



Policy and Finance Committee

Agenda Item No: 9

Date:

22 October 2015

Title:

Resident Survey Update

Purpose of the Report:

To provide an update following the Resident Survey actions since Partnership meeting held on 16 April 2015.

Contact Officer:

Jo Martindale, Committee Officer

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

1.1 To note the report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 During 2013/14 the Economic Development Committee recommended the idea of undertaking a survey of local residents resulting in providing key information on use of the town centre and help inform future decisions on town centre enhancement and business support schemes. This was endorsed by the Partnership committee on 13 February 2014 and funding of £10,000 allocated from the Economic Development budget. This survey was outsourced and undertaken during September 2014 and the Partnership Committee agreed to form a working party following the results to analyse findings.

2.2 The Resident Survey Working Group worked to identify five key priority themes with associated actions to focus on. In identifying these themes, the principles were to ensure residents see a response to their feedback and that actions were achievable if not immediately, then in the future as planned.

2.3 The five priority work themes and associated actions were endorsed, with an aim to build them into future work programmes across all Council Committees with the request to allocate delivery budgets and resources. The Partnership Committee allocated £5,000 within the Economic Development budget (504/4571) from 2015/16 budget to contribute towards the projects.

1. Markets
2. Car Parking
3. Lighting
4. Entertainment
5. Communications

- 2.3 A first draft 'Project Action Sheet' was presented to the Partnership Committee on 16 April 2015 identifying proposed officers and organisational leads to be responsible for progressing the work.

3 PROJECT UPDATE

- 3.1 **Markets:** A recommendation went to Policy & Finance Committee on 8 June 2015 regarding the integration of market related ideas including relevant events. It was resolved to endorse the proposals and recommend to the Market Sub-Committee to take these forward, utilising the existing budget where possible and bringing any recommendations for future work programmes and budgets back to the Policy and Finance Committee (Autumn 2015).

- Work on establishing a market brand/logo has commenced.
- A first draft programme of themed activities for 2016/17 is underway. The recent Great British Food Fortnight campaign was used to launch a new regular street food quarter.
- New traders have attended the market expanding the variety of products.
- Exploring alternative layouts is more complicated (traffic issues, historic trader pitch spaces, access to electricity, etc). It is hoped that an opportunity will come forward via Central Bedfordshire Council's Market Town Fund to support the development of this.

3.2 Car Parks:

Introduction to pay on exit car parks for Dunombe Drive & Library/Theatre car parks – Parking review has been carried out by CBC. It is intended that the full parking study document will be presented to the Partnership committee in due course.

3.3 Lighting:

A lighting feasibility study on the Mews areas was undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council in January 2015 at the cost of £450. An evaluation report was made available to LLTC at the beginning of March 2015.

A number of lighting projects have already been committed to and await completion.

- Bell Alley – increase luminosity of lanterns and use 'white light' bulbs.
- High Street lamp posts - as above (Using budget 970/9027)
- Peacock Alley – improved infrastructure and additional lighting. Awaiting completion of works.

In July, exploratory discussions took place with CBC's highways contractor about utilising existing building mounted lights to respond to the ambition to light up town centre architectural features. After research, these lights were

deemed not fit for purpose. The next action will be to draft a project scope and obtain quotes.

In addition, CBC's contractor will commence work (week beginning 11th January 2016) on improvements to the Market Cross up-lighters. This will be paid for with CBC's Highways contract budget.

- 3.4 **Entertainment:** A recommendation went to the Leisure and Community Committee on 1 June 2015 to consider actions relating to community events. It was agreed there was no current budget or resources available to consider a wider programme of events. However, the Committee agreed for further background work to be undertaken and recommendations for 2016/17 budget would be brought back to the committee (Autumn 2016). It was resolved to endorse integration of the Entertainment themed actions arising from the 2014 residents' survey into the future work programme of the Committee.

3.5 **Communications:**

It was agreed to establish a social media strategy (yet detail of what that involves and aims to achieve is still to be scoped). The next step is to convene a working group to commence work. It is important that wider partners are involved - an idea was to create a protocol for sharing and promoting information to ensure a good 'reach' of social media users.

As part of extending the communication within the town it is an idea to install two variable electronic messaging boards in the town to communicate information including events and traffic etc. Quotes are currently being sourced by Town Council Officers. Ear marked Reserves, Town Centre Management budget (970/9027) had initially been identified to put towards the cost estimated at £10,000 for one. Once the estimated costs have been received and potential locations decided upon, an update will be presented to the committee to review.

In addition to this, research continues into the project of displaying lamp post banner advertising across West Street to increase publicity of events and Town Council news. An initial discussion took place with CBC Communications team. However more detailed information is required into planning permission and cost of the banners. This is work in progress and the aim is to have the banners ready before the summer of 2016. A budget of £6,000 has been allocated through Town Centre Management Ear Mark Reserved (970/9027)

4 **NEXT STEPS**

Town Council officers will continue to work with Central Bedfordshire Council on the delivery of the projects whilst continuing research and obtaining quotes. Regular updates on these projects will be brought to the committee when and where possible. Both the recommendation results from Policy & Finance and Leisure and Community will also be included within these updates.

5 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 It is essential that the above actions are embedded within wider work programmes to ensure the capacity to deliver these projects, along with sufficient budgets. These projects will continue within officer's work plans into 2016/17.