

**Public
Key Decision - Yes**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Market Towns Programme – Spring Update

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 21 March 2023

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing

Report by: Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides the 2022/2023 Q4 update on the Market Towns Programme (MTP).

The MTP is an ambitious programme of economic led interventions to support Huntingdonshire's town centres recover from the Covid-19 Pandemic, whilst also looking forward to renewing and reshaping our town centres and high streets in a way that promotes growth, improves experiences, and ensures sustainability in the future.

The MTP is funded through a combination of external funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and National Highways.

This update particularly highlights:

- Progress on activity in St Neots:
 - Market Square (Transport Projects)
 - Old Falcon Inn
 - Priory Centre
 - St Neots CPCA legacy funding (masterplan phase 1)

- Delivery of existing and new planned activity in Ramsey:
 - Civic Hub
 - Market Produce Hall & Pedestrianisation (Capital)
 - Market Produce Hall (Revenue)

- Town Centre Masterplans– next steps
- Smarter towns project
- Digital Wayfinding options
- CPCA funding: Maximising use of remaining unallocated / accelerated delivery funding
- New UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSF) Vibrant communities' project

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is requested to:

- Note progress on the Market Towns Programme (MTP) over the last quarter.
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) or the Managing Director in Consultation with the Section 151 Officer, Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing and Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources to enter contractual arrangements, as necessary, to facilitate the completion of the St Neots Market Square renewal project.
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) or the Managing Director in Consultation with Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing to approve initiation of the Wayfinding (Digital Information System) project, or alternatively return the funding allocation to CPCA as per the requirements of the Accelerated Projects Funding Agreement.

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1. To provide an update on activity across the strands of the MTP. The report also updates on external funding grants, particularly noting activity on the outcome of the funding application to CPCA Local Growth Fund for delivery of the Market Produce Hall in Ramsey, the use of unallocated funding from the CPCA and legacy CPCA funding in respect of St Neots town centre masterplan delivery,

2. UPDATE ON MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME

ST NEOTS PROGRAMME:

Market Square (Transport Projects)

- 2.1. Construction of this scheme will begin in late Summer 2023 and will take up to about 12 months to complete. The scheme's detailed design is currently being refined, prior to the procurement of a construction partner. This is scheduled to commence in March 2023.
- 2.2. The Council will be publicising the final scheme designs in the Spring with residents, businesses, and local partners. This will include the interim arrangements necessary to facilitate construction, whilst ensuring minimum impact on local businesses and the Town Market. Regular project updates on this Project and other activities will also be provided through social media and the Market Town Programme Newsletter, which has a readership of over 400 registered residents and businesses.

The Old Falcon Inn

- 2.3. The Old Falcon Inn is a Grade II listed building and holds a prominent position in the Market Square. It is under private ownership and has been vacant for almost 20 years. The current owner is keen on bringing the building back into active use and following significant engagement from Council staff wishes to work in partnership with the Council towards this objective.
- 2.4. This is a complex scheme, which also includes an element of risk in terms of the current building condition and status, given the prolonged period since the property was in active use.
- 2.5. The MTP team are continuing to work with the existing owner, alongside internal teams, external technical experts and DLUHC to develop a viable proposition for the regeneration of the Old Falcon Inn and its return to active use.

Priory Centre

- 2.6. The objective of the Priory Centre project is to deliver a much enhanced and financially sustainable multi-use community facility, capable of providing a wide range of facilities and services to the people of St Neots. The Project will be delivered utilising funds allocated from the Future High Street Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy, subject to final proposals being approved.
- 2.7. The Council owns the freehold for the premises and is working closely with the building tenant, St Neots Town Council, on developing a project specification and tender documentation which sets out the key deliverables required from this scheme. The initial guiding objectives in this regard, include:
 - Increasing the occupancy levels and thus financial viability of the Centre, through an improved commercial offering which better maximises the available space, for example, enhanced audio-visual equipment to support theatre and live music performances.

- Improving the community facilities available, for example, linking the café function and Centre more closely with the Riverside, enhancing the main theatre or function hall by investing in the venue seating capacity, décor, and access arrangements.
 - Reconfiguring the Town Council occupied office space to reduce waste and increase efficiency, e.g., replacing the 2 separate reception areas for the Town Council and Centre with a single reception / welcome point.
 - Investing in energy efficiency to reduce energy costs and reduce carbon impact.
 - Consider options for expanding the Centre's commercial and community space above the current floorspace capacity.
 - Consider options for improving the exterior of the Centre and its links to the adjacent Oast House and Public Library.
- 2.8. The project specification set out above will form the basis for an open tender to procure architectural expertise and associated construction guidance to develop scheme options up to RIBA level 4 (technical design). Subject to this stage being completed satisfactorily, a second procurement exercise will be undertaken to appoint a construction partner.
- 2.9. During December 2022, the Town Council consulted independently with Centre users and, based on responses received, produced a paper setting out which aspects of the Centre it considers to be the most critical areas for investment. This paper will be used to inform the option development process.
- 2.10. We anticipate completing the tender process for architectural support during March, with initial options for the Centre produced for review in April. These options will be refined into a preferred option following appropriate consultation. The format of the preferred option will be based on a progressive model, so that works can be delivered in phases which are aligned to the available budget.
- 2.11. The rationale for this approach is to maintain continuity in Centre operation and ensure that funding from the Future High Street programme, which has a spend by deadline of March 2024, can be fully used as part of phase 1 works. Further phases following these works will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy, which does not have a restrictive spend by date. This approach ensures no external funding is lost and ensures improvements best meet the needs of current as well as future centre users.
- 2.12. It should be noted that at its meeting on the 10th of January 2023, the Town Council, subject to the negotiation of an appropriate sales price, has approved the acquisition of the Oast House. This building is adjacent to the Priory Centre, and should this acquisition be completed, we will seek to factor in the Town Council's proposals for the Oast House, as far as is practicable, in terms of the final preferred design option for the Priory Centre. This acquisition could potentially provide for greater efficiencies in the Priory Centre scheme, leading to either reduced costs or an improved service offering.

St Neots CPCA Legacy funding (masterplan phase 1)

- 2.13. In 2019, HDC was awarded £609,655 capital and revenue funding focused on St Neots town centre. These funds were intended to support the first phase of the St Neots masterplan. The funds were allocated to a wide range of projects including footfall cameras and marketing with these works all delivered.
- 2.14. However, the Business Improvement District element of the original project plan was not taken forward due to a lack of support and changing circumstances. Consequently, there is £260,000 of these funds still available for investment in St Neots. Over the last quarter, the MTP team has been working with key local partners on options for maximising this funding. Several options have been produced including:

- Development of a stage / entertainment area (including built in audio infrastructure to support events) within the renewed Market Square, which can also provide a multi-use space, e.g., café seating.
 - Public art within the town centre, to be developed as part of a local competition, managed by St Neots Town Council.
 - Extension of wayfinding digital screens into St Neots (subject to confirmation overall programme proceeds).
 - Supporting improved physical signage into St Neots
 - Co-retail space, providing an opportunity for the sale of products by local independent traders / product creators in a shared retail space.
- 2.15. Work has been undertaken to ensure that all the projects proposed above are revenue neutral to HDC. In practice, some of the projects will be delivered entirely by partners, whereas others will involve the transfer of assets and management and maintenance responsibilities at an agreed point.
- 2.16. The St Neots Masterplan Steering group, which was established to support delivery of this programme, has been consulted and have provided their support to these proposed projects. A change control request form outlining the proposed projects will now be submitted to the CPCA Board for their approval. Subject to this being provided, delivery of the revised programme will begin from April 2023.

Ramsey Civic Hub

- 2.17. The Ramsey Civic Hub is a new facility being delivered by Ramsey Town Council. The Town Council is refurbishing the former TSB premises on the Great Whyte utilising funding, which was originally awarded to HDC. These funds have since been novated to the Town Council, who will own and operate the Hub. Works are underway, with a completion date of March 2023. Major works recently completed include the installation of a new roof.

Ramsey Market Produce Hall & Public Realm improvements (capital funding)

- 2.18. The Council has successfully secured capital funding of £1.15 million from the Local Growth Fund to design and develop a Market Produce Hub in the Great Whyte area of Ramsey town centre. These funds were approved by the CPCA Board during December 2022. The overall project value is £1.45 million and includes an earlier allocation of funds (£300K) for enabling works, including public realm improvements,
- 2.19. The purpose of the Market Produce Hub is to revitalize the town centre by providing a new attraction for shoppers that can also serve as a start-up hub for market traders or other small-scale independent retailers. Preparatory work has already been undertaken, including site visits with the Highways Authority. Briefing meetings and discussions with local partners including the Town Council will be arranged before the project is formally launched.
- 2.20. This scheme will require external technical and construction partners. HDC Officers are currently investigating procurement options including the potential use of the Crown Commercial Services Framework to procure the relevant expertise and suppliers.

