



## Cultural and Economic Services Committee

**Date:** 13 December 2021

**Title:** General Service Updates

**Purpose of the Report:** To inform Committee of service work activity.

**Contact Officer:** Vivien Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic Services

<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>	<b>LLTC Five Year Plan – Aim 3.</b> Vibrancy and Vitality of Town and Town centre
<b>Implications:</b>	
<b>Financial</b>	Yes. Utilising annual budgets and earmarked reserves
<b>Human Resources</b>	
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>	Yes. Service work updates
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	
<b>Risk/Health and Safety</b>	
<b>Environmental Aims</b>	Yes. Temporary Children’s Trail in Linslade Recreation has a theme of children’s stories about the environmental importance of trees.

### 1 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Should members be minded, the recommendation are:**

1.1 To allocate up to £1,500 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) towards delivery of Black History Month activities to be undertaken during 2022.

1.2 To allocate up to £3,000 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) for undertaking enhancements to town centre signage/waymarking.

1.3 To allocate up to £2,000 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) for work to update and print the publication town centre Shops and Services Map and Directory.

1.3 To instruct officers to request the drawing down of S106 public art funds from Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver town centre branding enhancements.

## 2 SERVICE UPDATES

### 2.1 Town centre Wi-Fi

2.1.2. The table below shows visitors per month during 2021. WiFi has 1,346 registrations as of 30/11/21.

Month	Monthly registrations	Weekly registrations	Daily registrations	Comments
January	29	7	1	31 days
February	28	9	1	28 days
March	57	14	2	31 days
April	85	21	3	30 days 12 April 2021, non-essential trade reopened
May	87	22	3	31 days
June	121	30	4	30 days
July	127	32	4	31 days
August	91	23	3	31 days
September	103	26	4	30 days
October	105	26	4	31 days
November	113	28	4	30 days

### 2.2 Town Centre Geo-Sense, footfall monitoring

2.1 Committee is now able to compare the first full year of data with this second year. The anniversary date for going live with the footfall kit is 2<sup>nd</sup> January (2020).

Month	<u>Average visitors per day 2020</u>	<u>Average visitors per day 2021</u>	Comments
January	7947	<b>2752</b>	31 days
February	8182	<b>3117</b>	28 days
March	6146	<b>3407</b>	31 days
April	3885	<b>4021</b>	30 days 12 April 2021, non-essential trade reopened
May	4391	<b>3999</b>	31 days
June	5210	<b>3948</b>	30 days

<b>July</b>	5880	<b>3457</b>	31 days
<b>August</b>	6418	<b>3069</b>	31 days
<b>September</b>	5953	<b>3505</b>	30 days
<b>October</b>	4940	<b>4213</b>	31 days
<b>November</b>	4085	<b>4229</b>	30 days

2.2 Monthly footfall statistics for November show that the High Street was the busiest zone. The Christmas Festival Friday evening drew a very large crowd. However, the Friday evening is not recorded as having the highest attendance during November. Market days continue to have on average the higher footfall count with 30/11/21 showing the highest. .

### 2.3 Pigeon Management Grant Scheme

2.3.1 Eleven properties with Grade II status require Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to grant Listed Building Consent prior to starting the works. The most recent update is that CBC will need to confirm to those seeking pre-application advice that Listed Building Consent is required for all installations not replacing those already in existence, i.e. where new pigeon management systems are being installed. CBC is aware of the extended deadline for applicants of 31 March 2022 to secure the consent.

### 2.4 Greensand Ridge Walk and Cycleway Gateway Feature

2.4.1 The Greensand Country Gateway Feature project, led by The Greensand Trust, (TGT), successfully recruited artist Stephen Pardue of Differentia in June. Having visited the town and undertaken some initial survey work, it is expected that Stephen will provide draft designs imminently.

## **4 BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

4.1 Black History Month (BHM) activities enjoyed a positive response from those engaged in them. Following the earlier collaboration between Leighton-Linslade Carnival, Centre for Carnival Arts UK and the Town Council towards celebrating Carnival traditions in July, BHM was launched by the Town Mayor on 02/10/21. A presentation by local a resident entitled, Sugar and Spice and All Things Nice; the Then, Now and In-between. The presenter gave a personal perspective to Black History and how Black people came to be in the UK. Over 30 people attended the presentation held in Trinity Methodist Church (TMC). A local photographer volunteered to record the presentation and a post-event article was published in the Leighton Buzzard Observer.

4.2 The Council's About Town newsletter provided dedicated space for information promoting BHM and following the launch was a series of four two-hour sessions on

racism facilitated by a third volunteer. These sessions were moved to the TMC because attendee numbers exceeded TACTIC capacity. Notably, two attendees were teachers from a local school who posted a message about how helpful it was in developing their knowledge and awareness of equality issues. This, along with attendance numbers provides a tangible outcome of influence for the BHM activities delivered.

4.3 To add to this outcome is that post-delivery, officers received contact from the Hon. President of the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain. This is a Council of ethnic minority Churches, mainly African and Caribbean. The contact had worked on the Working Group about the Transatlantic Traffic in Enslaved Africans and is interested in collaborating on future activities. The Honorary President has proposed that the Council could hire the exhibition about the legacy of the slave trade created by the Movement for Justice and Reconciliation. A donation to cover hire and transport would be required at approximately £500.



4.4 A post event report which can be found at [Appendix A](#), **attached**. The author proposes that delivery for BHM continue for future years.

4.5 In delivering BHM alongside residents, it was identified that delivery of activities during 2021 aimed to raise awareness of BHM, the issues of racism and celebration of Black members of our community. The approach of working with community members was to assist the Council to undertake meaningful activity and build a relationship with its community. In turn, the community could be supported in future years to continue the delivery of BHM. There is clear interest in building on the work and Committee is asked to consider allocating up to £1,500 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) towards BHM activities to be undertaken during 2022.

