



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



# Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 27 June 2024

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter, The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and Economic Development

## Grantham Future High Streets Fund: Market Place Footfall Activity.

### Report Author

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### Purpose of Report

To discuss activities to support footfall in the vicinity of the Grantham Market Place works and wider town centre for the duration of the Future High Street Fund programme, and the policy of deployment for additional funding as agreed at the Council Annual General Meeting on 23 May 2024.

### Recommendations

**That the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Considers the contents of this report.**
- 2. Provides feedback on the proposed additional mitigation measures and recommends a budget for this activity.**

## Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Enabling economic opportunities

Which wards are impacted? Grantham St Wulfram's;

## 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 committed over £379k of its own financial resources towards the FHSF projects so any further contributions will be additional to this amount.
- 1.2 During the Council's Annual General Meeting, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024, it was agreed that additional budget for activities to support footfall in the town centre during the delivery of the project would be allocated from the existing match funded budget.

Completed by: Paul Sutton, Interim Head of Finance (Deputy 151)

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.3 Full Council, at their meeting on 23 May 2024 requested that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee discuss a budgetary increase to promote footfall to the Market Place in the short and medium term. The level of any increase and the policy on its deployment is to be discussed at this meeting. Any recommendation made by this Committee would be subjected to the relevant decision-making authority in the Constitution.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

### ***Risk and Mitigation***

- 1.4 The risk register for the programme is regularly monitored and updated with regards to all aspects of the scheme and is regularly reviewed by both programme

officers as well as the funding body, Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1 In 2021, Cabinet agreed a £5.56m programme of works funded by the Government's Future High Street Fund. This programme of works focuses on improvements to Grantham Town Centre, including public realm improvement schemes to the Market Place and Station Approach, a grant scheme to support the conversion of vacant upper floor retail spaces into quality residential properties in the Town Centre, and the potential acquisition of a strategic development site in the town centre.
- 2.2 In 2023, the Council decided it was no longer feasible to move forward with the acquisition of the strategic development site, and as a result the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities agreed that the budget allocated to that project could be reallocated against the other projects within the scheme. In addition, this also allowed for £90,000 funding to be allocated to refurbish and reopen the Conduit Lane Public Toilets.
- 2.3 The Council approved £379,000 in match funding for the Future High Streets Fund programme, which funds all elements of work through the scheme which are categorised as revenue costs.
- 2.4 This includes funding for the establishment and activity of the Grantham Town Team and Action Plan to include town centre beautification, the delivery of events and activities to support and increase footfall in the town centre, and promotion of Grantham as a destination.
- 2.5 The Market Place improvement scheme aims to deliver a usable and inviting public open space in the heart of Grantham, which is capable of hosting events and markets.
- 2.6 The Market Place works started on site on 7 May 2024 and include the reconstruction of the road from a tarmac surface to York stone sett paving, whilst also raising the current road height to deliver a single level structured and interconnected space.
- 2.7 The works have an anticipated duration of sixteen weeks and are scheduled to conclude by 19 August 2024.
- 2.8 Since the contractors mobilised and established site in May 2024, the Council has received a level of criticism and concern from businesses in the vicinity of the works.

These businesses feel that the works are having a detrimental effect on their business, through reduced footfall and falling of sales.

2.9 In order to mitigate these concerns Officers are delivering a number of activities to both monitor and minimise the disruption associated with the works. These include:

- Enhancing the SKDC website with information and news on the works – including a FAQ section.
- Engagement with Lincolnshire County Council and Taylor Woodrow to receive regular progress updates and resolve any concerns or issues in a timely manner.
- Increased communications on social media. Including the sign posting of available parking in proximity of the works, and promoting business open as usual.
- Development of an Events Programme, funded through the Council's existing match funding contribution, which currently includes supporting the Saturday Market with street performances, and will see the delivery of a programme of activity over the summer holidays, and a launch event during October half term.
- As part of the reporting requirements for the Future High Street Fund programme, footfall data is consistently monitored across the town centre. Officers regularly review the data to determine the impact of the project works, both positive and negative. Data for the month of May does not show any measurable decrease in footfall either for the town in general or for the Narrow Westgate/ Market area specifically during the course of the works to date. Footfall data is received approximately two weeks after the end of the month to which it relates (i.e. Data for May was made available w/c 10<sup>th</sup> June).
- Footfall data for both the town centre as a whole and the Narrow Westgate/ Market area is presented in the following table:

Location	Date	Total Visits
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	Mar-23	106581
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	Apr-23	120900
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	May-23	124669
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	Mar-24	144029
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	Apr-24	150920
Narrow Westgate/ Grantham Market	May-24	152323
Grantham Town Centre	Mar-23	1415542
Grantham Town Centre	Apr-23	1426264
Grantham Town Centre	May-23	1469212
Grantham Town Centre	Mar-24	1590638
Grantham Town Centre	Apr-24	1534478
Grantham Town Centre	May-24	1587802

2.10 During the Annual General Meeting of Council on 23 May 2024, Full Council agreed to:

***"not set up a Market Place Hardship Reserve, but increase the budget available to the already identified mitigation measures and the activities to promote footfall to the Market Place in the short and medium term. The level of this increase and the policy on its deployment is to be discussed at the next meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee."***

2.11 A streets entertainment programme commenced on Saturday 18 May to support market traders and businesses in the vicinity of the works. This programme is scheduled to run for a period of eight weeks every Saturday between 10am and 2pm, with the last event on 7 July 2024.

2.12 A wider programme of events is currently being procured which will run during the 2024 Summer school holiday period and will include a variety of events to encourage new and existing visitors to the Town Centre.

2.13 This programme will include activity across the town centre and include a mixture of weekend and mid-week events.

2.14 The programme of activity will culminate in a launch event for the Marketplace, which will take place during the 2024 October school half term holiday.

2.15 The budget for the combined programme of summer activities and the October launch event is £45,000 to be taken from the Council's existing contribution to the Future High Street Fund Programme.

2.16 In addition to the above, the Arts Team at SKDC are working to develop a district wide programme of events, including community art commissions, performances, and events. The programme of activity will be coordinated with activity already scheduled to take place in Grantham to ensure that the greatest impact is seen for the town centre.

2.17 This programme of activity is proposed to run until March 2025.

2.18 The Arts Team is preparing a bid to the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the delivery of this programme. However, should this bid be unsuccessful, funding to support the delivery of programme elements to be delivered in Grantham could be supported by drawing funding from the existing match funded budget.

2.19 In addition to the arts and events activity planned Officers have been exploring options for the introduction of a loyalty/ voucher card scheme to support businesses in the affected area.

2.20 These loyalty cards would be available in local businesses in the vicinity of the Market Place works and aim to encourage visitors to spend money in those businesses, rewarding a purchase by adding a stamp to their card. Once full of stamps, the cards could then be dropped into a box and a prize winner drawn at random by Officers at the Council. Prizes could include vouchers to spend in local shops or cash.

2.21 Following the Council AGM, Councillors have again raised the suggestion of removing or reducing parking fees in the vicinity of the Market Place. As well as increased bus services to Grantham on Market days, and rental incentives for local shops and/or market stalls. These are all options that would require further exploration as to their feasibility and potential cost.

2.22 The table below outlines indicative budget for further activity which could be delivered:

Proposal	Indicative Budget Requirement
Extended events programme to delivery further events within the town centre between January and May 2025, to deliver a mixture of weekend and midweek activities, with a focus on larger scale events to be delivered during school holidays and or spring bank holidays.  As an alternative this funding could be re-directed to support the events programme being developed by the Council's Arts Team, should their UKSPF bid be unsuccessful.	£45,000 - £50,000
Voucher/ loyalty card scheme for businesses within the Market Place area, to run for 12 months with monthly prize draws offering cash rewards or vouchers for town centre experiences.  Note: Should the scheme be extended to a wider area within the town centre, costs will increase as this will require additional set up, promotional and logistics costs, as well as have a more significant impact on the capacity of the Economic Development Team to deliver.	£10,000
Long term promotional activity to highlight Grantham as a destination in general, and Grantham businesses specifically. The focus of this promotion will be to audiences outside of Grantham i.e. surrounding towns and potentially railway routes. This will build upon short- medium term marketing and promotional activity which will be delivered by the Grantham Engagement Manager and Town Team from the existing budget.	£25,000
Incentives schemes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• free parking on Market days/ mid-week to encourage shoppers,</li> <li>• grant scheme for businesses to access marketing support,</li> <li>• Financial incentives for new market traders taking up stalls,</li> </ul>	While the budget requirements for any/ all of these schemes would likely be high, further feasibility work will be required to determine

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial incentives to support rent costs for new town centre businesses,</li> <li>• Provision of free buses to Grantham from outlying regions/ other towns for market days</li> </ul>	<p>budget requirements for any/ all of these schemes should the committee be minded to recommend proceeding with any of the proposed incentive schemes</p>
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2.23 It was the intention of the original Future High Street Fund programme design that a Grantham Town Team would be established, supported by the Grantham Engagement Manager and that part of the remit of that group would be to develop a package of activity which would support the town centre, both through the delivery of the scheme and beyond.

2.24 These activities would be funded through the Council's contribution to the Future High Street Fund programme and include promotion of the town centre (both locally and further afield), beautification activities, and events programming.

2.25 Despite two attempts to recruit and sustain a Grantham Engagement Manager, we are currently without this capacity. However, to address this situation a new recruitment process is underway with the hope to appoint this role by the end of June.

2.26 Once in post the new Grantham Engagement Manager will lead on reactivating the Town Team programme, and with the support and input of the Town Team, developing a short/ medium term activity plan to be delivered over the next 12 months. This will be delivered utilising the remaining budget from the Council's March funding contribution to the Future High Street Fund programme.

2.27 The current uncommitted funding remaining within the SKDC match budget is £210,000.

### **3. Key Considerations**

3.1 It is important for Members to consider that the Works and existing programme of mitigation commenced on the 7th May and it is likely that it will be several weeks before we can properly ascertain the extent of any decline in business activity in the market place.

3.2 A planned programme of mitigation measures is already underway including street performance during Saturday markets and commissioning a programme of activities to run throughout the Summer Holidays.

3.3 Footfall data monitoring has revealed that there has been no significant decrease in the number of visits to the area during the course of the works to date.

## 4. Other Options Considered

4.1 **Option 1:** Do nothing further – The Council is committed to support businesses across the district, and to mitigate any impact of works which are carried out by the Council and has committed £379,000 of Match Funding to support this activity. Although footfall monitoring has shown that there has not been a decrease in footfall in the area during May, there is a perception among businesses that there is or will likely be an impact, and that they require support from the Council.

**Option 2:** To continue with the mitigation measures currently in place and some or all of the identified activities: to promote the Market Place through the extended programme of events/ activity to run through out Spring 2025 (January – May), a 12 month voucher/loyalty card scheme, and an enhanced long term promotional activity for Grantham town centre attractions and businesses.

**Option 3:** In addition to the activities outlined in option two, to complete feasibility works and costed proposals for long term/ permanent suggestions to support the town centre, including the removal of parking charges, implementing a rental support or financial incentive scheme for new businesses and/ or market traders, providing additional bus services on Market days, and funding grants to town centre businesses to deliver additional marketing/branding/promotional activity. Subsequently to bring these fully costed proposals to a future meeting of the committee for allocation of additional budget.

## 5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 This report provides Members of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to feedback comments within their scrutiny remit to the Programme Board and (where appropriate) Cabinet. This includes suggestions for work programmes and items to be considered.

## 6. Background Papers

6.1 Grantham Market Place - Possible interventions to encourage footfall and support businesses. Report for AGM, Council, published 23 May 2024, available online at:  
[Grantham Market Place Final Report.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/Grantham-Market-Place-Final-Report.pdf)

6.2.1 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 30 June 2022, available online at:  
[Future High Streets Fund final.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/Future-High-Streets-Fund-final.pdf)