Ramsey Market Produce Hall (revenue funding)

- 2.21. As part of the overall funding package, the Council has also secured £221K in revenue funding as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund HDC Project Proposals.
- 2.22. These funds will be used to support the operation and initial launch of the Market Produce Hub. How the Hub will be managed and operated is actively being reviewed currently. HDC will be consulting with local organisations, including Ramsey Town

Council, on options for this and how we can maximise local input and support. Recommendations in this regard will be submitted to members for their consideration as the project is developed in detail.

Town Centre Masterplans – next steps

- 2.23. A core part of the original Market Town Programme was the development of conceptual Masterplans for our major town centres. The final stage of this work focused on Huntingdon, Ramsey and St Ives is in the process of being completed, following the completion of a local consultation programme
- 2.24. A presentation of the consultation feedback and next steps was provided to Huntingdon Town Council on the 12th of January. Further presentations have been scheduled for the 8th and 9th March with St Ives and Ramsey Town Council, respectively. Where masterplan project options can be progressed towards delivery, such as the Ramsey Market Produce Hub, the feedback provided at this stage will guide initial project development and approach. However, further opportunities for engagement with residents and others will be provided as projects are developed to a detailed stage. For example, a working group is being established with Ramsey Town Council to co-ordinate the management and delivery of the new Produce Hub. This working group will also look at future management arrangements which could involve Ramsey Town Council taking a leading role.
- 2.25. Draft masterplans for each town centre were produced during 2022. Residents, businesses, and partner organisations were consulted on the Masterplans during October and November last year. 234 online responses were submitted to HDC as part of this consultation. This level of response compares favourably with similar consultations in comparable locations. The breakdown by town is shown overleaf:

No of submissions	Town
56	Huntingdon
71	Ramsey
107	St Ives
<u>234</u>	

- 2.26. In addition, 25 responses were provided by organisations. This included governmental bodies such as the Environment Agency in addition to Town Councils in each of the three towns.
- 2.27. Most responses received were positive and supportive of the broad masterplan objectives and key projects, and with some excellent suggestions and recommendations, however, concerns and challenges relevant to projects were also particularly useful. We are grateful for the time and care taken in very many of the responses. The feedback received as part of this consultation is now being used to finalise the masterplan documents. The final masterplans will be published during March, alongside a summary of the feedback received during the consultation stage.
- 2.28. Whilst the masterplans provide a vision of our ambitions for Huntingdon, Ramsey, and St Ives town centres, it is important to underline that these documents are conceptual only and are not intended as detailed delivery plans.

Smarter Towns

- 2.29. The purpose of the Smarter Towns project is to deliver a standard based Low Power Wide Area (LPWA) network within Huntingdon, Ramsey, and St Ives, based on a

network of gateway routers. This network will form the basis for the deployment of Internet of Things (IoT) devices by the council, businesses, and community groups.

- 2.30. The installation of gateway routers, which will be used to communicate with deployed sensors, is underway. River level/ flood sensors have also already been installed in St Neots. As reported in local press, the St Neots Rowing Club is part of the initial pilot trial, which will not only provide early warnings of flooding, but will also provide information on water temperature. Sensors in additional locations in both St Neots and St Ives are currently being installed.
- 2.31. Additional sensors including ground water flooding, footfall and air quality sensors are currently being considered for acquisition and installation. The adoption of footfall sensors, for example, could provide a more financially sustainable means to monitor the health of our town centres whilst minimising ongoing revenue costs, which apply to alternative systems such as footfall cameras.
- 2.32. This scheme is being delivered in partnership with Connecting Cambridgeshire and will be completed by March 2023. Funding for the scheme is provided by the CPCA.

Digital Wayfinding Project

- 2.33. The Digital Wayfinding approach seeks to make best use of the latest Information Technology systems to provide up to date information to residents, visitors, and other interested parties, in high footfall locations such as town centres. The Council was previously awarded funding of £200K from CPCA to deploy a Wayfinding system to St Ives, Ramsey, and Huntingdon. The scheme was intended to provide digital screens in each town centre, with locally specific information being displayed.
- 2.34. In addition to the provision of digital screens, existing physical signage was also to be reviewed to assess whether improvements were necessary, or whether new signage was appropriate. This also would have included an element of decluttering old or redundant signage.
- 2.35. Whilst work began on Digital Wayfinding in 2021, the scheme was paused early in 2022. This was primarily due to concerns as to how the screens would be used and maintained and what the overall benefits would be. Officers have been asked to review the options for this project, which may or may not lead to the scheme being recommissioned. If the project does not proceed, under the terms of our funding agreement with CPCA, the funds will be returned.
- 2.36. The original project proposal was developed in partnership with Connecting Cambridgeshire (CC). Initial discussions have been held with CC concerning the project, focused on potentially rescoping the specification and subject to developing an acceptable approach, recommissioning. CC have confirmed their interest in revisiting the project, and subject to this review, taking a leading role in delivering the scheme. The rescoping of the project will also consider the merits of extending the scheme to St Neots town centre, which did not form part of the original project specification.
- 2.37. HDC will therefore be working with CC to reassess the project, clearly identifying the benefits that could be delivered, and seeking to address issues concerning future maintenance and operation. Upon this review's completion, members will be consulted on formally restarting work on the project.

Unallocated CPCA Accelerated Delivery Funding

- 2.38. Whilst the majority of the original Accelerated Fund programme has been completed, there remains £802K of funding which is available for project delivery across Huntingdon and St Ives town centres.

- 2.39. This funding has not previously been allocated to any specific projects. Work has recently begun on developing options for scheme delivery in Huntingdon and St Ives, ensuring we utilise these funds within required timescales. Key considerations in this regard include projects outlined within the draft Huntingdon/St Ives masterplans, the feedback received on these documents from residents and partners and the recent work on the new Huntingdonshire Place Strategy, Huntingdonshire Futures.
- 2.40. The proposed project options have been reviewed for alignment with HDC strategy, local priorities and needs and deliverability. The preferred projects are:
- St Ives Broadway Cycle Link and Highways improvements – This highways scheme will be delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council.
 - St Ives Bandstand - This is a community driven and majority funded project which will provide a new bandstand for St Ives that will be used to support events in the town.
 - Shop Front grant scheme / Visual Merchandising support – this scheme will provide grants to businesses in both St Ives and Huntingdon for the purpose of improving shop fronts and how services/retail is marketed – This scheme will be delivered in partnership with Huntingdon BID (Business Improvement District).
 - Expansion and improvement of the Cromwell Museum to improve visitor amenities and facilities – delivered in partnership with the Cromwell Museum.
 - Huntingdon Visitor Centre – this new facility will be developed and managed by Huntingdon BID. Its purpose will be to promote the town centre, the retailers and services that can be found there and expanding the role and function of the BID to meet the needs of the local area and business community.
- 2.41. HDC will consult with CPCA on the acceptability of the proposals outlined above. Subject to CPCA's initial review, the preferred projects will be submitted to the CPCA Board for their consideration in March. If approved, project delivery will commence in the new fiscal year.

New Vibrant Communities Project (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)

- 2.42. The Vibrant Communities programme will provide funding allocations from HDC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Plan to our main Town's and large Villages to promote these local areas as places to visit and support local businesses. Funding has been allocated to specific settlements (representing towns/large villages) based on a mixture of Local Plan status and population.
- 2.43. Briefing meetings with local partners have been scheduled for the 22nd of February 2023 to provide advice and guidance about the fund. A Project Plan will be required for HDC to approve proposed activities. This Plan is based on a simple proforma and the deadline for submissions of draft plans to HDC is the 22nd of March with final plans submitted by the 7th of April, to allow sufficient time for member consultations. Activities will be delivered during the 2023/24 fiscal year. The total funds available are £135,000 in revenue.
- 2.44. The fund will also provide £20,000 in capital for expenditure during the current fiscal year (2022/23). Given the short timescale for delivery, the Council has been working with partners in Huntingdon and St Neots to progress projects already fully formed but lacking funding for delivery.
- 2.45. In St Neots we are working with a local community group to refurbish information displays throughout the town centre. The displays will be leased to the community group for 10 years. They will take over management of the displays, making them available to all community members to promote local activities, services, and events. We are also working with Huntingdon Town Council and BID to deliver improvements to the public realm through new decoration and displays in event areas.

3. FINANCE UPDATE

- 3.1. The overall sources of confirmed funding for the MTP are shown below in Table 1. For the first time and moving forward we will be reporting spend against funding streams. All funding identified below has been secured and is subject to contractual obligations and must be spent within the agreed guidelines and allocations only.
- 3.2. Where CPCA funding is being proposed for reallocation within this report, it should be noted that this is subject to approval by CPCA.

Table 1: Overall MTP funding sources and status

Market Towns Regeneration				
Funding sources	£ Grant secured	£ Spend to date	£ Grant balance	Comment
St Neots Regeneration				
Future High Street Funds (MHCLG now DLUHC)	£3,748,815	£823,221	£2,925,594	Progress on spend commitment and activity is report to DLUHC on a quarterly basis.
HDC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	£4,829,943	£0	£4,829,943	As per HDC cabinet decision. Schemes which have a mixture of funding sources inc CIL, will utilise time limited funds before CIL.
CPCA	£3,100,000	£0	£3,100,000	As per Funding Agreement (Dec '21). Expenditure is scheduled to Q3 and Q4 2023/24.
National Highways	£3,493,218	£0	£3,493,218	Funding agreement finalised January 2023. Drawdown of funding from NH will be in three tranches, scheduled for December 2023, May 2024, and November 2024.
CPCA Masterplan phase 1 St Neots *	*£609,655	*£305,099	*£304,556	Remaining spend is subject to a CPCA change control request, approval due March 2023.
St Neots Regeneration Sub-total	£15,781,631	£1,128,320	£14,653,311	
Huntingdon, St Ives & Ramsey				
CPCA Masterplans & Accelerated Funding	£3,000,000	£1,957,106	£802,150	Funding programme was due to conclude by March 2022. Ongoing work with CPCA to confirm rollover of unallocated funding of £802,150 into 2023/24. Proposed projects will

				be considered by CPCA Board in March 23. £240,744 which was allocated to specific projects that have now been delivered, was not required. These funds cannot be rolled over.
Sub-total	£3,000,000	£1,957,106	£802,150	
Staff revenue funding – overall MTP programme				
UK Shared Prosperity Fund **	£221,000	£0	£221,000	Funding confirmed. Expenditure profiled for Q3/Q4 in 2023/24.
Sub-total	£221,000	£0	£221,000	
Ramsey Market Produce / Retail Hub				
Local Growth Fund (CPCA) **	£1,153,525	£0	£1,153,525	Funding awarded December 2022./ Funding agreement currently being finalised.
Sub total	£1,153,525	£0	£1,153,525	
PROGRAMME TOTAL	£20,156,156	£3,085,426	£16,829,986	

*This programme was previously managed separately and has now been incorporated into the MTP.

**Funding included in this report for the first time as this has now been confirmed.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 The Panel discussed the Report at its meeting on 1st March 2023.

4.2 During its deliberations on the report the Panel has focussed on St Neots Market Square. In response to a question on whether the Panel will be consulted on the detailed design of the Market Square, Members have been advised that any such input will be through the local consultation process. On the same line, Members have sought assurances that the stakeholder database is fit for its purpose and any engagement is on the final iteration of the design.

4.3 The Panel has requested that any projects that are amber or red are reported to future meetings.

4.4 At the conclusion of its deliberations on the report the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to approve the recommendations.

- 4.5 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS

- 5.1 There are several risks associated with delivering an ambitious programme of this size and complexity, the notable risks are:

5.1.1. Budget management risk

The projects that sit within the MTP are at various stages and therefore, as work progresses to detailed level, cost reliability and accuracy increases, the level of risk is more certain. We will continue to review the individual projects viability and programme impacts, identifying any areas of risk, as scheme progress. The construction industry has seen materials and labour costs significantly increase in cost over the past 18 months. Inflation continues to increase. Therefore, as we move from design into delivery any decisions on proposed options will require agreement that they can be funded within the approved Market Towns programme budget. Mitigation: We will continue monitoring the programme funding profile and anticipated spending against budgets, updating to Cabinet quarterly. We will also seek to engage Contractors as part of an early-stage pre-procurement process to assess 'buildability' and a sense check of construction costs based on current market activity. The MTP team continue to provide regular updates to funding bodies, briefing them on estimated costings, risks, issues, and inter-dependencies.

