REPORT TO:	Boston Town Area Committee
DATE:	28th November 2024
SUBJECT:	Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 Annual Review 2024 (Year One)
PURPOSE:	To present to the Boston Town Area Committee the Year One Annual Review of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 for Discussion.
KEY DECISION:	No
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 the Boston Town Area Committee the first annual review of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan covering the period 2023-2027. The Strategy and Action Plan provides a vision and seven strategic objectives along with over 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 was approved by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet on 25th October 2023. This report provides feedback on progress against the Strategy and its associated action plan to date.

In summary 24 actions have been completed, 47 are on target and 3 require further attention.

The first year of the plan has seen delivery of a host of activities/initiatives including: -

- A deep clean of the market place that took place on 27th February 2024 to 2nd March 2024.
- A four day Christmas Festival and Illuminate Parade.
- A Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy was approved and adopted by full council on 15th July 2024.
- Enhanced floral displays have been provided in partnership with North Sea Camp Prison.

- A volunteer co-ordinator post has been introduced to support volunteering.
- A Changing Places toilet has been installed in Central Park.
- A joint operation with the police and the Council called Operation Plotting has continued which focusses on addressing anti-social behaviour, street-based violence, and serious harm. This work has been enhanced through the introduction of Community Rangers.
- The production of town centre specific promotional material.
- The production of a Market Development Plan that was agreed by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.
- A Public Space Protection Order regarding feeding wild birds in designated areas in the town centre (which is a new action in the Strategy/Action Plan) has been agreed at Cabinet.
- A Street Art Policy was produced and agreed by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.
- A Business Development Plan for the Guildhall in Boston has been developed and agreed at Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.
- A business forum has been established for the town.
- The installation of twenty six new car park ticket machines.
- Additional significant events that have happened in the town centre such as the Foodfest and Boston's Strongest event on 14th July 2024, boosting community cohesion and enhancing trade.

The Boston Town Area Committee is asked through this report and associated appendix (Appendix A - monitoring report), to comment on the work that has taken place to date to deliver the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-27, and to provide comment on any other potential future actions that they feel may be appropriate for year two of the strategy/action plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to review the progress made to date as provided in this report and its associated appendix (Appendix A), against the commitments made in the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 entitled, "A Town Centre for Everyone."
2. For the Committee to provide feedback to be recommended to Cabinet to be incorporated into the annual review, including any potential other future actions the Committee feel should be built into this work for year two of the strategy/action plan.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan provides a strategic and operational focus on the town centre. This initiative seeks to revitalise the town centre by supporting our communities' pride in the area through targeted work and regeneration activity, working hand-in-hand with businesses, residents and partners.
2. The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is a live document which was agreed at the Council's Cabinet on 25th October 2023. Now that it is in place it is important to review and report on progress against the commitments that were made.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. To not review progress against the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027. This has been discounted to ensure through a review the commitments made by the Council's Cabinet are delivered against, whilst enabling consideration of any additional actions and challenges with mitigating action/s as appropriate.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Boston Borough Council is committed to working in partnership with businesses, residents and partners to revitalise the high street and the surrounding public realm and is committed to making the town centre a place to be proud of, a place recognised for its great heritage and a place that is cherished by its diverse communities to work, live and enjoy leisure time in.

1.2 The Council sees the importance of the town centre as a key economic hub that supports the vibrancy of this great borough and that it is also a key focal point for those who reside within the area's local neighbourhoods. A Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 entitled "A Town Centre for Everyone" was agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 25th October 2023. It seeks 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.

1.3 This report provides to Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) a review of year one activity against the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 that was agreed by Cabinet on 25th October 2023, in order to support feedback to Cabinet on progress against the commitments made through the adoption of this important document.

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 that 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. However, as a town centre Boston has a lot to offer and the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan that was adopted in 2023 is a key strategic document that has been developed to help tackle, along with other initiatives, the challenges that are impacting this important place within the borough.

2.2 Appendix A of this report provides a monitoring report regarding progress against the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2023-2027. Feedback on progress has been provided throughout the year to a Steering Group, that is Chaired by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre, supported by the Vice Chair who is the Chair of the Boston Town Area Committee. The Steering Group is supported by key officers from across the Council and partner agencies as appropriate.

