



Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Date: 14 March 2022

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

Corporate Objective/s	LLTC Five Year Plan – Aim 3. Vibrancy and Vitality of town and town centre
Implications:	
Financial	Yes. Utilising annual budgets and earmarked reserves
Human Resources	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes. Service work updates
Procedural/Legal	
Risk/Health and Safety	
Environmental Aims	

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

1.1 To note the report

1.2 To extend the deadline for completing pigeon management installation works to 30 June 2022.

1.3 To carry forward unspent funds from Buzzard Trails (101/4509), into earmarked reserves 970/9018 and to create a single earmarked reserves budget line for Buzzard Trails to ensure adequate funds are available for the upkeep of all trail assets.

1.4 To carry forward unspent funds from Christmas lights (101/4412), into earmarked reserves 970/9044 to ensure adequate funds are available for infrastructure maintenance and ongoing delivery of the scheme.

2 SERVICE UPDATES

2.1 WiFi

2.1.2 The table below shows comparison figures for the two full calendar years of 2020 and 2021 for monthly, weekly and daily WiFi registrations.

Month	Monthly registrations	Monthly registrations	Weekly registrations	Weekly registrations	Daily registrations	Daily registrations	Number of days per month
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	
January	34	19	9	5	1	1	31 days
February	12	28	3	9	0	1	29 days / 28 days
March	9	57	2	14	0	2	31 days
April	6	85	2	21	0	3	30 days
May	4	87	1	22	0	3	31 days
June	2	121	1	30	0	4	30 days
July	16	127	4	32	1	4	31 days
August	20	91	5	23	1	3	31 days
September	29	103	7	26	1	4	30 days
October	23	105	6	26	1	4	31 days
November	34	113	9	28	1	4	30 days
December	46	91	12	23	2	3	31 days

2.1.3 Use of WiFi is slow as people become aware of it, develop their trust in using it, and go on to use it repeatedly. The town centre was blighted by the pandemic and the figures for 2020 reflect this. Though people will have been hesitant in returning to the high street, the second year shows growth in WiFi registrations.

2.2 GEO-Sense Footfall

2.2.1 The table below provides the comparison figures for 2020 and 2021 of 'average' visitors per day. 2021 figures did not show a positive increase until the latter part of the year.

Month	Average visitors per day 2020	Average visitors per day 2021	Comments

January	7947	2752	31 days
February	8182	3117	28 days
March	6146	3407	31 days
April	3885	4021	30 days
May	4391	3999	31 days
June	5210	3948	30 days
July	5880	3457	31 days
August	6418	3069	31 days
September	5953	3505	30 days
October	4940	4213	31 days
November	4085	4229	30 days
December	4215	5554	31 days

2.2.2 Although the report focuses on comparing the first full two years of the three-year contract, below is an indication of monthly footfall incorporating January and February 2022. This increase in the number of average visitors per day is encouraging.

Month	Average visitors per day 2020	Average visitors per day 2021	Average visitors per day 2022	Comments
January	7947	2752	4780	31 days
February	8182	3117	4761	28 days

2.3 Pigeon Management Grant Scheme

2.3.1 There has been good progress since Committee's last meeting. This March, officers have been provided with a "Statement by the Local Planning Authority Conservation Officer regarding pigeon-proofing installations (spikes and netting) attached to listed buildings", to be passed to recipients of the Pigeon Management Grant. The recipients have been waiting for The Local Planning Authority's stated view before being able to complete the works and claim the grant funds awarded by Committee.

2.3.2 Committee had previously endorsed an 'open completion date' within 2021/22 meaning the deadline for work completion is 31 March 2022 (88/CE). It is unlikely that all grant recipients will achieve this deadline due to the delay in receiving confirmation from the Local Planning Authority. Committee is asked to extend the deadline for completing the works a further 3 calendar months to 30 June 2022.

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. It is anticipated that the final location of the Gateway artwork along with the final design will be signed off by the steering group this Spring. A planning application will then be submitted to the Local Authority by TGT seeking approval for installation. In accordance with Council objective to provide drinking water, a water bottle filling station will be incorporated within the design.

2.5 Black History Month

2.5.1 The new 5-member steering group leading activity has formed and met in late January. Key approaches agreed by the group included:

- Black people exist outside of Black History Month (BHM) thus some activity could take place in the lead up to BHM.
- Black people were around before slavery. Activity regarding this subject could be undertaken pre-BHM.

