

Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Date: 7 December 2020

Title: General Service Updates

Purpose of the Report: To inform Committee of work activity

Contact Officer: Vivien Cannon. Head of Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Corporate Objective/s: LLTC Five Year Plan VIBRANCY AND VITALITY OF THE TOWN CENTRE: To continue to support a vibrant town through partnership working and initiatives including management of the street markets, support for local businesses, town and community promotions and town centre enhancements.		
Implications:		
Financial	Yes	
Human Resources		
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	Update information
Procedural/Legal		
Risk/Health and Safety		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

- 1.1 To utilise the remaining allocated Town Centre Promotion earmarked Budget, (970/ 9018) £1,609.80 to create a Town Centre promotional video, as per para 3.11.1.
- 1.2 To allocate the remainder of the Living History Trail funding of £11,608 (925/9506), to fund the transfer of The Sands of Time (edited version) onto the Buzzard Trails App. and additional promotional materials to continue the Buzzard Trail promotion.

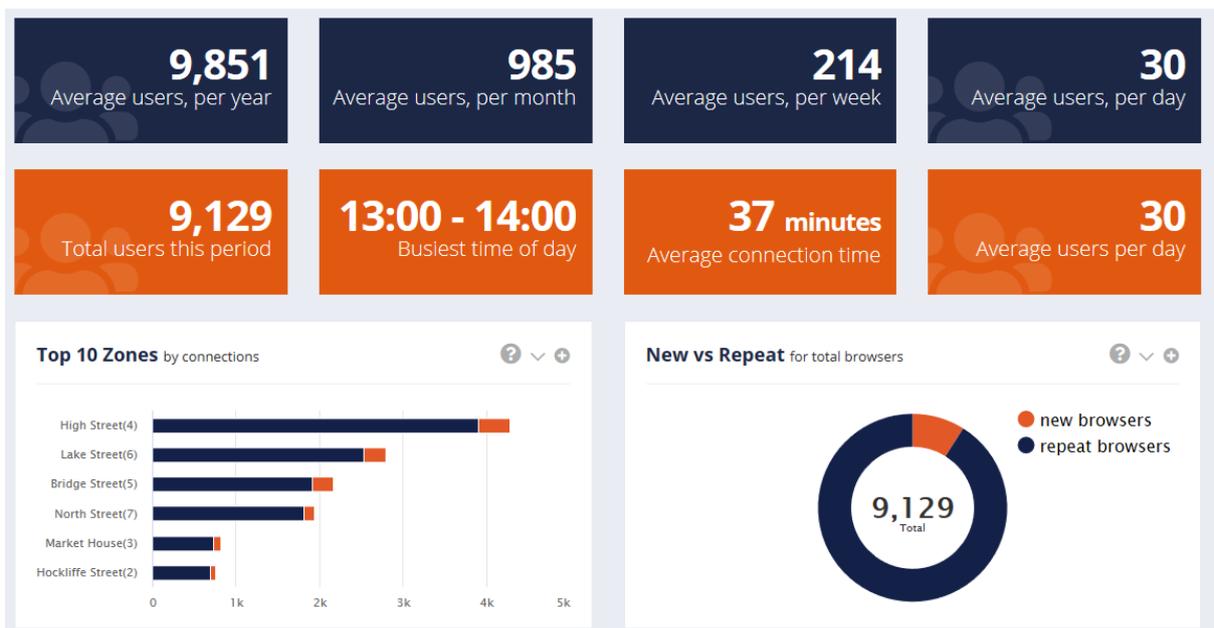
2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The activities and responsibilities of the Cultural and Economic Service (C&E) are broad and diverse. Below are brief updates on service activity to inform Committee of projects completed and ongoing.