2.3 **Overview of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan Monitoring Report**

2.3.1 Boston Borough Council is determined to put local communities at the heart of the future success of the town centre. The aim of the Boston Town Centre and Action Plan 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. The Strategy and Action Plan was developed through consultation and engagement in partnership with key stakeholders, businesses and the community and it is therefore important to report on progress against the commitments made in this document.

2.3.2 The vision for the strategy builds on the successful work taking place around the town in connection with the Town Deal. This strategy seeks to deliver against seven key strategic objectives: -

Vision

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

2.3.4 **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 utilising sustainable forms of transport where available.

f) **To support and build a cohesive community**, utilising 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.

2.3.5 The strategy and action plan is divided into the following four sections/themes and Appendix A of this report provides an update against the actions aligned to these themes: -

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.

2.3.6 Clean and Safe

2.3.6.1 29 actions (12 grey/completed and 17 green/on target) 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.

2.3.6.2 Actions completed over the past year include: -

a) A deep clean of the market place took place on 27th February 2024 to 2nd March 2024. Another Spring clean is scheduled for next year.
b) A review of waste and recycling bins and collection points in the market place area has been completed with two locations identified, that now have alternative waste containment and presentation arrangements put in place as a consequence.
c) Completion of a review of planters and options for increased planting in the market place and road safety barriers, leading to an improved floral display in the town centre during the summer months. Enhanced floral displays have been provided in partnership with North Sea Camp Prison.
d) Production of a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy that approved and adopted by full council on 15th July 2024.
e) The publication by the Council every month of a list of five star rated food premises.
f) A Public Space Protection Order regarding feeding wild birds in designated areas in the town centre (which is a new action in the Strategy/Action Plan) has been agreed at Cabinet.
g) A review and reinstatement of the Public Space Protection Order for Dogs.
h) The introduction of a volunteer co-ordinator post to support volunteering. The Council now has for example, volunteer CCTV spotters. The co-ordinator will support such roles.
i) The installation of a Changing Places toilet in Central Park.
j) Completion of the redevelopment of the Central Park Playground.

2.3.6.3 Ongoing work includes: -

a) Deployment of Enviro-Crime Enforcement Officers to hotspot areas.
b) An education and enforcement programme that focusses on domestic bin contamination is running with funding in place for a 12 month Engagement Officer post. The officer commenced work on 2nd September 2024.
c) Continuation of a joint operation with the police and the Council called "Operation Plotting" which focusses on addressing anti-social behaviour, street-based violence,

and serious harm. This work has been enhanced through the introduction of Community Rangers.

d) A group of community leaders continues to meet to support ongoing engagement regarding Boston Town Centre Strategy and its associated action plan.

e) Work continues to make Boston a dementia friendly town.

2.3.7 Open for Business

2.3.7.1 There are currently 17 actions (4 grey/completed, 11 green/on target, 2 amber/mitigating action required) 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.

2.3.7.2 Actions completed include: -

a) Engaging through a subscription with Destination Lincolnshire, to provide business to business support.

b) The production of town centre specific promotional material.

c) The promotion of Boston at Lincolnshire County Show, Heckington Show, Boston Food Festival as well as at Boston Markets.

d) The review of the Council's Markets Policy with a refreshed version being agreed at Cabinet.

e) The production of a Market Development Plan that has been agreed by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.

2.3.7.3 Ongoing work includes: -

a) Establishing the Advice4Growth offer/service which is disbursing Business Growth Action Plans at a rate which is substantially ahead of the profiled curve.

b) Commencing work on Boston's Conservation Area Appraisal.

c) Continuing work with the Healing the High Street Programme supported by the Town Board and working with Heritage Lincolnshire.

d) Work that is underway to identify opportunities for Travel Trade to promote Boston and Boston 400 to international markets and tour operators by Destination Lincolnshire using links to Mayflower 400.

e) Initiatives to be progressed that are linked to the Long Term Plan for Towns Programme noting the government's confirmation that the "Long-Term Plan for Towns will be retained and reformed into a new regeneration programme". For example, aspirations to deliver the outcomes of Historic England Places Panel Review which have been included in the Town Board's submission.

2.3.8 Culture, Heritage and Events

2.3.8.1 There are currently 15 actions (4 grey/completed, 11 green target,) 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.

