

Report to the Local High Streets Task & Finish Panel



SCRUTINY

Date of meeting: 20 December 2021.

Portfolio: Finance, Qualis Client & Economic Development



Epping Forest District Council

Subject: Update Report to Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel.

Responsible Officer: John Houston (01992 564094).

Democratic Services: Laura Kirman (01992 564243).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That members consider the options detailed in this report and provide recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and guidance to officers on the proposals for the future requirements of the panel.

Report:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 12 October 2021 agreed that this task and finish panel should meet to establish how the panel wanted to move forward.
2. The report presented at Overview and Scrutiny outlined that the pandemic had resulted in a renewed interest in town centres. Following a series of actions, reports had been requested and separately considered by Cabinet. Progress with town centre issues was now well advanced and the four options reported were discussed at the meeting
3. The report suggested the following four options for consideration:
 - A. to support initiatives either by reviewing the processes ongoing within Place and/or take a more detailed look at the Panel's work programme; or
 - B. do something different such as becoming involved with the high street working groups and local councils' initiatives; or
 - C. scrutinise some other elements, such as the medium/long term health of the high streets; or
 - D. end the current task and finish group but restart it with a unique and updated remit that is acceptable to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. It was highlighted that that irrespective of the options shown above, further progress with all the town centre initiatives would require a specific town by town meeting to ensure all parties commit and support progress. Local members and other groups would be involved in this process.
5. The Council has commissioned and published reports on each of the district's town centres to look at ways of supporting recovery from the pandemic and enhancing future growth. These can be accessed through the links below
 - Buckhurst Hill regeneration study 10 March 2021
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Buckhurst-Hill-Regeneration-Study-Final-Copy-180521.pdf>

- Epping regeneration study 31 March 2021
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Epping-Regeneration-Study-Final-Copy-18.05.2021.pdf>
- Loughton Broadway regeneration study 5 February 2021
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Loughton-Broadway-Regeneration-Study-and-Proposals-Final-Copy-18052021.pdf>
- Loughton High Road regeneration study 16 February 2021
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Loughton-Broadway-Regeneration-Study-and-Proposals-Final-Copy-18052021.pdf>
- Ongar regeneration study 30 December 2020
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Regenerating-Ongar-report.pdf>
- Waltham Abbey regeneration study 30 December 2020
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Regenerating-Ongar-report.pdf>

6. The original terms of reference for this task and finish panel are attached as Appendix 1.

Reasons for Decision:

To define and support the Task and Finish Panel's review of High Streets.

Other Options for Action:

N/A.

Consultation undertaken:

Resource implications:

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal and governance implications arising directly from this report.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

A key element of future high street sustainability will be the maintenance of a clean, green and safe environment for customers and residents to use.

Background Papers:

Town Centre Regeneration Studies
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/business/town-centre-regeneration-studies/>

Impact Assessments:

Not applicable at this time.

Risk Management:

Not applicable at this time.

Equality:

Not applicable at this time.

LOCAL HIGH STREETS TASK & FINISH PANEL**TERMS OF REFERENCE****Origin**

At its meeting on 19 November 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a Task and Finish Panel to support the forthcoming review of the future of local high streets in the Epping Forest District.

Terms of Reference

- (1) That the Panel consider the current performance of local high streets and review evidence of changing demands and opportunities.
- (2) That the Panel consider:
 - (a) the changing nature of retail spend and impact on the district's current offer;
 - (b) government initiatives to support the resourcing and evolution of the High Street offer;
 - (c) the outcomes of national reviews and policy recommendations;
 - (d) the evidence from local and national organisations on their perspectives on the issue;
 - (e) surveys of occupation/vacancies in High Streets in the district and responses to consultation events such as the Economic Stakeholder Conference;
 - (f) formulating a series of recommendations for action by the council and other major stakeholders to enable the continued success and diversity of the district offer; and
 - (g) other relevant matters related to the review of future High Street success on the basis of the evidence reviewed.

Aims and Objectives:

- (1) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit final recommendations for consideration by the Committee.
- (1) To gather evidence and information in relation to the terms of reference through receipt of data, presentations and other means considered necessary; and
- (2) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Overview and Scrutiny rules of the Constitution (Article 6).

Timescales

- (1) To agree membership of the Panel at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28 January 2020;
- (2) To agree the Terms of Reference of the Panel at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28 January 2020;
- (3) To hold the first meeting of the Panel during February 2020;
- (4) To undertake analysis of relevant data and relevant site visits by the end of March 2020;

- (5) To consider draft outcomes and recommendations to be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by 30 June 2020;
- (6) To regularly report progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit final recommendations for consideration by the Committee by 30 June 2020.

Commencement:

The work of the Task and Finish Panel should commence as soon as possible.

Completion:

The final recommendations of the Task and Finish Panel with regard to the future of town centres will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by 30 June 2020.