3 INFORMATION

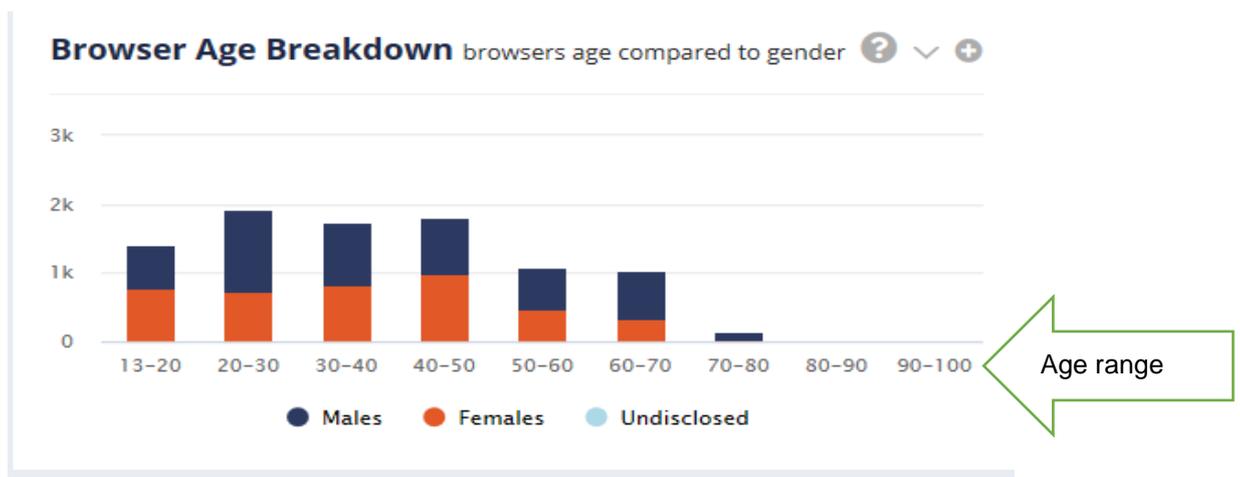
3.2 Town Centre Wi-Fi

3.2.1 Free WiFi facilitates use of the internet. Below is the internet user report from install, Thursday 2 January to Saturday 31 October 2020.

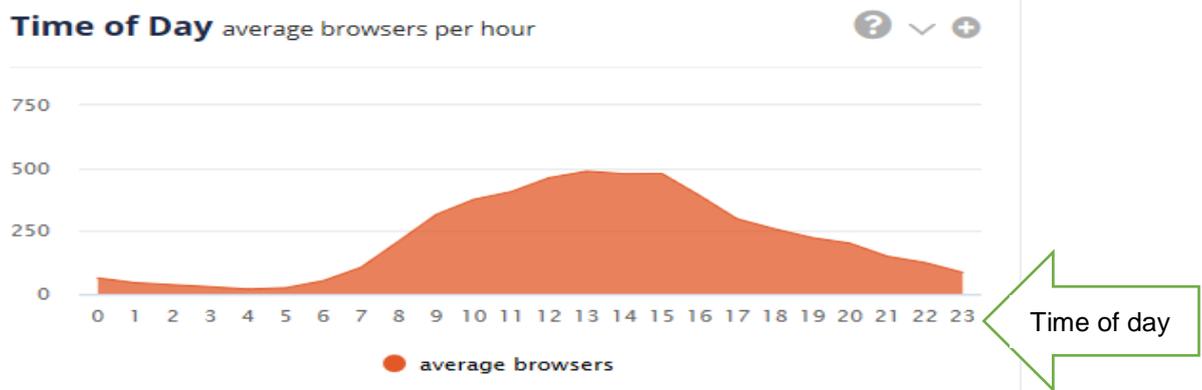


Note: The total user figure is **9,129** of which 8,310 (91%) are repeat browsers and 819 (9%) are new by the last date of the report period.

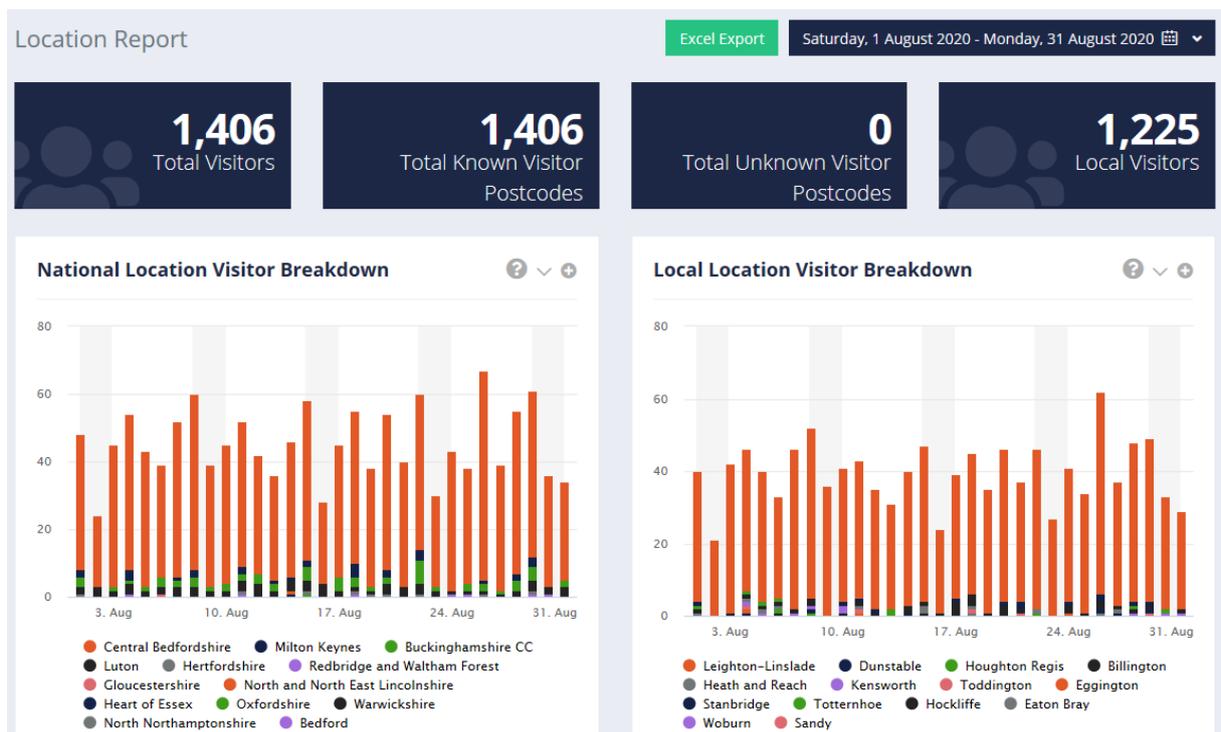
3.2.2 The browser user age breakdown for the same period is below.



3.2.3 Internet browser average time of day usage is below. It reflects footfall visit times.



3.2.4 The below details give Committee a sample location breakdown of where visitors register their main post code when signing up to the service for the month of August 2020. Of the 1,406 total visitors, 1,225 provide a local postcode. Local is



Note: By way of a detailed example of visitor locations, the date for the highest WiFi registered devices is Wednesday 26th August. The breakdown of locations shown for this date is shown below:

National Location



Local Location (Central Beds area)



3.3 Town Centre Geo-Sense – footfall monitoring

3.3.1 There are 4 active Geo-Sensors coexisting with the WiFi equipment. Monthly visit comparisons provided up to 31st October are provided in the table below:

Month 2020	Average visits per day	Total month visits	Have visited previously	New visitors	Increase / decrease visits from previous month	Comments
January	7947	246347	118692 (48%)	127655 (52%)	+5428.43%	Kit installed
February	8182	237269	142035 (60%)	95234 (40%)	+3.83%	
March	6148	190574	118844 (62%)	71730 (38%)	-22.64%	Covid restrictions
April	3885	116549	60558 (52%)	55991 (48%)	-38.84%	
May	4391	136118	69032 (51%)	67086 (49%)	+16.79%	Food market in Library car park
June	5210	153286	80354 (51%)	75932 (49%)	+14.82%	Easing of Covid restrictions / Market moved to High St.
July	5880	147006	76446 (52%)	70560 (48%)	-5.94%	One week's kit outage
August	6418	198943	102953 (52%)	95990 (48%)	+35.33%	
September	5953	178599	105104 (59%)	73495 (41%)	-10.23%	Schools back
October	4940	153133	95905 (63%)	57228 (37%)	-14.26%	
November						Covid restrictions / Restricted market

December					
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3.3.2 The table below compares the monthly average dwell time and busiest time of the day.

Month 2020	Average dwell time - minutes	Busiest time of the day	Comments
January	20	11.00 – 12.00	Kit installed
February	21	12.00 – 13.00	
March	21	11.00 – 12.00	Covid restrictions
April	21	11.00 – 12.00	
May	19	11.00 – 12.00	Food market in Library car park
June	18	12.00 – 13.00	Easing of Covid restrictions / Market in High St
July	18	14.00 – 15.00	One week's kit outage
August	16	14.00 - 15.00	
September	17	11.00 – 12.00	Schools back
October	19	10.00 – 11.00	
November			Covid restrictions / Restricted market
December			

3.3.3 At present, the Council collating data for its first baseline year, all be it an unusual one.

3.4 Architectural Lighting

3.4.1 With most permissions and background work confirmed, a tentative timescale for delivery is in place which takes the project into early 2021 (as previously reported). It recently emerged that All Saints Church is hosting some bats which is a protected species. All parties are positively collaborating, and officers anticipate work can still go ahead.

3.5 Electronic signage

3.5.1 New software has been purchased and installed to facilitate the programming of messages in advance. It is hoped this will provide flexibility in messaging and help the Corporate Governance and Central Services administration team manage the activity.

3.5.2 The sign on the by-pass remains unused and awaits relocation.

3.6 Section 106 approved projects

3.6.1 Of the four projects agreed by Committee, the road barrier for the High St remains outstanding. The aim was to undertake exploration and fund any

feasibility activity needed with the assistance of Central Bedfordshire Council Highway officers. With the experimental Temporary Traffic Road Order (TTRO) in place in the Town Centre, no action is being planned. Officers will use the experience and learning of Central Bedfordshire Council's Traffic Management service to assess how the existing temporary barriers have fared and what is planned for the future of the Town Centre.

3.7 Public Convenience (Multi-Storey Car Park)

3.7.1 Officers have been notified that Central Bedfordshire Council has postponed the installation of a Changing Places facility. Work on the redrafted lease has been completed and until such time that there is a need to formally accept it, it remains with CBC.

3.7.2 We continue to manage safe access to the public conveniences in keeping with Covid Secure guidelines. The facilities remain open during this second national lockdown period as per Government guidelines.

3.8 Community Defibrillators

3.8.1 Throughout lockdown, the Council's volunteer has continued to undertake regular inspections and report them on the online Webnos system which is part of the national database of defibrillators used to inform the emergency services of their locations. The Webnos site is run by The Community Heartbeat Trust which is a charitable organisation. Apart from some wear and tear with the ageing cabinets, all equipment remains in good working order.

3.9 Lamp Column Banners

3.9.1 Three years have passed since the banner fixings were first installed and many have fared well. Replacement fixes are due to be installed in readiness for new banners to go up.

3.10 Town Centre Promotion / Welcome Back Campaign.

3.10.1 The campaign delivery consisted of 7 parts and a budget of up to £5,000 (970/9018), was allocated to facilitate the activities. See below table providing update summary. The proposal is to use unallocated budget for a short promotional video for the Town Centre.

Activity	Budget allocation	Actual spend	Comments / Update
Pictorial promotion of Town Centre	0	0	On-line campaign on Town Centre-slide show delivered. Redirected existing contracted Market Support staff hours.
Town shopping adverts	£2,000	£1,250	Advert on side of bus service vehicles ran for 12wks from 1 st Aug.
Town Centre Logo		£200	Commissioned illustrator for finalisation work and redirected exiting contracted staff hours.

Shopping vouchers	£1,000	£650	148x £5 vouchers issues, 18x £5 voucher unused, 30x retailers signed up to the scheme, of which, 19 exchanged vouchers. Redirected existing contracted Market Support staff hours.
Children's shop front trail	£500	£368.20	This became the Spooktacular Halloween Train on Oct half term. Delivery by Events team
Best Independent Shop Window Display competition.	£300	£300 TBC	Ongoing for December delivery - 1st prize £110, 2nd prize £90, and 3rd prize £50 <u>TOTAL £250</u> <i>Considering purchase of Trophy - £50.</i> Delivery by Events team.
Cotton shopping bags.	£1,500	£622	Ongoing sales: On sale in 4 shops at £2 each. 50x bags donated to TACTIC's older Person's Christmas boxes. All income for sales going to Mayor's Charities.
Total	£5,300	£3,390.20	Remaining funds of £1,609.80 to be used to fund a video celebrating Town Centre retailers.

3.10.2 Of the potential £1,000 worth of vouchers available to issue, £740 was the actual amount issued, of which **£650 was redeemed**. It is not unexpected for some vouchers to remain unredeemed. Those shops who had vouchers spent with them said they appreciated that customers chose their shop to spend their vouchers in. It was a moral boost and a practical act of interest in their products. The only less favourable feedback is that shops would have liked a longer lead-in period for them to help promote the scheme during the competition period. The scheme raised awareness of and celebrated, local retailers. It encouraged visits and spend in the town. Officers believe there would be business support to repeat the scheme in the future.

3.10.3 The reusable Town Centre logo bags are currently being promoted as a good stocking filler for Christmas. Fifty bags have been included in the TACTIC centre's older persons Christmas food boxes, and 3 shops are currently collaborating with the Council by making them available to buy from their shop. Income raised through the sale at £2 each is donated to the Mayor's charities. The bags serve as a subliminal reminder and celebration of the Town Centre offer.

3.10.4 The Events team delivered the children's shop window Halloween Trail during half term. Feedback from parents was that the trail took them to places they had not seen before in the town. The Halloween trail map has been downloaded **143** times.

3.10.5 The best dress shop window competition invitation to retailers was sent out in early November and the deadline for entries is 25th November 5.00pm. The public launch to encourage people to view dressed windows will be on 3rd December and judging will take place on 13th December. This is the last element of the Welcome Back campaign.

3.11 Small Business Saturday

3.11.1 Small Business Saturday (SBS) falls on Saturday 5th December. This year, Officers are collaborating with two local businesses who have successfully caught the eye of the national campaign. These businesses are liaising with the national SMS contacts to establish local activity that links into the SMS virtual bus tour. Details will be shared with Members prior to the weekend which will be before this Committee meeting.

3.11.2 Given the number of activities taking place on this weekend - SBS, the Charity Christmas Gift market, Christmas lights being on, best dressed window competition and that we have a new business website and a directories recently launched by partner organisations, coupled with the fact that we all anticipate a loosening of current restrictions, Officers have been working on a two-day hire of a moving digital imaging van to promote the Town Centre, local businesses and utilise as part of the town centre based activity over the weekend. See image below:



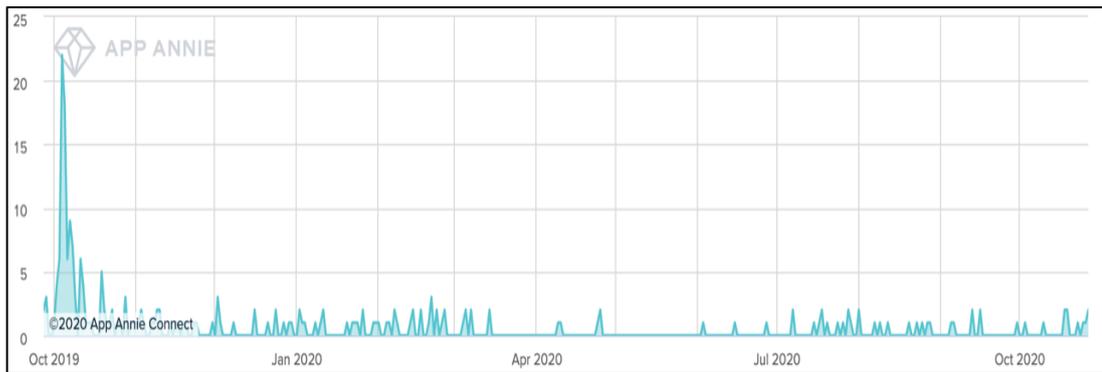
When not situated in the Town Centre, the van will be given a route around the town and beyond to advertise/promote Leighton Buzzard.

The digitally enabled 3x sides of the van allows messages to be changed and interactive activities to be developed.

3.12 Buzzard Trails

3.12.1 The Living History Trail was launched in October 2019. The online app. platform was named Buzzard Trails to allow more trails to be added to the app. The Children's Trail was therefore added. Between October 2019 – and October 2020, the usage figure stands at **575** downloads (iOS – 318 and Android – 257).

3.12.2 Promotion of the history trail has been low key, specifically evident during the first Covid-19 lockdown period of March to June to encourage people to stay at home. Recently, the promotional message is to enjoy the Trail's online version whilst staying at home.



3.12.3 The overall budget allocated for the History Trail and app. development was £40k. The remaining balance is £11,608. The Children’s Trail was added to the app. The app. was purchased in a format to accommodate more trails. The proposal is to add an edited version of the Sands of Time Trail (created by The Greensand Trust) to the app. and ensure this trail is more frequently accessed and access to the Town’s broader history is shared.

3.12.4 The need to promote the trail app. continues and officers propose to invest in further promotional items and printing, etc. utilising the same remaining budget referenced above.

3.13. About Town

3.13.1 Committee will be aware that the editing and creation of the About Town newsletter is coordinated by the service. Officers collate information provided by all services areas. Over the last year, the ‘Focus On’ articles have been written by a Town Centre business owner of Latte Dah. He reports that he has enjoyed learning about the Town Centre whilst drafting the articles and that it has been an eye opener for him as he did not know the extent of services and shops on offer. His own learning reflects how important it has been to share the detail of the Town Centre offer with existing and new residents. Moving forward, Officers have approached the Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society to start a regular mystery historical object article. This will expand on the Council’s interest in supporting the promotion of the Town’s history.

4. SUMMARY

4.1 Much of the above work is ongoing service activity. In this first year of having the WiFi and Geo Sense footfall facilities, Committee will learn how best to utilise the data to assist its decision-making.

4.2 Committee’s Welcome back campaign activity has been welcomed by local retailers. Committee is well placed to continue to develop its working relationship with retailers and businesses over the coming year as the Town continues to feel the impact of Covid.

End