

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny**
Date of meeting: **9th December 2019**
Report Subject: **Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director
Regeneration and Economic Development
Bethan McPherson, Team Leader**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
19.11.19	26.11.19	29.11.19			09.12.19			

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the recommendation to establish a Town Centre Task and Finish Group.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Challenges relating to town centres, increasing vacancy rates and declining footfall remain both a national and local challenge. Consideration and development of new uses and offers within our town centres is critical to long term sustainability, vibrancy and servicing the needs of our community as part of the broader foundational economy.

2.2 In response to this challenge, external consultants Nash Partnership were appointed to assist in the development of the Blaenau Gwent Town Centres Strategy in 2017, providing a new strategy, with clear focus and direction.

2.3 The primary purpose of the Town Centre's Strategy, was to articulate a locally agreed direction for addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with each of the five town Centres within Blaenau Gwent taking into account local and national policies and priorities.

2.4 The draft strategy has been prepared by NASH and an initial task and finish group was established in 2018 to consider the report and outline its recommendations for approving the strategy document. The work of the task and finish group was not concluded.

2.5 There is an outstanding requirement to review the strategy, prior to the recommendation for approval; the establishment of a new town centre task and finish group would be focused on consideration of the following:

- a. Generating a new strategy, focus and direction
 - b. Common principles that should underpin the strategy, action plan and associated delivery across all towns.
 - c. Complementarity of offer across the Authority and associated town centres.
 - d. Key strategic projects for town centre delivery, Blaenau Gwent wide.
 - e. Partnership and delivery mechanisms to support implementation of priorities contained within the strategy.
- 2.6 The recommendations of the task and finish group would feed into the report seeking approval of the strategy and inform the approach moving forward in terms of implementation.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

To approve the establishment of a Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group.

Option 2

Not to approve the establishment of a Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This topic supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2022 in the following areas:

- Economic Development and Regeneration - 'To work with partners to develop a new vision for our town centres ensuring their long term future.'

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no immediate implications on budget, the strategy was funded through external Welsh government funding in a previous financial year. In the medium to long term, the recommendations contained within the strategy and key priorities identified within any associated action plan may require funding. A range of internal and external funding opportunities may need to be explored to support implementation.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The primary risk associated with the recommendation presented within the report is the task and finish group does not propose membership beyond council members and officers. To mitigate this extensive engagement work was undertaken in preparing the strategy and the implementation of priorities would be delivered through an appropriate partnership structure, with wider stakeholder membership.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications associated with the report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The Regeneration Department is recruiting a Towns Facilitator to co-ordinate and support the agreed partnership in delivering agreed priorities. More broadly town centres fall across multiple disciplines internal and external to the Council, requiring a combined contribution and commitment.

The task and finish group will be supported by officers within Regeneration.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

An approved town centre strategy to inform future delivery at a strategic and local level:

- Town centres that serve the needs of its communities
- Town centres with good infrastructure
- Town centres accessible to all

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The task and finish group would consist of scrutiny members only. However the strategy was developed and will be implemented in an engaging and participatory way, involving key town centre stakeholders. There is opportunity to extend membership to specific experts or service users.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The work of the task and finish group and the town centre strategy more broadly aims to ensure a sustainable future for our towns, with facilities and provisions that serve the needs of its users.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Town centres have been in relative decline, a proactive and alternative approach is key to reducing further decline.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

Collaboration and partnership working will be critical to the development of any associated action plan and implementation. This will extend to public sector organisations, businesses, voluntary and third sector organisations.

6.7 *EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)*

A full EqIA is not required for the purpose of establishing a task and finish group.

7. *Monitoring Arrangements*

7.1 The task and finish group will report its recommendations to scrutiny and will form part of the wider report to approve the town centre strategy.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Task and Finish Group Template