



Council

Date:	24th August 2020
Title:	Experimental Closure of Leighton Buzzard High Street and introduction of One Way on Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard
Purpose of the Report:	To provide Members with background information in support of the question and answer session to be given by the Strategic Transport Manager – Central Bedfordshire Council at this meeting.
Contact Officers:	Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 To note the report

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On 20th May 2020, the Town Clerk received a telephone call from a Central Bedfordshire Council Highways Officer in respects of the potential introduction of a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) for the High Street. Its purpose to restrict vehicular movements within the High Street thereby encouraging pedestrians to return to the town centre on the grounds that social distancing measures could be respected. The rationale being that the removal of traffic would allow:

- i) The twice weekly Charter Market operated by the Town Council to return to the High Street
- ii) The additional space would enable social distancing for businesses to be respected
- iii) Those businesses that wanted to trade outside of their retail premises the ability to do so

2.2 By way of email exchange, the Town Council resolved to support the principle by offering the following statement to the Highways Team at Central Bedfordshire Council:

“In the common interests of businesses, retailers and users of the Town Centre, the Town Council supports any measures that would encourage footfall to return to the High Street. The introduction of a TTRO is

considered a credible measure that would provide retailers and consumers with a level of confidence that social distancing measures could be met. On this basis the Town Council would encourage its introduction as soon as practicable”.

2.3 At the Central Bedfordshire Traffic Management Committee meeting held 9th June 2020, Central Bedfordshire Council resolved to support the experimental closure of Leighton Buzzard High Street and the one way of Lake Street.

2.4 Within the report presented to the Traffic Management Committee, Highways Officers made clear that the TTRO is a temporary measure and subject to constant review. The Order introduced through the emergency Covid-19 powers (afforded by the Department for Transport) allows for the trial to be ceased at any point. Alternatively, the Order can be made permanent if after 18 months it is felt appropriate and supported. The report continues by stating that views are to be sought from the public, key stakeholder’s ward/parish councillors and the police.

3.0 PRESENT SITUATION

3.1 From a market operation perspective, the introduction of the TTRO has been welcomed by the market traders and town council staff responsible for the market operation. The diversion of traffic has made for a safer working environment with the potential conflict between stalls and buses eliminated.

3.2 However, not all users of the High Street share the same views. A proportion of those with limited mobility are finding the lack of parking directly outside of certain High Street retailers and banks a challenge which for some has stopped them visiting the High Street.

3.3 Some High Street retailers welcome the change and others are not supportive.

4.0 LOOKING FORWARD

4.1 As Highways Officers confirm, this is very much an experimental order that can be revoked at any time as well as operational changes made to the way it works. To this end, the Town Council should carefully consider how it may wish to invite public opinion to help inform any recommendations it may wish to make on behalf of the community to Central Bedfordshire Council.

4.2 It is understood that the Head of Place Delivery (Central Bedfordshire Council) will be attending Partnership Committee on 10th September to provide an update on the work his team are doing in respect of High Street improvements. It is assumed that this will include any feedback that CBC has received on the subject.