2.5.2 The planning of activity is ongoing and the group meet again in March to start confirming and diarising activity.

2.6 Children's Trail

2.6.1 The trail has suffered from wear and tear over the last year, and it was anticipated that the accepted assistance from a local company as part of their community giving programme, endorsed by Policy and Finance Committee (Re:257/CE, 26 July 2021), would have been completed in 2021. Unfortunately, the scale of the artwork silhouettes proved too large for their machines. Officers contacted the original artist to secure electronic versions of the artworks and passed them onto the company. It took some time before the company were able to confirm they could still offer the assistance. Officers understand that production is underway.

2.6.2 Cedars Upper School Art tutors have been working with a group of young people to make artworks intended for the creation of a new 10th Anniversary Trail in Linslade Recreation Ground. Student's work is almost finished, with a final 2 students putting glaze on their work which will be followed by all work having the final firing.

Officers therefore hope to receive the artworks this Spring and will then plan the installation and promotion of the new trail. The trail is only anticipated to last the celebratory year due to the vulnerability of the ceramic artworks. This also ensures the focus remains on the Council's main asset long-term, The Children's Trail.

2.6.3 A small town centre shop window trail is being planned for the town centre over the Easter holiday to begin the 10th anniversary celebration activity.

2.6.4 Four animal shaped benches were purchased using welcome back funds to be used for storytelling opportunities during 2022. One event took place on a very wet market day in the February half term week and whilst only a handful of people attended due to the heavy rain, officers received feedback that a family had specifically attended the market that day because of the storytelling activity.

2.6.5 Officers aim to hold a birthday party event in Linslade Recreation Ground, the home of the new anniversary trail, on 3rd August. It is envisaged that a budget of up to £5,000 will be needed and Committee is asked to endorse the use any remaining earmarked reserves already allocated for repairs and maintenance (970/9018), and to carry forward into earmarked reserves unused Buzzard Trails funds into 970/9018 which officers anticipate will cover this amount along with funding additional storytelling activities.

2.6.6 In addition, Committee is asked to endorse that a new earmarked reserve budget line is created dedicated to Buzzard Trails to ensure long-term maintenance is adequately funded.

2.7 Christmas lights

2.7.1 There were slight teething problems initiating the first year of the contract with the contractor unable to install the wall mounted town centre motifs. The motifs will be installed for the 2022 scheme. The contractor acknowledged this and provided additional lamp column motifs on the town centre lantern lights free of charge. As a goodwill gesture they confirmed that they will do the same for 2022. Officers have requested an indication of the cost of these motifs should Committee wish to secure them for the 2023 scheme. At present, no additional funds are available in the 2022/23 budget. Officers will bring options forward to committee in readiness for the 2023/24 budget setting activity.

2.7.2 Additional standalone motifs were incorporated in the 2021 scheme using welcome back funds. There are no planned additional standalone motifs for future years.

2.7.3 As in previous years, Committee is asked to carry forward unspent funds from Christmas lights (101/4412), into earmarked reserves 970/9044 to ensure adequate funds are available for infrastructure maintenance and ongoing delivery of the scheme.

3 WELCOME BACK FUND (EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS)

3.1 The delivery of work and funds end on 31 March 2022. All but two aspects of the listed activities have been delivered. £59k was awarded of which £13k is attributed to the undelivered activity of cleansing. Clarification of funding rules were received in which meant 3 external quotes for work were secured to ensure it complied with the strict funding protocols. This relates to ensuring there is no duplication of public

contracted works (CBC's existing street cleansing contracts) and use of existing staffing. Unfortunately, officers received notification from the supplier, that they had accepted another large job, so they no longer had the availability in their forward order book to do the work by the deadline. The other suppliers did not reduce their price to accommodate the available budget. Officers are continuing to have conversations with CBC colleagues regarding the existing street cleaning contracts.

3.2 Due to the short timescale for preparing the funding bid, many costs were estimated. After completing the projects, officers negotiated spend of available funds to secure services for creating promotional videos of town centre shops and market with a further video promoting the leisure opportunities that the town centre offers. This is in keeping with the original town centre promotional activity agreed with CBC. In addition, another bench is now on order to add to the 6 existing benches.

3.3 Officers are now supporting CBC officers in completing monitoring processes providing evidence of delivery.

4 STAFFING

10.1 A new officer has been recruited working 20hours per week and commenced work in March. Their work will be to assist with maintenance and developing the Buzzard Trails (Living History, Sands of Time and The Children's Trail), as well as supporting the promotion of the town's history and town centre-based enhancements such as signage.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 With the welcome yet unanticipated work activity that the Welcome Back Fund enabled now concluding, officer's attention turns to delivering Committee's identified actions on signage, celebratory activity for The Children's Trail 10th anniversary and ongoing operational service work.

End