitors to the town. It is likely that it will be several weeks before the Council can properly ascertain the extent of any decline in footfall and sales figures.
- 3.2 Councillor Matthew Bailey recently submitted a request for an extraordinary meeting of the Council which proposed the creation of a Market Place Hardship Reserve, further details of which are set out in option 1 below. It was subsequently agreed that the item would be included on the agenda for the Annual Meeting of the Council on 23 May 2024.
- 3.3 If Council be minded to agree to the setting up of such a fund, it would be necessary to consider how this would be administered together with the need to consider eligibility, a process to establish harm and possible compensation levels, as well as a method of distribution.

4. Options Available

- 4.1 Option 1: To create a Grantham Market Place Hardship Reserve of £50,000 to be funded from the General Fund Local Priorities Reserve. This would support local businesses that might be affected by a reduction in footfall during the roadworks.
- 4.2 Option 2: Not to set up a Market Place Hardship Reserve. The general rule is that there is no compensation if a business is affected by road works. Successive governments have taken the view that businesses should not have the right in law to any particular given level of passing trade, and that traders must take the risk of loss due to temporary disruption of traffic flows along with all the other various risks of running a business.
- 4.3 Option 3: Continue with the identified mitigation measures and defer any decision on establishing a Market Place Hardship Reserve until a clearer picture emerges around any harm that may be caused by the works.
- 4.4 Option 4: To consider increasing the available budget to support additional activity to enhance the programme that is already established to drive footfall after the works are completed.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 To allow Council to consider all options set out in section 4 of this report, including the creation of a Grantham Market Place Hardship Reserve as proposed by Councillor Matthew Bailey.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 A report recommending the final options for the capital projects supported by the Future High Street Scheme in principle offer of up to £5,558,818. Report for Cabinet, dated 2 February 2021, available online at:

[Future High Street Fund.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)

- 6.2 Report detailing proposals for submission of a bid for the Future High Streets Fund for Grantham Town Centre, including match funding. Report for Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 22 November 2022, available online at:

[Agenda for Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 30th June, 2020, 10.30 am | South Kesteven District Council](#)

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Works Diagram
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Communication Plan

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Future High Streets Fund

Grantham Market Place Improvement Works Communications Plan

Context

This campaign is designed to support the delivery of a £5.56m investment in Grantham town centre as part of the Government's Future High Streets Fund.

As well as refurbishing public conveniences, the work will provide a new space to help diversify the town centre, businesses, market and leisure opportunities.

Since early May 2024, road closures and diversions have been in place as part of the improvement works..

The campaign will inform and reassure residents and business owners.

Objectives

- To keep residents, visitors and businesses informed of the improvement works.
- To help manage expectations and minimise disruption whilst the improvement works and road closures are under way.
- To provide support and promotion for businesses affected by the improvement works and road closures.
- To promote future events that will help drive footfall to the area.

Audience

- Residents of Grantham and surrounding areas
- Businesses and their employees located in or near improvement works and road closures (Market Place, Narrow Westgate and Conduit Lane)
- Commuters/visitors to Grantham

Key messages

- The improvement works are positive – they will transform and revitalise Grantham town centre, enhance accessibility for all and create a social hub for residents and visitors to the town.
- Temporary road closures are necessary for the duration of the project and are clearly marked and signposted. Diversions are in place.
- Businesses in Market Place, Narrow Westgate and Conduit Lane are all open for business as usual.
- Businesses are still able to take deliveries as usual.
- Full pedestrian access remains – customers are able to easily visit these businesses on foot.
- Parking is available at five nearby carparks (situated between 3 and 8 minutes walk away)
- There are long-term benefits that include a series of events and activities planned for during and after the improvement works to drive footfall to the area.
- The Council is eager to work with residents and businesses who want to share feedback and make Grantham a more vibrant and attractive town centre for everyone to enjoy.
- The Council's Economic Development Team is on hand to support businesses with any concerns and has a dedicated officer in place to help businesses throughout the improvement works, and beyond.
- The project aligns with the Council's vision to make South Kesteven a thriving District to live in, work and visit.

Implementation

Implementation Item	Messaging	Channel
Social media campaign	Regular reminders of why the road closures are in place – what the long-term benefits of the work will be and what the area will be able to offer afterwards.	Social Platforms (<i>X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and LinkedIn for business-focused posts</i>)
	Spotlight on the affected area – showcase affected businesses - what they do, where they are and how accessible they are on foot from one of five car parks in the nearby area.	
	Accessibility information – nearby car parks, how long it takes to get to the area on foot, where the diversions are.	
	Share positive news about the other aspects of the FHSF and the overall impact of the project – i.e. Westgate Hall.	
	Promotion of planned events/activities/entertainment on offer throughout the improvement works and afterwards, funded by the FHSF.	

	Milestone/progress updates with how the improvement works are progressing. Include photographs/videos to visualise the progress.	
SKDC website area	<p>Dedicated area on the SKDC website exploring what FHSF is, what the long-term benefits of the project will be, what the current road closures are in place to do and what the area will look like afterwards.</p> <p>Include information on nearby car parks, highlight that businesses are still accessible.</p> <p>Regular updates with progress pictures to mark key milestones of the work.</p>	SKDC website
FAQ document	<p>An accessible document available as a page on the Council's website and as a PDF with FAQs about FHSF, the road closures currently in place and the long-term benefits of the project.</p> <p>Include the support that is available for businesses affected by the closure.</p>	SKDC website and PDF document – shared via social media and in press releases where appropriate.
Press releases	Share updates with local media outlets on significant progress and supporting events that will drive footfall to the area.	Issued to local media (newspapers, radio stations, tv channels)
Dedicated email address (monitored by Economic Development team)	<p>The email will field queries about the FHSF and enable people to share their thoughts, contact with questions/concerns/feedback.</p> <p>Support businesses/residents in feeling listened to and open up a two-way conversation.</p>	Email inbox
Community information/feedback session led by Cabinet	'Meet the Cabinet' session held in Grantham for people to voice their concerns, ask questions, provide feedback but also feed into a plan for events and activities that can help drive footfall into the area throughout and after the improvements.	In-person session.
SKtoday update	An update in the next issue of SKtoday to include latest information.	SKtoday.
Video	Work with external provider to produce promotional video for the area, promoting the key messages.	Social media, website

Risks

- **Misinformation** – there is a risk of misinformation spreading among the community that can be worsened by social media. This could lead to confusion or frustration about the timeline or impact of the improvement works/road closure.
- **Negative public perception** – with both business owners and residents affected by the road closures currently in place, some may perceive the disruption to be more of a burden than a benefit to them. This creates negativity surrounding the works which may be shared with others on social media, through customer service channels or with local media outlets.
- **Negative media coverage** – media scrutiny will amplify any perceived negativity surrounding the works. This will undermine public support and confidence in the FHSF project.
- **Unforeseen delays or changes** – unexpected delays will cause frustration. These will need to be clearly communicated to businesses and residents.
- **Reputational damage to the Council** – negativity surrounding the project will reflect on the Council.

To manage these risks, it's essential that any communications proactively address the concerns of residents and business owners, engages with those affected and provides regular information and updates.