

## **HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Scrutiny Committee  
18 July 2019

**From:** Director of Economy and Planning

**Subject:** **DRIVING ECONOMIC VITALITY, INCLUDING MARKETS – VIBRANT MARKET TOWNS UPDATE REPORT**

All Wards

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### **1.0 SUMMARY:**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update with regard to the current position on, and impact of, the council's Vibrant Market Towns initiative.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND:**

2.1 Between September 2018 and January 2019 the committee undertook a review of the Council's key priority within the Council Plan, namely 'Driving Economic Vitality'. A particular focus of the review was to consider the vitality and viability of the district's market towns and town centre markets.

2.2 The Committee submitted their report to Cabinet in March 2019 and made the following recommendations:-

- 1) the Committee endorses the initiatives in delivering the Council's key priority 'Driving Economic Vitality' as detailed within the Council Plan;
- 2) the Committee supports the continued collaborative working with stakeholders, businesses and traders working towards building more vibrant towns;
- 3) the success of projects identified within the individual Vibrant Market Towns Investment Plans be assessed after six months of their implementation or such other period as appropriate;
- 4) the issues regarding empty shops be monitored and an assessment of the new initiatives to encourage occupation by new traders be provided after six months of their implementation or such other period as appropriate;
- 5) continued communication with market traders and the organisers of farmers markets be undertaken in order to encourage new traders and the reinstatement of the farmers markets within the market towns;
- 6) the opportunities presented by hosting major sporting events and other bespoke events such as festivals and seasonal markets continue to be explored and implemented; and
- 7) continued improvements to communications on the support offered to businesses be explored.

### **3.0 CURRENT POSITION**

3.1 The VMT Team continues to work closely with Town Councils, Business Networks, community groups, and the Northallerton BID to identify and deliver projects that bring direct economic benefit to, or increase footfall in, market towns across Hambleton. A number of projects identified in the Vibrant Market Towns Investment Plan which fulfil the committee's recommendations have been completed, or are near completion. These projects are listed below. Having achieved a number of 'quick wins' the VMT team is now looking to undertake more ambitious projects that will have greater impact the long term sustainability of our market towns.

- Work has started with Easingwold Town Council and the Wold Class Business Network to improve signage from the A19 into Easingwold.
- Work is underway in partnership with the Northallerton BID to publish a Design Guide for Northallerton which it is anticipated will be adopted by the council as a supplementary planning document.
- The VMT team is committed to delivering a Heritage resource for Northallerton that will enhance the visitor and resident experience of the town. This project is exploring numerous delivery models with the support of key town partners.
- Work is progressing to rebrand and make exterior improvements to both Easingwold and Northallerton Tourist Information Centres to improve their visibility and footfall. This is of particular significance in Northallerton as the tourist information centre will be highly engaged in welcoming UCI visitors.
- Two additional footfall counters have been installed in Stokesley to monitor footfall and assess the impact of town centre events and activities.
- Footfall data is monitored closely and evidence suggests that footfall remains constant across all five market towns. Following the recent installation of 2 additional footfall counters in Stokesley a total of 23 footfall counters have now been installed in the 5 market towns. The use of new technology which provides more robust data is being explored.
- A VMT-sponsored Town Map of Stokesley has been published in partnership with Stokesley Town Council to promote Stokesley as a tourist destination.
- The VMT team is supporting Stokesley Town Council to host the Stokesley Food Festival in October 2019.
- The VMT team collaborated on the recent creation of the 'Stokesley Business Welcome' pack which provides easily accessible planning advice and signposting for local businesses.
- The team has delivered a successful Google Garage Event addressing the digital skills gap in our market towns that has already resulted in Google agreeing to return for another event to be held in October 2019.
- The VMT project sponsored the publication of a Thirsk 'Furniture Trail' leaflet that was distributed across the UK.
- The VMT team continues to promotion the support for business available from Hambleton District Council in fortnightly e-bulletins.

- The VMT team has built vital connections with Code Nation a Software Developer training academy. Talks are positive and it is hoped that they will take a residence in Northallerton's C4DI tech hub.
- The VMT team successfully facilitated the return of a Farmers Market to Thirsk in June, hosted by the award-winning Northern Dales Farmers Market, and three further farmers markets are to be held in Thirsk in October, September and November. A Farmers Market is also now being held on Saturdays in Easingwold. If these markets prove successful the rollout of a farmers market in Northallerton will be encouraged.
- As part of the 'Love Your Local Markets' campaign held between 17 – 31 May 2019 the VMT team prepared a series of 'trader profiles' that will be shared on social media and in the local press to provide an insight into the life of market traders and their experiences of trading in Northallerton and Thirsk.
- A 'Market Development Plan' is being prepared to provide a strategy for improving the management and performance of the markets in Thirsk and Northallerton. The short term priority is the performance of the Saturday market in Thirsk which has experienced a decline in both regular and casual traders since 2013/2104.
- Building on last year's successful marketing of the markets another extensive marketing campaign is planned for 2019-2020 including door to door leaflet delivery and distribution of promotion leaflets to visitor destinations.
- The VMT team continues to support major sporting events, festivals and seasonal events to ensure that local businesses benefit. The VMT team supported the co-ordination of activities to celebrate the arrival of the Tour de Yorkshire in Bedale and is working closely with the Northallerton Bid and Northallerton Town Council to ensure local businesses benefit from the UCI Cycling World Championship in September 2019.
- The VMT Team is exploring other uses of empty retail premises. These solutions include 'pop up' shops or 'incubator centres' for new traders which are being piloted successfully in other market towns and which reflect a new philosophy about the future of our High Streets described in the Grimsey Review 2.
- The project is looking to develop a closer relationship with other partner organisations including the YNER LEP and Welcome to Yorkshire to progress a number of new projects currently in development to address the larger challenges facing market towns such as the digital skills gap and aging population.

#### **4.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers the information presented within the report.

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**Background papers:** None  
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