5.1.2. Programme Timescales risk

This is an ambitious programme of delivery, with the funding for St Neots of £3.748m from the FHSF required to be spent by March 2024. The CPCA funding of £3.1m also has a deadline of March 2024, they recognise the strategic importance of this programme, and it is anticipated there will be some flexibility in the delivery timescales. National Highways have also indicated that they expect their funding of £3.49m within the 2024/25 fiscal year. Mitigation: The detailed programme plan covering feasibility, design, and delivery phases, will be continually reviewed ensuring focus remains on hitting funding milestones, claim dates and delivery milestones. The MTP team continue to provide regular updates to funding bodies, briefing them on progress, risks, issues, and inter-dependencies.

5.1.3. Programme Resources risk

The MTP requires different skills, expertise, and external technical support at various stages of the project delivery. The programme itself has multiple projects which must be managed simultaneously identifying all interdependences across the programme. There is significant internal and external stakeholder management and detailed consultation with partners and resident/ business groups. This could result in competing priorities across organisations that will require careful consideration. Mitigation: As part of the project, a detailed resources plan and communications strategy with stakeholders has been developed to ensure the management of expectations and information being shared promptly. The HDC's website is regularly updated with the progress across the core programme sites, more time is being invested in engaging stakeholders, a greater presence on social media and revamping of the newsletter.

5.1.4. Reputational Risk

The MTP is a high priority for the Council, so monthly reporting, governance and timely decision-making are critical to ensure the programme is successfully delivered. Mitigation: The programme governance and reporting lines will be continually monitored to ensure that the key programme milestones are managed and achieved.

A full MTP programme risk register is in place along with individual project risk registers. Given the size and complexity of the MTP it features on the Council's Strategic Risk register, along with the mitigating actions.

6. LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2026

- 6.1. The delivery of the MTP is aligned with the principles and key objectives of the emerging HDC Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's objectives.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council, based on previously successful funding bids and Cabinet decisions, has entered into several grant agreements with associated delivery and outputs frameworks.
- 7.2. All Funding Agreements and contracts are subject to review by HDC legal team and senior officers and members as appropriate. In the most recent quarter, a contract with National Highways was entered into concerning funding provision for the Market Square (transport projects) scheme. Over the next quarter it is anticipated that further Funding Agreements / Contracts may require legal review. This includes the Ramsey Market Produce Hall, for which we expect to receive a draft funding agreement before the end of the fiscal year.
- 7.3. There will be a requirement for ongoing legal input to support the further development of project options, this will include the Ramsey Market Produce Hall, Old Falcon Inn, and Priory Centre. Other areas include future land and property advice relating for example to leasehold acquisitions and may be required should there be any contractual disputes. Noting there are none currently within the programme.

8. EQUALITIES

- 8.1. The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 8.2. Good planning and effective regeneration can improve environments and opportunities for communities experiencing disadvantage. Planning which does not engage with or consider the needs of local communities is unlikely to improve their life chances and may further entrench area-based disadvantage.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL

- 9.1 The Council has a duty to ensure we continue to promote an environmentally positive recovery in Huntingdonshire following the impacts of COVID 19. We also have a duty to deliver sustainable place making. In December 2021, the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles. In October 2022, the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2022 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:

- setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
- an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners
- an encourager to those that live, work, and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions

- 9.2. The Council has direct control of only a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire, but we can adopt a key role to influence the district, demonstrating good practice whilst setting policies and strategies to influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth. These principles are embedded within the MTP.

10. APPENDICES

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 13th February 2020 can be found [here](#)

Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 28th July 2020 - EXEMPT

Report to Cabinet (Market Towns Accelerated Programme) 18th March 2020 can be found [here](#)

Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 23rd. February 2021 can be found [here](#)

Market Towns Programme Spring 2022 Update to Cabinet, 17 March 2022 can be found [here](#)

Market Towns Programme Summer 2022 Update to Cabinet June 2022 can be found [here](#)

Market Towns Programme Autumn 2022 Update to Cabinet September 2022 can be found [here](#)

Market Towns Programme Winter 2022 Update to Cabinet December 2022 can be found [here](#)

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