## 5 CHILDREN'S TRAIL

5.1 Cedars Upper School Art tutors are working with a group of young people to make artworks inspired by three stories all based on trees which will be attached to the trees as a temporary 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trail in Linslade Recreation Ground. The book titles are:

- Mama Miti - Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya - By Donna Jo Napoli
- Because Of An Acorn – Lola M. Schaefer and Adam Schaefer

- The Lorax – by Dr Suess

5.2 Stories based on trees were chosen because the artworks are to be attached to the trees and because trees have great environmental importance for sustaining life which attunes to the Councils Environmental Ambitions.

5.3 An installation and launch date is yet to be confirmed due to the school managing staff illness and unable to confirm an exact finish date for the artworks. Given that that trees in the recreation ground are due an early pruning and may not be looking their best in the early part of the year, a spring or early summer launch would be preferable.

## **7 WELCOME BACK FUND**

7.1 Work is ongoing:

- Regular entertainments have taken place in the town centre throughout September through December with one larger event planned for 10/12/21.
- Town centre businesses have been encouraged to sign up to a Town Council communication database allowing the Council to provide direct updates on activities taking place. The communication tool will continue beyond the period of funding and its aim is to improve dialogue and awareness about what the Council does in support of the town centre.
- Benches, following significant delivery delays arrived week commencing 07/12/21. At the time of writing, officers are liaising with CBC confirming their placement.
- The Welcome Back letter sent to all households informing residents about the wealth of services and activities offered in the town centre is now being distributed to surrounding villages. As a market town, it is understood that hinterland residents look to Leighton Buzzard for their services and shopping.
- The logo printed bags continue to be bought and the Council is assisted by three town centre businesses making bags available for sale. The logo printed and biodegradable wrapped tissues were successfully distributed to residents throughout the Christmas Festival weekend with many people responding “how handy tissues were”. Tissues were chosen as an encouragement to contain coughs and colds.
- Temporary, movable animal shaped benches will be bought to provide story-telling spaces throughout the year in celebration of the Children’s Trail 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

7.2 Delivery work continues up to 31 March 2022.

## **8 S106 PUBLIC ART CONTRIBUTION**

8.1 Approved development at Grovebury Retail Park included a planning condition for the provision of public art. The developer did not intend to install public art within

the Grovebury development and suggested a financial contribution towards public art elsewhere in Leighton-Linslade to the sum of £5,000.

8.2 In October 2018, officers were contacted by the CBC officer responsible for overseeing public art contributions asking for ideas on its use. Several ideas were shared yet no further contact was received. Officers followed up the contact and were recently advised that the contribution is now available to be released.

8.3 Officers propose that the above S106 fund is used to further embed the Town centre branding/logo to continue the work of supporting the town centre and its businesses. The idea being to add the logo in metal form to the top of the 4/5 town centre maps signs, (2x High Street, 1x Duncombe Drive car park, 1x Hockliffe Street car park and 1x Waterborne Walk). Costs are yet to be secured yet should there be enough funding remaining, it is proposed to paint the logo on the side of the market lock-up in Bell Alley to enhance a town centre entrance. Other locations are also being sought. The support and collaboration from landlords will be required. Pavement signage like that used for the Living History Trail would also be considered and would link with the desire to improve waymarking.

8.4 Committee is asked to consider the above proposal. Should Members be minded to support the resolution, officers would apply to CBC to draw down the S106 funds and commence securing costs.

## **9 TOWN CENTRE SIGNAGE/WAYMARKING AND PROMOTION**

9.1 With much work being delivered on promoting the town centre businesses, Councillors and Officers alike have identified that signage and waymarking could yet be improved within the town centre. Managing the introduction of waymarking needs to balance the potential for introducing more clutter by way of street furniture into the town centre with the need for enabling visitors to navigate the area. The town centre is not overly hard to navigate yet businesses off the main High Street, as those on it, fight for attention and use A' Boards, etc. to draw visitor's attention.

9.2 The town centre sign and map in Waterborne Walk was temporarily removed as it was believed it provided a nuisance behaviour route onto roof tops. Now that more robust deterrent barriers have been installed, it can be reinstalled.

9.3 As per above, para 8.3, it is proposed that rather than install more street furniture signage, thermoplastic signage is put on pavements at key walking route junctions to provide waymarking, as well as some strategically placed signage. This will complement the ongoing signage enhancements in alley ways and mews areas that has so far been undertaken in Friday Street and Peacock Mews.

9.4 Committee is asked to allocate up to £3,000 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) for undertaking enhancements to town centre signage/waymarking.

9.5 In addition, it is proposed to update the Town Centre Shops and Services Map and Directory publication. Committee is asked to allocate up to £2,000 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) for this work.

## **10 STAFFING**

10.1 As part of the annual budget setting process, the Head of Service reviewed service staffing budgets and workload. There are many actions identified above that require more than the financial resources to ensure they are delivered. At its meeting on 11/10/21, Personnel Committee endorsed the creation of a new job post of Cultural and Economic Support Officer on a substantive contract for up to 20 hours per week (subject to evaluation). Job evaluation has been undertaken and the job post will be advertised shortly. The additional officer will assist with developing the Buzzard Trail, history activity and town centre-based enhancements such as those listed above.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

11.1 Committee is often reminded that its services are broad and diverse, and delivery requires time. The additional staff resource goes towards ensuring the work tasks can be delivered in a timely way with an appropriate level of attention.

11.2 Many of the above work proposals and activities draw on Committee's earmarked reserves. Careful consideration of future activities will be needed prior to being put forward should they have a budgetary element.

End