



REPORT TO:	Corporate and Community Committee
DATE:	21 st September 2023
SUBJECT:	Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027
PURPOSE:	To present to the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee the Draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027
KEY DECISION:	Yes
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Cllr Dale Broughton, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Town Centre
REPORT OF:	John Leach, Deputy Chief Executive - Communities
REPORT AUTHOR:	John Leach, Deputy Chief Executive - Communities
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Station, Trinity, Witham
EXEMPT REPORT?	No

SUMMARY

This report provides for Members consideration a draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and action plan covering the period 2023-2027. The draft strategy provides a vision and seven strategic objectives along with seventy actions that cover the themes of 1) Clean and Safe, 2) Open for Business 3) Culture, Heritage and Events and 4) Transformation.

The strategy and action plan is provided for public consultation during the period 15th September to 15th October 2023. It is currently intended to be considered at Cabinet on 25th October 2023.

Should the strategy and associated action plan be agreed then it is proposed that delivery against the strategy is supported by a steering group Chaired by the Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for the town centre that includes membership such as the Chair of Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) and key leads from each relevant council department along with representation as appropriate from key stakeholder organisations.

The views and considerations of the Corporate and Community Committee are sought regarding the draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Corporate and Community Committee to consider the draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 and to feedback as appropriate to help in the development of the document to be considered by Cabinet.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is considered especially important that scrutiny is involved in the development of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan as part of the consultation work being undertaken to develop the document. This will support the production of a well-informed strategy and action plan that focuses on improving Boston Town Centre for present and future generations.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. To maintain the status quo in terms of managing the town centre. It is considered that this will not provide the focus required to help improve the current circumstances faced in the town centre such as concerns regarding street cleanliness, closing shops and other matters such as less than impactful events as exemplified by Christmas in the town in 2022.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Boston Borough Council is seeking to revitalize the town centre by bringing back to life the high street and the surrounding public realm that those who call themselves Bostonians, fellow citizens and visitors to the town recognise as home, a wonderful place to visit, a place that offers employment and a place to enjoy leisure time in.
- 1.2 The Borough Council sees the importance of the town centre as a key economic hub that supports the vibrancy of this great borough and that is also a key focal point for those who reside within the areas local neighbourhoods. This is incredibly important if the town's high street offer is going to survive the many challenges it faces, it requires the support of the local authority and partners, working with local communities and those who visit the area. It is recognised that COVID-19 has had an impact in so many ways, including how people shop. The use of the internet has brought a change to many people's shopping habits however, there remains an important place for face to face retail and hospitality services, whilst there is also now space for transformation and an ability to reinvent the town centre so that it can offer the very best experience to everyone.
- 1.3 A Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 is proposed. This strategy is seeking to better align council service delivery with partners, community representatives and the voluntary and community sector in order to lead a programme of work which ensures that Boston Town Centre is clean and safe, open for business, a great place for culture, heritage and events and a place that is on a very real transformation journey that will ensure present and future generations enjoy the very best that Boston's town centre

can provide. This strategy is about helping put Boston back on the map and recognising that this is a place to be proud of, a place with great heritage and history and a place that is cherished by wonderfully diverse communities that deserve the chance to come together through shared understanding of what can be achieved through a real sense of community.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Boston Town Centre is a key economic and social hub for the borough of Boston. Importantly it is a sub-regional retail centre, second in the county to Lincoln, and provides retail employment and a variety of visitor attractions. Boston's town centre has like many places suffered in recent times due to a number of factors including the COVID pandemic and an ongoing move to internet shopping. Yet as a town centre, Boston has a lot to offer!
- 2.2 The market town has a rich heritage and is known to many people as the home of the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed from The Haven in 1620 and settled in what is now Boston, Massachusetts. There are many heritage features in the town centre which is home to one of the largest parish churches in England, St Botolph's. The town also retains a Guildhall that was built in 1390 by the Guild of St Mary. Today it is managed by the borough council and houses a museum and a venue for weddings and other events.
- 2.3 The defined town centre of Boston covers a relatively extensive area on either side of the River Witham, with the main retail and Primary Shopping Area located on the east side where smaller units in the historic core are complemented by newer and larger footprint units at the Pescod Shopping Centre and further north at the Boston Shopping Park. Whilst the town centre has a number of challenges with key shops closing in recent times, it continues to have a number of strengths and has potential to increase its non-retail offer. It is considered that the centre would benefit from a clearer focus of activities and vision for its future.
- 2.4 Appendix A of this report provides a draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2023-2027. This strategy and its associated action plan, whilst not a planning policy document is intended to assist in driving positive change in how the town centre is managed, nurtured and developed. Appendix B provides a summary of the proposed actions associated with the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027.
- 2.5 The draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan has been developed through a steering group consisting of borough council departments that is also reaching out to key stakeholders/ partner agencies to support its development. To further inform this document a consultation is running from 15th September until 15th October 2023. The Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee meeting of 21st September that is to receive this report has been included as part of the consultation, in order to further attract Member comment and feedback to inform the final Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan that is intended to be presented to Cabinet on 25th October 2023.
- 2.6 **Overview of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan**
- 2.6.1 Boston Borough Council is determined to put local communities at the heart of the future success of the town centre. The aim is to deliver an approach to public realm

management that will ensure this important public space demonstrates all that you can hope can be achieved within the (approximate) 520,000 square metres of land that is called Boston town centre. To this end a new Town Centre Strategy and action plan is proposed, facilitated by the Borough Council but developed through consultation and engagement in partnership with key stakeholders and the community.

2.6.2 The proposed vision for this strategy builds on the successful work taking place around the town in connection with the levelling up agenda/Town Deal. This strategy seeks to deliver against seven key strategic objectives:-

Draft Vision

2.6.3 **Boston town centre will be known to be a place that brings communities together to enjoy quality public realm and open spaces that magnify the national heritage of the town whilst supporting a vibrant retail and hospitality experience.**

Draft Key Strategic Objectives

- a) To ensure residents and other visitors to the town centre **experience a clean and tidy public realm.**
- b) To ensure **residents and visitors feel safe** whether that is during the day or when they visit the town centre at night. **Supporting a vibrant day time and night time economy.**
- c) To ensure **businesses have every opportunity to thrive in the town centre.**
- d) To ensure residents and visitors experience the town centre as **a place for heritage, culture, events and entertainment.**
- e) To ensure residents and visitors are **able to access and leave the town centre easily** and by utilizing sustainable forms of transport where available.
- f) **To support and build a cohesive community**, utilizing all the benefits and opportunities a town centre can bring to achieve this.
- g) **To work effectively with all public sector partners, businesses and the voluntary and community sector** to achieve the above.

2.6.5 The draft strategy itself is divided into the following four sections:-

- i) **Clean and Safe:** Covering matters such as street cleansing, community safety and regulatory services.
- ii) **Open for Business:** Covering support to businesses and seeking a thriving local economy.
- iii) **Culture, Heritage and Events:** Linking the importance of people to place.
- iv) **Transformation:** Recognising the opportunity to re-invent and transform the town centre in the wake of COVID-19 and the change in the retail environment.

2.6.6 Clean and Safe

2.6.6.1 To date 27 proposed actions are covered in the strategy that relate to the “Clean and Safe” theme and they range from regularly deep cleaning the town centre, removing black bags and fly tips and introducing annual floral displays to driving up food hygiene standards in restaurants and standards in the taxi trade, along with supporting safer streets initiatives with the police and the voluntary and community sector. This section in particular includes the role of the Boston Town Area Committee.

2.6.7 Open for Business

2.6.7.1 There are currently 17 actions in this section which includes things like the aspiration to work with Destination Lincolnshire, developing specific promotional material for the town, promoting Boston and in particular work towards Boston 400. This section also includes actions to declutter the high street in order to ensure clear signage to the key sites within the town centre and deliver a Market Development Plan for the town.

2.6.8 Culture, Heritage and Events

2.6.8.1 There are currently 15 actions in the Culture, Heritage and Events Section which includes actions such as delivering a four day Christmas festival along with a range of events such as Halloween to a car show, continental market and vintage festival and a beach in the park summer events programme. Further to this, this section covers work on the National Portfolio Organisation Guildhall Hub and work with Transported Arts on a rich programme of arts and culture.

