



Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 17 September 2024

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

Grantham Town Centre Footfall Report

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To update Members on progress on the action plan to increase footfall to Grantham Market place in relation to the Future High Street Fund programme.

Recommendations

That the Committee notes the update on the action plan to increase footfall to Grantham Market place as part of the Future High Street programme.

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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

Which wards are impacted?

(All 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 There are no financial implications directly arising from the report, which is for noting.

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

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no legal or governance implications arising from this report, which is for noting.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring 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 To support this approach, the Council approved £379,000 (16 July 2020) Future High Streets Fund programme, to funds activities to support the delivery of the physical works described in 2.1.
- 2.3 This activity includes funding for: a) the establishment of the Grantham Town Team and; b) a Town Centre Action Plan to include town centre improvements, the delivery of events and activities to support and increase footfall in the town centre, and promotion of Grantham as a destination.
- 2.4 The Market Place improvement scheme aims to deliver a usable and inviting public open space in the heart of Grantham, capable of hosting events and markets and expected to complete by the end of September 2024.
- 2.5 The Market Place works started on the 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.
- 2.6 When the contractors mobilised and established the site in May 2024, the Council received a level of negative feedback and concern from businesses in the vicinity of the works, who felt their businesses were being adversely affected. In that context an urgent item was brought to the Annual General Meeting of the Council on the 23 May 2024 which discussed

setting up a hardship fund for any businesses affected. It was proposed that up to £50,000 should be set aside for this.

2.7 During the meeting the Council agreed to: "not set up a Market Place Hardship Reserve, but instead recommended focusing part of the existing FHSF to develop interventions that would further promote footfall to the Market Place in the short and medium term". It was agreed that the level of this increase and the policy on its deployment would be discussed at the next meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC).

2.8 At this meeting on the 27 June 2024, three options were discussed:

Option 1 was to do nothing further.

Option 2 was 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 throughout Spring 2025 (January to May), a 12-month loyalty card scheme, and an enhanced long term promotional activity for Grantham town centre attractions and businesses.

Option 3 was, in addition to Option 2, to conduct feasibility works to provide costed proposals for long-term/permanent projects to support the town centre.

2.9 Long term projects to be considered included:

- the removal of parking charges
- implementing a rental support or financial incentive scheme for new businesses and/or market traders
- providing additional bus services to Grantham on market days; and;
- funding grants to town centre businesses to deliver additional marketing/branding/promotional activity.

These would be explored while implementing Option 2.

2.10 The FEOSC on 17 July resolved to accept Option 3.

Option Three – 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 the allocation of additional budget.

2.11 Progress made against the elements of Option 2 include:

- Voucher scheme: The Council's Communications Team are currently designing a loyalty card in conjunction with the Grantham Engagement Manager, which will be distributed to those businesses in the vicinity of the Market Place who have operated in the area affected by the roadworks. This will be "rolled out" from 1 October to coincide with the revised dates for the full reopening of the Market Place. Subject to its performance and affordability, this scheme has the potential to be extended further within the town.

- Extended programme of events: is being drawn up to incorporate a monthly event in the Market Place to work in conjunction with the market diary. An example of things under consideration is a Summer Solstice Festival, French Market and Brocante, along with interactive events for school holidays etc.

An indicative programme of events is appended to this report (Appendix 1)

2.12 Forecast Budgetary costs for Option 2

The council has committed over £379,000 of match funding towards the Future High Street Fund. This included funding for the establishment and activity of the Grantham Town Team and Action Plan to include town centre beautification and the delivery of events and activities to support and increase footfall in the town centre. £210,000 of the match funding remains.

Proposal	Indicative Budget Required
Extended events programme to deliver events within the town centre between January and May 2025	£25,000 - £35,000
Voucher/loyalty card scheme for businesses within the Marketplace area, to run for 12 months with monthly prize draw.	£2,000
Long-term promotional activity.	£TBC
Incentive schemes including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free parking on Market days/mid-week to encourage shoppers - grant scheme for businesses to access marketing support - financial incentives for new market traders taking up stalls - financial incentives to support rent costs for new town centre businesses - provision of free buses to Grantham from outlying regions/other towns for market days 	Feasibility study to be conducted prior to 26 th November 2024.

2.13 The requested feasibility works to provide detailed proposals for long-term/permanent projects to support the town centre are being developed as part of a wider Action Plan for Grantham town centre in partnership with the Grantham Town Team. Details will not be available until November 2024.

2.14 The Grantham Town Team will be made up of key stakeholders from the town, the first meeting of this group will be 19 September 2024. The Terms of Reference will be agreed at the first meeting of this group.

2.15 The indicative timetable for the development of the Action Plan is as follows:

Activity	Dates	Next Meeting
Town Team Meeting	19.09.24	Frequency of meetings to be decided at initial meeting on 19.09.24

FEOSC Meeting	17.09.24	26.11.24
Cabinet Approval	03.12.24	
Action Plan Completion	Town Team to confirm after initial meeting, but prior to 26.11.24	

2.16 The FEOSC on 27 June 2024 was informed that despite the concerns footfall had increased relative to May 2023. Further data obtained since May, confirms a further increase in footfall in June and July 2024. **Appendix 1** contains detailed information.

3. Key Considerations

3.1 Mitigation measures are already underway including street performance during Saturday markets and the commissioning of a programme of activities to run throughout the Summer Holidays.

3.2 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 The alternative options were considered by Members at an earlier meeting. They are listed in the report above.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 The report is for noting only. All relevant information needs to be obtained in relation to cost, feasibility and impact on businesses for the proposed business support measures, for the FEOSC Meeting on 26 November.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 - [Grantham Market Footfall Data Comparison May-July 2023 VS 2024 22](#)

7. Background Papers

A - Report to Finance and Economic OSC 27th June 2024 [Grantham Future High Streets Fund Market Place Footfall Activity.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)

B – Grantham Future High Street Fund - May 2024 Update [FINAL FHSF FEOSC Report - 8th May 2024.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)

C– Full Council Approval of revenue budget for Future High Street Fund [Full Council Report FHS July 2020.pdf \(southkesteven.gov.uk\)](#)