



Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Date: 1 March 2021

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	Annual budget
Human Resources		
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	Service updates
Procedural/Legal		
Risk/Health and Safety		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

- 1.1 To endorse an open completion date, within the financial year 2021/22, for Pigeon Management Grant applicants who occupy a listed building to enable them to gain consent for works, as per para 3.8.3.
- 1.2 To recommend to Policy and Finance to carry forward underspend of £2,000 from Buzzard Trails (4509/101) to earmarked reserve (9018/970) to fund annual maintenance to the Children’s Trail, as per para 3.10.1.

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 for January 2021.

	Total registrations / marketing consent	Monthly registrations	Weekly registrations	Daily registrations
Average	1,197 / 522	92	21	3
Actual	29 / 15	29	7	1

3.3 Town Centre Geo-Sense – footfall monitoring

3.3.1 Committee will now be able to start comparing the first full year of data with this second year which commenced in January, the anniversary of installing the footfall kit. The influence of Covid -19 is evident.

Month	Average visits per day 2020	Average visits per day 2021	Comments
January	7947	2752	Lockdown

3.3.2 The complete first year of baseline data is 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	4085	122549	14746 (61%)	47803 (39%)	-19.97%	Covid restrictions / Restricted market
December	4215	130671	78654 (60%)	52017 (40%)	-26.37%	
January 2021	2752	85298	52812 (62%)	32486 (38%)	-188.81%	Lockdown / restricted market

3.4 Architectural Lighting

3.4.1 Officers await the outcome of the planning application for works in Waterborne Walk having responded to requests for additional technical drawings. Central Bedfordshire Officers (CBC) confirmed acceptance to utilise funds originally held for the All-Saints Church and the Sue Ryder building on alternative town centre locations as previously requested by Committee and this will include the Flypast Monument, Bridge Street and Town Centre trees. Works have been commissioned and pending fair weather, should be completed in spring this year.

3.4.2 In addition to the above, and as requested by Committee, Officers are researching the steps needed to install up-lighting of the War Memorial in Church Square. This was registered as a scheduled monument in August 2020 which means no work can complete until appropriate listed consent has been secured. A paper will go to Transport and Planning to seek formal permission to progress the works which will require detailed drawings, submission to advisory bodies for comments prior to applying for Listed Building Consent. The approximate cost of this work including installation will be £8k, from existing project matched funds.

3.5 Electronic signage

3.5.1 Officers are liaising with CBC to transfer the bypass located sign to a new location along Hockliffe Road. CBC confirmed acceptance to utilise remaining market town regeneration grant funds and Council's match funding monies to pay for the cost of transfer.

3.6 Public Convenience (Multi-Storey Car Park)

3.6.1 Following the disappointing news that CBC would not be installing a Changing Places Facility, Officers have contacted CBC colleagues to encourage them to seek alternative funding opportunities, e.g., s106 funds or grant funds.

3.7 Pigeon Management Grant Scheme

- 3.7.1 At the time of writing this report, six applications had been received. The buildings occupied by applicants ranged from being non-conservation listed to Grade I and II listed. The applicants were asked to explore the implications of installing pigeon proofing kit on their buildings. One applicant withdrew their application as a result.
- 3.7.2 Officers have been undertaking background explorations to see what kit and methods of fixings would be acceptable to CBC planning officers. The exploration is ongoing at the time of writing the report.
- 3.7.3 In presenting to the applications to the Town Clerk, Committee Chair and Vice Chair, officers recommended that in the circumstance that a building is listed, grants be awarded on a conditional basis to ensure the budget is allocated yet allow the applicant time to secure consent for works. This is likely to extend the completion date for works agreed by Committee as 30th April 2021. For this reason, officers recommend that an open completion date, within the 2021/22 financial year is given to those applicants.

3.8. About Town

- 3.8.1 The service oversees the publication of the About Town newsletter with a dedicated budget line in Committee's cost centre. There is an underspend this year because officers have reduced the number of printed copies in circulation. This is because not all our regular distribution venues have been open or are willing to accept printed information due to Covid-19, e.g., the train station is not currently accepting them, and this is usually a good pick-up point for residents.
- 3.8.2 Colleagues have stepped-up the promotion for people to sign-up to receive an electronic version as a result with 409 people currently registered. Advertising that people can read it directly on the Council's website is also taking place. Downloads from the website are generally around 30-35 on the month of publishing and 15-20 on the subsequent month. We had a boom in downloads in September with 56 downloads that month. These figures occasionally include a few downloads of older issues. Council's communications update reports go to Policy and Finance Committee.

3.9 Greensand Gateway

- 3.9.1 The Greensand Ridge Walk and Cycleway Gateway Feature project, led by The Greensand Trust, has been in abeyance over the last year whilst issues of grant funds and liaison with the artist where being dealt with. The Town Council is a member of the steering group through this Committee. The project is again up and running with a newly confirmed artist and additional grant funds being confirmed. Work focuses around the 'entertainment' circle at the Bridge Street end of the High Street. New draft plans will be worked up and a timescale for completion by 31st July 2021.

3.10 Buzzard Trails

3.10.1 The Children's Trail needs some regular maintenance. Both the Living History and Children's Trail now fall in the same budget code used for promotional products and general maintenance. The Children's trail incurs more wear and tear. Committee is asked to carry forward underspend of £2,000 from Buzzard Trails (4509/101) to fund annual maintenance to the Children's Trail.

3.10.2 Uploads of Buzzard Trails:

- iOS - 339 (22 more since 9th Nov)
- Android - 279 (22 more since 9th Nov)

4. SUMMARY

4.1 Architectural lighting project work should reach a conclusion in the first half of the calendar year. The up lighting of War Memorial in Church Square will need to be taken through a process commencing with formal consent via Transport and Planning Committee to progress the work needed.

4.2 A resolution to the electric signage situation draws near with CBC and the Town Council officers pushing work forwards to secure relocation of the sign.

4.3 The Pigeon Management Grant scheme will take longer to complete given the nature of the buildings within the conservation townscape.

End