


Project Brief	
<p>The Project Brief is the first thing to do. It should be completed before any activity of any sort takes place. This is because the Brief is the document that subject to authorisation triggers the development of the Business Case.</p>	
	
Project Name	High Street Shops - Shop Front Improvements Scheme & Small Business Advice
Project Reference (if applicable)	TBC
Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)	Dave Caulfield
Project Manager	TBC
Document Author (if different from PM)	Angela Crossland, Head of Community, Partnerships and Customers
Date Approved	TBC
Approved By	TBC

Background

The Corporate Plan Refresh 2018 identifies one of the priority delivery areas for the next two years to be the development of a long term programme of market town regeneration to help them reach their true potential. An identified element of this is to deliver a shop front improvement scheme.

The Council has recently engaged with Historic England (HE) to gain a better understanding of our district town centres in terms of the importance of heritage on our high streets. We have a high number of listed buildings within our retail areas which may benefit from enhancement and a better local understanding of their importance to the vibrancy of the town centre. Similarly, recent building characterisation work from the Economic Development Team Urban Designers has demonstrated our need to consider how we protect some of this heritage as well as consider how we support local property owners to maintain a sustainable and aesthetic contribution to our future high street.

Recent discussions with heritage funders demonstrate a keen interest in place shaping agendas and how we should consider the impact of heritage in the town centre as a whole. Funding rounds for such work are opening across late 2018 and 2019 which may support these initiatives but will require match funding agreements.

Shop improvement initiatives are a common approach to revitalising town centres. Examples can be seen at South Kesteven DC and Henley on Thames.

Scope

The project will be for eligible retail/hospitality outlets in our town centres. Within this, the project will consider a range of criteria for which shops/buildings would be eligible for financial support. This is still to be defined but should consider elements such as geographical zone or historical importance.

A shop front design guide will offer a range of designs as part of the project. Any other design would be out of scope.

Develop a small business offer to those businesses who apply for the scheme, to enhance local skills and knowledge in managing high street business. This should include marketing and digital capabilities (full range of support still to be defined).

Not in scope – Buildings/businesses outside of the identified criteria.

Project Objectives

We will support our local high streets to enhance the local shopping experience and look and feel of the district towns through:

- Identify shop front improvements where they are likely to have an impact in improving the overall appearance and performance of a retail and heritage area;
- Consider the scope of a grant/fund incentive in line with heritage partners and the private business sector to support improvements;
- Establish a shop front design guide
- Offer business advice and support to eligible businesses to make effective use of enhancements

Benefits

Investment in the high street should be seen as a pump-prime investment in developing the district as a great place to live, enjoy and enhance local business.

This project will be pivotal in this as well as unlocking other investment into the town.

The project does not offer a direct and sustained return on investment to the council but it can contribute significantly to a return on investment to the local area through:

- Encouraging increased footfall from both local and external visitors;
- Increased local spend through dwell time in town centre;
- Relocation to the area as an attractive, vibrant and connected place to do business;
- Increased business growth in the high street;
- Increased business confidence;
- Increased business reach through improved marketing expertise;
- Increased business rates through reduction in vacant units;
- Increased employment opportunities;
- Improved aesthetics to support increased business viability;
- Increased external funding investment from regional and national funding bodies, such as Historic England;
- Protection of heritage assets.

The impact of increased visitor spend in the area can be calculated through local business feedback on the impact of the scheme. Evaluation measures will also be commissioned through the visitor economy action plan which will support an increase in data accuracy per year of delivering the plan.

Project Approach / Delivery Options

Work with Historic England & the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a grant scheme outline to improve shopfronts & establish a shop front design guide. This will need managing through a project coordination point.

Provide a supporting suite of small business advice – commissioning external support for businesses.

Project Timescales (Milestones)

The project will be initiated in 2018 with expected completion by April 2020. Project initiation and specific timescales are reliant on appropriate project management resource being in place.

Project Resources (people and money)

Internal:

£50k per annum cash fund;

CPC team – project lead resource. TBC but could be through External Funding Coordinator or Culture, Visitor and Creative Economy Project Manager;

Contracts, Commissioning and Procurement – to ensure appropriate delivery of project;

Economic Development Team – Urban Designer to develop the guide;

Comms team support to promote the scheme.

External:

Heritage Lottery Fund Liaison including scope for potential match funding;

Historic England Liaison including scope for potential match funding;

Property owner match funding required.

Funding

As identified in the Resources element. The fund would be used to unlock other funding from Historic England/Heritage Lottery Fund and the local businesses.

The initiative will be agreed on a match fund basis.

The total £100k council contribution over the period of the scheme would be through this Programme For Growth project.

Risks / Issues

Delivery risk

- Ability and desire of businesses or property owners to come forward;
- Desire of businesses, property owners to follow the shop design guide;
- Demand management outweighs resource;
- Ensuring that the approach remains within planning legislation and guidance and can be delivered on time and to budget;
- In mitigation, targeted marketing of the opportunity required. Initial engagement discussions with business and property owners to understand how to meet their needs. Liaising effectively with planning colleagues to ensure the right and expedient approach.

Financial risk

- Demand management outweighs resource;
- Limited forthcoming match funding;
- In mitigation, consider other support funding (i.e. LEP initiatives) on ongoing basis. Grants would only be released on the basis of match funding agreements.

Political risk

- Demand management outweighs resource leaving the initiative feeling unfulfilled.
- In mitigation, we know from stakeholder engagement with local businesses, council and heritage funders that investment in the high street and incentives to attract footfall are very welcomed.

Legal risk

- Clarity on grant funding framework for businesses.

Links and Dependencies

This project directly supports the Council's corporate plan priorities of making the district a great place to do business and enjoy life.

Economic Development Framework – Revitalise market towns and help them reach their potential, Boost the visitor, leisure and night time economy.

Helps in implementing Planning Policy for town centres and shop-fronts.