2.3.8.2 Actions completed include: -

a) Boston held a successful four day Christmas Festival on 23rd November to 26th November 2023, which included an Illuminate event which attracted thousands of people into the town.
b) A successful May Fair event which was held on 4th May to 11th May 2024.
c) A Car Show, Continental Market and Vintage Festival that has taken place as committed to in the Strategy/Plan.
d) A Beach in the Park and Summer Events Programme that has been delivered.
e) The production of a Street Art Policy that has been agreed by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.
f) A Cultural Audit which has been completed with projects focused on Boston town centre within the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Action Plan for future years.
g) An arts programme focussing on the town centre that has been delivered against.
h) A Business Development Plan for the Guildhall in Boston that has been developed and agreed by Boston Borough Council's Cabinet.
i) A programme of Boston New World Connections that has been developed. This has been incorporated into the NPO Plan with an exhibition plan developed to 2030.

2.3.8.3 Ongoing work includes: -

a) Work with collaborative partnerships with town centre cultural facilities and organisations that have been established in the town.
b) Taking forward a varied range of events that are ongoing and programmed for the town including a Christmas festival that will run from Friday, 29th November to Sunday, 1st December 2024.
c) Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation activity which is continuing in the Borough. This work provides a focus on the town.
d) Supporting a Boston Brilliance event using NPO funding that is planned for the town on 14th and 15th February 2025.
e) Work to consider plans for Boston's 400th anniversary in 2030 that is being developed.

2.3.9 Transformation

2.3.9.1 Transformation work currently aligns to 13 actions (4 grey/completed, 8 green/on target, 1 amber/mitigating action required) 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. The transformation section also seeks alignment with the Government's £20 million Long Term Plan ten year funding opportunity by working/continuing to work with the Boston Town Board.

2.3.9.2 Actions completed include: -

a) A business forum has been established for the town.
b) The Blenkin Memorial Hall Town Deal project being completed. This covered the repair, renovation, and redevelopment of the building, securing and strengthening this historic building's important role as a community hub for Boston.
c) The Dolphin Lane rejuvenation project that is part of the Town Deal, "Healing the Highstreet" project being completed in October 2023.
d) Replacement of car park ticket machines with 26 new units.
e) The market on Saturday market days benefitting from traffic restrictions which prevent vehicles going into the Market Place whilst the market is on. This is providing a family friendly environment to help support the public and traders shop in the market place, without the need to consider vehicular movements.

2.3.9.3 Ongoing work includes: -

a) Work to consider mixed use opportunities in the town.
b) Work to enhance Boston's leisure, food and beverage offer within the town centre. Work is taking place with Destination Lincolnshire and The Centre for Food & Fresh Produce Logistics (CFFPL) (Boston College) to promote the food and drink offer in the town and across the district.
c) Work with the private sector to develop residential accommodation in the town centre is ongoing.
d) Work seeking to deliver 5G Wi-Fi networks within the town centre that has been incorporated into the proposal for Boston's Long Term Plan for towns.
e) Work seeking to deliver the PE21 project in Boston following the purchase of the B & M site, as part of the Rosegarth Square development initiative.
f) Work to seek shared space opportunities in the Market Place.

3. Analysis Work

3.1 During year two of the strategy/action plan it is proposed to conduct analysis work that will pull together an up to date profile of the town centre which will cover matters such as the health of the retail and leisure sector, skills and demand studies. This will support the further targeting of resources (where available) towards town centre improvements. This analysis work is helpfully being commissioned by the Town Board.

4. Community Feedback

4.1 During year one of the strategy the Council has continued to keep an open dialogue with businesses and the community. It has been pleasing to receive recognition through feedback on the work that has taken place such as: -

4.1.1 **On the introduction of Community Rangers:** "A positive step in the right direction to help our Town and its residents feel safer, l wish them every success."

4.1.2 **Regarding the Deep Clean of the Town Centre: "**Massive improvement. Well done."

4.1.3 **On the improved floral displays**: -

- "Thank you so much - the planters look wonderful and make such a difference to the town."
- "They look wonderful. It really does make the town feel warmer, friendlier and brighter. It's also good for wildlife and contributes to the bigger ecosystem. Thank you."

