



Tuesday, 26 November 2024

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

Market Place Grantham Footfall Report

Report Author

Melanie Brown, Grantham Engagement Manager

 melanie.brown@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To update Members on progress towards an Action plan for Grantham Town Centre. This includes feedback on the feasibility work requested by the June 2024 meeting of Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC).

Recommendations

That the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Considers the findings of the feasibility study into options proposed by FEOSC members at their June 2024 committee meeting.**
- 2. Endorses the Action Plan for Grantham Town Centre (Appendix 1).**
- 3. Agrees to receive an updated Action Plan after six months.**

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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? (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 All activities identified in the draft Grantham Action Plan, contained within Appendix 2, can be delivered from existing budgets. The following table shows the allocation of the Council approved budget:

Budget	Spend 2022- 2023	Spend 2023- 2024	Proposed Spend 2025 to deliver Action Plan
£379,092.00	£64,000	£105,000	£210,000

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan commits to "*enable and support a dynamic, resilient and growing local economy*". The Grantham Future High Street Fund (FHSF) is one means by which the Council seeks to meet this ambition.

2.2 In 2021, Cabinet agreed a £5.6m programme of works funded by the Government's FHSF. The programme focuses on improvements to Grantham Town Centre including public realm improvement schemes for the Market Place and Station Approach.

2.3 To support this programme of works, on 16 July 2020 the Council committed £379,000 of Revenue as match funding. This is ring-fenced for activities including the employment of a Grantham Engagement Manager and the establishment of a 'Grantham Town Team' to act as a strategic body of public, private and third sector partners to support the development of a Town Centre Action Plan. This

team will consider: town centre improvements; the delivery of events and activities to support and increase footfall in the town centre, and the promotion of Grantham as a destination.

- 2.4 When works commenced on the Market Place in May 2024, the council received some negative feedback and concerns from businesses in the vicinity of the works who felt they were being adversely affected. At its Annual Meeting in May, the Council discussed possible measures to support local businesses.
- 2.5 The Council resolved to review the available budget to possibly add to the already identified mitigations and increase activities to promote footfall to the Market Place in the short and medium term. It was agreed that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEOSC) would consider this further at its June meeting.
- 2.6 Alongside a range of measures, the success of these activities will be evaluated against footfall data. This is one of the most reliable sources of information to understand the health and vibrancy of the town centre and is a reporting requirement of the Future High Street Funding.
- 2.7 Footfall data is not available yet for the period of the events, but **Appendix 1** shows the most recent available footfall data (for the period 01/08/24 – 30/09/24). The table below summarises this data. It can be seen that, while weekly visits within the period are volatile, overall footfall has increased by 15% relative to the same period in the previous year. These results have informed the approach to the Action Plan (**Appendix 2**).

Week Commencing	Visits 2023	Visits 2024	
05-Aug	27942	24854	-11%
12-Aug	32804	28340	-14%
19-Aug	24421	27474	13%
26-Aug	14289	30851	116%
02-Sep	29463	37828	28%
09-Sep	17,070	34,150	100%
15-Sep	23549	37299	58%
22-Sep	29145	31549	8%
29-Sep	31818	27789	-13%
Total visits	230,501	280,134	22%

- 2.8 The development of this plan to promote footfall in the Market Place has been discussed by FEOSC on several occasions, most recently in September 2024. At that meeting Officers committed to bring an 'Action Plan' to the November

meeting, which would be developed in conjunction with the Grantham Town Team. The Action Plan would include a fully costed feasibility study that had considered the following potential interventions recommended by FEOSC at the June meeting:

- 1 **Parking:** Free parking on market days/midweek to encourage shoppers.
- 2 **Marketing:** implement a grant scheme to enable better promotions.
- 3 **New Traders** – offer financial incentives to new market traders taking up stalls.
- 4 **Rent** – offer financial support for rent costs for new town centre businesses.
- 5 **Transport** – provision of free buses to Grantham on market days.

