

## Partnership Committee

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 February 2015</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Residents' Survey</b>
<b>Purpose of the Report:</b>	<b>To report on the recommendations emerging from the working group's review of the M.e.I. Research, Residents' Survey 2014</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Jo Martindale, Partnership Officer</b>

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### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 **Members are requested to agree in principle the recommendations outlined in section 5 of this report.**
- 1.2 **Should the recommendations be agreed in principle then a more detailed estimation costs of delivery will be brought back to this committee on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015.**

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 During 2013-2014, the Economic Development Sub-Committee put forward the idea of undertaking a survey of local residents. The survey results would provide information on use of the town centre and help inform future decisions on town centre enhancement schemes as well as business support schemes.
- 2.2 At the Partnership Committee meeting held 13 February 2014, the recommendation to undertake a survey was endorsed and funding of up to £10,000 from the 2014-2015 Economic Development budget was approved.
- 2.3 A Tender Specification was developed with assistance from Central Bedfordshire Council officers, detailing the background and context of the brief and requesting that research be undertaken with at least 500 local residents, by telephone and/or face-to-face interviews. The Tender Specification suggested that topics to be covered during interviews should include: how often people visited the town centre, at what time of day, for what purpose, what would make them visit the town centre more often and ideas/suggestions for improvements.
- 2.4 The survey was undertaken during September 2014 and findings were presented to the Economic Development Sub-Committee on 9 October 2014 and the Final report at Partnership Committee on 23 October 2014. In addition

to provision of the raw data obtained during the survey, Consultants made recommendations based on key themes arising from the data captured.

- 2.5 Finally at the Partnership Committee Meeting on 23 October 2014 it was agreed that a small working party be formed in order to analyse the findings in greater detail and agree recommendations for future actions/projects to put forward to the Committee. Those who took part in the working group including Cllr S Cotter (Chairman), Cllr D Hopkin, S Lakin, G Borelli, P Curtis, V Cannon, M Saccoccio, J Martindale plus extending invitations to owners of Ollie Veas (wrap up meeting), G Miller (Entertainment meeting) S MacKay (Markets meeting)

### **3. UPDATE**

- 3.1 The working party have met fortnightly to discuss, evaluate and analyse the survey. The first meeting was held on 10 November 2014 to evaluate the survey and share the understanding of the need for change and improvements. The Working Party used a voting system from a list of key topics following the survey to pin point the key areas for discussions. The working group then used the meetings to discuss and agreed which key factors from these topics would be taken forward as recommendations.

The meetings scheduled were as follows:

- 3.2 3 December 2014 - Communications
- 3.3 15 December 2014 - Markets
- 3.4 5 January 2015 - Car Parks (inc.Parking)
- 3.5 21 January 2015 - Lighting and Entertainment
- 3.6 02 February 2015 - Final Wrap up meeting

### **4 BUDGETS**

- 4.1 The cost to deliver the survey was £9,197 which included the delivery and evaluation and final report and recommendations and carried out by M-e-l Research Limited.
- 4.2 In addition an incentive scheme was offered to attract residents to attend the three focus groups at the Library, White House and AstralPark. Within the budget £750 was budgeted and a group of local Independent retailers joined in the voucher scheme in which residents who attended were given £25 to spend with the independent shops. In total £430 worth of vouchers were distributed to attendees with an expiry date to claim by 1st March 2015.

- 4.3 £10,000 was budgeted for the project and final cost was £9,627.
- 4.4 The working group have identified a number of actions and recommendations. A mixture of budgets and staff/partner capacity will need to be confirmed in order for the recommended actions (Ref. Para 5) to be achieved. To this end Officers have estimated the costs for delivery to guide Committee's decision-making.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Communications:
- a) To secure two variable electronic messaging/signage systems in the Town (Estimated costs for one would be in the region of £6000 plus installation and traffic management costs)
  - b) To establish a Town Centre Social Media strategy
- 5.1 Markets
- a) Update the visual look of the market through branding and uniformed canopy's. (Cross-reference with wider markets review) (Review capital markets budgets)
  - b) Evaluate the current layout of the market to identify possible improvements.
  - c) Review the product offering of the Market and source new traders and increase 'high-end' products.
- 5.2 Car Parks (inc.Parking)
- a) Work with CBC to review the possibility of introducing pay on exit car parks for both Duncombe Drive and the Library/Theatre. (Town Council to discuss costs with CBC)
  - b) Review the local application of the current enforcement strategy for illegally parked vehicles and explore local solutions, e.g. memorandum of understanding between the local authorities for managing market vehicles on High Street.
- 5.3 Lighting
- a) Arrange a full lighting review of the town centre highlighting key issues and costs for replacements and repairs. (Cross-reference with work undertaken to secure future Christmas Lighting schemes). (The Town Council are already working with CBC regarding the lighting issues and evaluating the projects and costs. We aim for this to be funded through the Town Centre delivery Plan project)
  - b) Review outcome form CBC Lighting Replacement programme and highlight lighting areas that need improvements or replacing.
  - c) Research the costs to provide uplighters to historic buildings and trees. Identify key locations. Town Council Officers will explore the costs and locations to deliver this project.

5.4 Entertainment

- a) Increase volume of events and footfall into the town centre. Explore ideas generated by Ollie Vees. (i.e vintage fair, charity rides, Hot Rod events) Review dates, costs and internal resources to aid or deliver specific key events and working with community groups and organisations to assist with delivery of events and where appropriate, e.g. space and theme, integrate within the historic market and specialist events.
- b) Increased themed markets and provide entertainment to enhance the market atmosphere including rural crafts, demonstrations, music, displays etc. To explore budget share between Markets and Partnership Committees pending confirmation of cost estimates and outcome of market review activity.