4.1.4 **Regarding Events:** "What a fantastic atmosphere in the town. I was one of the helpers on the tombola and guess the number of sweets in the jar for the Boston Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group and due to the generous support of the visitors to the stall we raised £431.12 for which we thank you."

4.1.5 **On the Public Space Protection Order – Feeding Wild Birds**: "Thank you for this action. Our wonderful, historic St Botolph's Church will not now suffer stone erosion damage from the pigeons' acidic droppings."

5. Conclusion

5.1 In conclusion the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 Annual Review report on year one activity is presented to the Boston Town Area Committee for their consideration with a view to seeking feedback prior to submission to Cabinet on 12th December 2024.

5.2 There are currently 74 actions in the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan. This is one more action than when the document was agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 25th October 2023. To date there are 24 completed actions, 47 actions that are on target for completion and 3 that require mitigating work to stay on plan.

5.3 Noting the above it is clear that in the first year of the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan there has been significant progress made to improve the town centre. There is however, more work to do.

5.4 The Boston Town Area Committee's feedback on the first year's activity and what other actions might be appropriate for year two is requested.

6. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

6.1 The 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.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS' PARTNERSHIP -** No key implications to be reported within this report other than those cited at point 6 above.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 The proposed strategy aligns to the following corporate priorities within the South and East Lincolnshire Partnership's Sub-Regional Strategy: -

- Growth and Prosperity
- Healthy Lives
- Safe and Resilient
- Environment

8.2 The strategy also sets a corporate priority focussing on efficiency and effectiveness.

9. STAFFING

9.1 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.

10. WORKFORCE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Workforce capacity implications and any suitable measures to ensure adequate resources are made available are considered against each project reflected in the Action Plan when seeking to progress a proposed initiative.

11. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct constitutional and legal implications to note regarding this report other than the matter of monitoring delivery of the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for Boston is a matter for the established Steering Group to consider and report to Boston Town Area Committee, Scrutiny and Cabinet. Any constitutional and/or legal implications would be covered through any reports that are required to progress any individual actions.

12. DATA PROTECTION

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

13. FINANCIAL

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

14. RISK MANAGEMENT

14.1 Each project within the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan is risk assessed as appropriate with any associated mitigating action being taken where appropriate.

15. STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

15.1 The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan went out to public consultation (working with the community and businesses) during the period 15th September to 15th October 2023. This included consideration at scrutiny on 21st September (Corporate and Community Committee) and the Boston Town Area Committee on 28th September 2023. Feedback from the consultation was considered and incorporated into the Strategy and Action Plan as appropriate.

15.2 This report is provided for the Boston Town Area Committee to feedback on the progress that has been made against the commitments/actions provided in the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 to date. The Committee is also asked to suggest any additional actions for Cabinet's consideration for year two of the document.

16. REPUTATION

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

17. CONTRACTS

17.1 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.

18. CRIME AND DISORDER

18.1 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/action plan.

19. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

19.1 The final Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan has been considered through an Equality Impact Assessment.

20. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

20.1 It is considered that the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan will contribute to helping improve health and well-being in the borough/town, including supporting things such as walking and cycling around the town centre which links to the climate change agenda that is considered at point 21 of this report.

21. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

21.1 The Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan supports the climate change and environment agenda. This includes actions that for example seek to reduce litter, waste

and fly tipping and those associated with sustainable means of travel, such as walking and cycling.

22. ACRONYMS

BBC – Boston Borough Council
BTAC – Boston Town Area Committee

23. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023- 2027 - "A Town Centre for Everyone" Annual Review - Performance Monitoring of Actions October 2024

24. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Boston Borough Council Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027. "A Town Centre for Everyone".	Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 - Boston Borough Council

25. CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

This is the first publication of this report to BTAC as an annual review document since the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan was agreed on 25th October 2023.

Previous reports relating to the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan are listed below.

Name of body	Date
Corporate and Community Committee	21st September 2023 14th November 2024
Boston Town Area Committee	28th September 2023
Boston Borough Council's Cabinet	25th October 2023

26. REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	John Leach, Deputy Chief Executive (Communities) john.leach@boston.gov.uk, 07818 118 435
Signed off by:	John Leach, Deputy Chief Executive (Communities)
Approved for publication:	Cllr Dale Broughton, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre