

REPORT TO EVENTS AND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TOWN CENTRE VITALITY PLAN

Report Reference E-22-09
Meeting Date 6th February 2023
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by Town Clerk



1.0 BACKGROUND

Cheshire East Council commissioned consultants to develop 'vitality plans' for all key service centres in the borough. The objective of the vitality plans are develop an action plan of interventions/projects that could support the vitality of town centres. Cheshire East Council has been clear that the plans are designed to ensure that each town centre has a series of actions that could be implemented when funding becomes available, for example when the government opens funding opportunities which could deliver on the actions identified, but do not commit the borough council to funding initiatives or projects at this stage. For Cheshire East Council to progress projects it would be subject to business case and inclusion in their medium term financial strategy.

Cheshire East Council's Economy and Growth Committee formally adopted the plans on 17th January and are seeking the endorsement of each plan by the relevant Town Council. Cheshire East Council hopes that each plan can be jointly promoted by both councils.

The Town Council has been involved in the development of the draft plan, from having representation on early working groups (in 2020/21) alongside community representatives, to being consulted on the draft plan as part of the public consultation. The public consultation window fell outside the council's meeting cycle and the Town Clerk sought input from members to inform a response; only one member provided input, but the borough council did enact every change the Town Council proposed.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF VITALITY PLAN CONTENTS

2.1 INTERVENTION AREAS

The vitality plan is 96 pages; a copy has been provided to all committee members to read in advance of the committee meeting. Attention is particularly drawn to pages 69 onwards which detail the areas for intervention. The areas are:

1. Reducing the dominance of cars along King Street
2. Connecting green assets
3. Prioritising more walking and cycling
4. Mobilising Knutsford's business community
5. Showcasing Knutsford's tourism and heritage assets
6. Raising Knutsford's profile
7. Better management of car movements

2.2 ALIGNMENT WITH TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGY

The Town Council is currently consulting on its new strategic plan and would naturally wish to ensure that its work is focused on delivering its own corporate strategy. Particularly relevant to the town centre vitality plan interventions are the strategic aims of:

- Knutsford Town Centre will be a thriving independent destination for residents and visitors alike
- Our residents will have less need to use a car with it being easy to travel by cycling, walking and public transport
- Knutsford will have a diverse network of green spaces, a biodiverse natural environment and a reduced carbon footprint

Objective TC1 of the strategy notes the vitality plans:

The [Town Centre Masterplan] will detail how we can meet the objectives of the Cheshire East Knutsford Town Centre Vitality Plan...

Further, each vitality plan intervention aligns with objectives of in the Town Council’s draft strategy, as indicated in the table below. This indicates that supporting and working to deliver the vitality plans has a strong strategic fit for the Town Council.

Vitality Plan Intervention	KTC Strategic Objectives
Reducing the dominance of cars along King Street	TC1 TC2
Connecting green assets	TC2 E1 C8
Prioritising more walking and cycling	T1
Mobilising Knutsford’s business community	TC3
Showcasing Knutsford’s tourism and heritage assets	TC4 C1
Raising Knutsford’s profile	TC1 TC3
Better management of car movements	TC2

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

Noting the strong strategic alignment of the vitality plan and the Town Council’s draft strategy and the opportunity of involvement the Town Council has had to develop the plan, it is recommended that the committee endorses the Town Centre Vitality Plan for Knutsford.

In endorsing the plan, the Town Council will assume some responsibility for ensuring its delivery with partners. The vitality plan is strongly aligned to the council’s own strategy and will therefore be fed into the development of annual action plans under this strategy i.e. delivery of the council’s strategy will be delivery of the objectives of this vitality plan.