

MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME WINTER UPDATE

6. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 6.2 The Panel discussed the Market Towns Programme – Winter Update at its meeting on 7th December 2022.
- 6.3 Following an enquiry from Councillor Pickering on the Wayfinding project, who expressed concerns that the project may become a white elephant, the Panel heard that the project was one of the last remaining accelerated projects and is linked to other planned projects allowing cohesion between multiple schemes. It was further stressed that the Joint Administration felt merit in continuing this project whilst also extending the project to include St Neots, it was felt that the project would help provide useful signposting for residents and visitors whilst providing each town with its own brand. Councillor Pickering further enquired about anticipated maintenance costs which may be associated with the project in the medium to long term and the Panel was advised that partnership working and advertising revenue would be sought to fund anticipated costs. Councillor Harvey observed that Huntingdon had previously had digital signage which was often broken, and further questioned what appetite there was for such a board given the use of smart phones. Councillor Gardener agreed with the comments made by other Panel members and suggested that the funding could be spent on other matters given the current economic climate. The Panel heard that the previous administration had shelved the Wayfinding project but that the Joint Administration felt the project had value and had thereby reinstated it.
- 6.4 Councillor Corney requested clarification surrounding the various funding pots available for the projects identified in Ramsey and the Panel heard that the intention was to combine the funding available to give the projects the best opportunity to succeed.
- 6.5 Councillor Wells thanked Officers for their support with the work in St Ives, and requested updated timescales following the consultation extension. The Panel heard that the deadline had been extended to allow for the received responses to be given full consideration. It was further advised that minimal amends were anticipated for Ramsey and Huntingdon but amends were expected for St Ives to incorporate further information following the analysis of the responses.
- 6.6 Councillor Gardener observed that due to the number of feasibility studies having been undertaken in St Neots recently, the available funding could have been impacted and thereby not able to fulfil what originally hoped.
- 6.7 Following questions from Councillor Gardener, the Panel heard that the Council were working closely with St Neots Town Council to ensure cohesion between the Priory Centre project and the potential purchase of the Oast House property by St Neots Town Council.

- 6.8 Councillor Gray observed the tight deadlines for the Priory Centre project and queried the confidence of the administration in delivering the project on time. The Panel were advised that the project would be focusing on realistic deliverables and the team had established working relationships with partners to ensure funding was secure and not jeopardised.
- 6.9 Following the discussion, the Panel observed that whilst they were generally in support of the recommendations they would like to see more detail on the Wayfinding project which it did not support.