2.9 A draft Grantham Town Centre Action Plan (**Appendix 2**) has been prepared to support an overall strategy for Grantham Town Centre, both through the delivery of the scheme and the initial period up to December 2025. The Action Plan has been developed in collaboration with the Grantham Town Team and is fully funded from existing budgets.

2.10 In producing the draft Action Plan, the options put in paragraph 2.8 above have been fully considered. **Appendix 3** to this report contains a summary of this feasibility work and identifies which options have been included within the action plan. For example, providing incentives to market traders has been included however it also identifies where further work is required to understand their viability, such as the provision of free buses on market days.

2.11 During the continuation of the works, up to December 2024, the Action Plan concentrates on maintaining town centre footfall, supporting established businesses, and providing incentives to new market traders during the period of the disruptive highway works. The data shows footfall was not only maintained during this period but generally shows a year-on-year increase.

2.12 The second phase (between January and July 2025) will investigate:

- Additional activity to market the town to a wider regional audience,
- Providing incentives for the occupancy of void retail units,
- Developing a pipeline of potential future 'Regeneration projects', and
- Providing a comprehensive programme of events to further increase footfall.

2.13 A critical element of the Action Plan is to emerge at the end of the period with a longer-term strategy and a 5-year action plan that will sustain and grow footfall in

Grantham Town Centre. This will continue to evolve with the support of a broad partnership of public, private and third sector stakeholders; in collaboration with the Grantham Town Team.

- 2.14 Since the start of the works in the Marketplace there has been continuous support to businesses affected by the roadworks. This is continuing throughout the Station Approach works. This has included regular engagement with businesses and the hosting of two events on the newly completed Market Place. The most recent being the 'Grantham Community Event' on 19 October. This was well attended by a cross-section of the Grantham public and was the culmination of weeks of community engagement involving over 500 residents who participated in workshop activity. All initial feedback has been positive.
- 2.15 One of the options considered has been the introduction of a proposed voucher scheme for Grantham. This has been amended. Prior to the scheme being launched, Grantham retailers have expressed a desire to do their incentive scheme using their own branding. As a result, Officers have offered support to this process and a small budget has been ringfenced on the Action Plan to respond to their needs.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The adoption of an action plan for the medium to long term is vital to sustain the activities that have been started and to ensure Grantham continues to attract visitors.
- 3.2 Grantham Town Team expressed support for the draft Action Plan at a meeting of 4 November 2024.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Further work could be carried out to identify additional activities or actions for the Town Centre Action Plan but this would delay its implementation.
- 4.2 The Council could decide not to adopt an Action Plan but this would fall short of the commitment was part of the original FHSF bid.

Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Delivery of the Grantham Town Centre Action Plan will ensure a collaborative and coordinated approach to sustaining interest and activities in the town centre to ensure Grantham continues to grow and attract visitors. The development of the Action Plan will provide a strategic framework to ensure activities are targeted.

6. Background papers

- 6.1 Report to Cabinet “Future High Street Fund” February 2021; Cabinet [Future High Street Fund.pdf](#)
- 6.2 Report to Full Council “Future High Street Fund”: [Full Council Report FHS July 2020.pdf](#)
- 6.3 Report to Council May 2024 “Grantham Market Place – Possible interventions to encourage footfall and support businesses”; [Grantham Market Place Final Report.pdf](#)
- 6.4 Report to Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee May 2024 “Grantham Future High Streets Fund – May 224 update”; [FINAL FHSF FEOSC Report - 8th May 2024.pdf](#)
- 6.5 Report to Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27 June 2024[Grantham Future High Streets Fund Market Place Footfall Activity.pdf](#)
- 6.6 Report to Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee 17 September 2024; [Footfall Final Version.pdf](#)

7. Appendices

7.1	Appendix 1	Footfall Data Aug – Sep 2024
7.2	Appendix 2	Grantham Town Centre Draft Action Plan
7.3	Appendix 3	Feasibility Study Summary
7.4	Appendix 4	Callconnect Aslackby – Grantham bus timetable
7.5	Appendix 4.1	Callconnect Stamford – Grantham bus timetable
7.6	Appendix 5	Centrebus Saturday timetable