2.6.9 Transformation

2.6.9.1 Transformation work currently aligns to 11 actions that include supporting important Town Deal projects such as Healing the High Street, rejuvenation of Dolphin Lane, establishing a business group to work together on town centre initiatives and work with the private sector to develop residential accommodation in the town centre along with delivering the PE21 regeneration initiative.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 In conclusion the draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is presented to the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee for their consideration as part of the consultation process (which ends on 15th October 2023) for developing a final draft document to go to Cabinet on 25th October 2023.

3.2 Should the strategy and action plan be agreed then it is proposed that the Boston Town Centre Steering Group formed to inform the strategy will oversee the delivery of actions and reports on progress will come to scrutiny and Cabinet on a regular basis.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

- 4.1 The draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-27 recognises the contribution to the economy that Boston Town Centre plays in the South and East Lincolnshire sub-region as a wider strategic economic hub and the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership from a place making perspective as a whole.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS' PARTNERSHIP-** No key implications to be reported within this report other than those cited at point 4 above.

6. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The proposed strategy aligns to the following Boston Borough Council Corporate priorities:-
- Priority 1: People Focussed
- Priority 2: Future Prosperity, regeneration and inclusive growth
- Priority 3: Environmental Awareness and Accountability
- Priority 4: Delivering high quality services and maximising use of technology to support residents

7. STAFFING

- 7.1 There are no direct staffing implications to note regarding this report. Any impact on staffing would be covered through any reports required that are associated with individual actions.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct constitutional and legal implications to note regarding this report other than the matter of determining / agreeing a town centre strategy and action plan for Boston is a matter for Cabinet. Any constitutional and/or legal implications would be covered through any reports that are required to progress any individual actions.

9. DATA PROTECTION

- 9.1 No key matters in relation to data protection are associated directly with this report. Where required legislation with regarding data protection will be complied with.

10. FINANCIAL

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications to note regarding this report. Financial matters associated with actions would be covered where necessary through reports to Cabinet and Council.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 Each project within the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan will be risk assessed with any associated mitigating action taken where possible/as appropriate.

12. STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

12.1 The draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is undergoing public consultation working with the community and businesses from 15th September to 15th October 2023. This includes consideration at scrutiny on 21st September (Corporate and Community Committee) and the Boston Town Area Committee on 28th September 2023.

13. REPUTATION

13.1 The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is a key document from Boston Borough Council’s perspective and therefore it is important that if agreed the strategy and its actions progress as appropriate to help safeguard the Council’s reputation.

14. CONTRACTS

14.1 There are no specific contracts committed to as a consequence of this report. Should any contracts be required in relation to any particular actions then the appropriate procurement and contract regulations will be applied.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER

15.1 The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan seeks to help contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder in the town centre. Reference to this is included in the “Clean and Safe” section of the strategy/plan.

16. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

16.1 The final Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan will be considered through an Equality Impact Assessment.

17. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

17.1 It is considered that the Boston Town Centre and Action Plan will contribute to helping improve health and well-being in the borough, including supporting things such as walking and cycling around the town centre which links to the climate change agenda which is considered at point 18 of this report.

18. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

18.1 Proposed actions in the draft Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan will support the climate change and environment agenda. These include actions that for example seek to reduce litter and fly tipping and it is anticipated other initiatives will come forward to promote things like sustainable means of travel, such as walking and cycling (as indicated above).

19. LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

MISSIONS	
This paper contributes to the follow Missions outlined in the Government’s Levelling Up White paper.	
Pride in Place	By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

Wellbeing	By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Health	By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.

20. ACRONYMS

BBC – Boston Borough Council

BTAC – Boston Town Area Committee

<p>APPENDICES</p> <p>Appendix A: Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023- 2027 - “A Town Centre for Everyone”</p> <p>Appendix B: Summary of the Draft Actions in the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, “A Town Centre for Everyone” 2023-2027</p>
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BACKGROUND PAPERS	
N/A	
Document title	Where the document can be viewed

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT	
This is the first publication of this report.	
Name of body	Date

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