

**Public - Yes**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Market Towns Programme – Autumn Update 2023/2024

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth)  
Wednesday 4th October 2023

Cabinet  
Tuesday 17th October 2023

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing

**Report by:** Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All wards.

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides the 2023/2024 Q2 update on the Market Towns Programme (MTP).

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION UPDATED**

Cabinet is asked to:

Note progress on all the projects within the Market Towns Programme and specifically the following:

- (a) The appointment of a contractor to deliver the St Neots Town Centre Improvements (Market Square and adjacent highways/junctions) and commencement of works in October 2023.
- (b) Progression of the Priory Centre improvement project including the appointment of a multi-disciplinary team to develop proposals and support delivery.
- (c) Commencement of delivery of the Huntingdon & St Ives works, including roll out of the Shop Front Improvement Grant scheme.
- (d) Delivery of the Digital Information Screens project in Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, and Ramsey.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

1.1 To provide an update on activity across the strands of the Market Town Programme, with specific regard to the progress of projects highlighted above.

## **2. UPDATE ON MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME**

### **ST NEOTS PROGRAMME:**

#### **Town Centre Improvements (Transport Projects)**

2.1 The Town Centre Improvements project is scheduled to begin delivery during October 2023. This follows the successful completion of the contractor procurement process carried out, utilising the Eastern Highways Framework, in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council. The successful tender was submitted by the contractor Eurovia, and we are now in the process of finalising contracts to enable the works to begin in October.

2.2 The most significant risk to this project was the impact of high levels of inflation on the construction cost and, consequently, the ability of the Council to deliver the scheme within our current resources. Considerable work was undertaken in developing the detailed designs and specifications with scheme partners and contractors to mitigate this risk.

2.3 This work, which included consulting with contractors during the design process, helped to ensure that the value of both tenders received were broadly in line with cost expectations, and resources available. At a time when construction inflation is having a significant impact on the delivery of major infrastructure projects across the country, this is a considerable achievement.

2.4 Now that the procurement process is complete, work is turning towards the contractors starting on site, preparation and phasing of works in the Market Square and adjacent highways or junctions, which are due to be improved. The start of the main works within the Market Square itself is scheduled for January. This will help to ensure that there will be minimal impact on Christmas celebrations, including the Christmas lights switch on, which is a very popular event in the town.

2.5 As part of this initiation stage, the implementation of the Project Communication Plan will be of critical importance. The Communication Plan will be used to inform and guide messaging to residents and businesses. This includes ensuring accurate and up to date information concerning the works is always available. For example, on a topic discussed in these quarterly reports previously, where trees are due to be replaced in the Market Square for safety reasons due to being incorrectly planted (and as Cambridgeshire County Council would have been obliged to do anyway, regardless of the improvements works). This will ensure that residents and others can be fully aware that the scheme will in fact result in the planting of a greater number and wider variety of trees (already at semi-mature stage) than are currently positioned in the Market Square, combined with biodiverse ground level planters that incorporate the square's distinctive monastic statues, to help address what would otherwise be entirely natural and reasonable concerns.

2.6 Of critical importance to the success of this project, the Council continues to work with Wendy Fair Markets Ltd and the Market traders to support uninterrupted operation of the Market during the scheme works. Notably, this

has included installing new power points during July, which can be used by the traders (and St Neots Town Council when managing their own events/activities), for the duration of the construction period.

- 2.7 Discussions are also underway with Wendy Fair Ltd regarding the Council potentially taking over management of the Charter Market and integrating its operation into the Council's wider Market management, which also includes St Ives and Huntingdon. Subject to a successful conclusion of these discussions, the Council may take a direct role in managing St Neots Charter Market, beyond the completion of the town centre improvements.

### **3. Priory Centre Improvement**

- 3.1 The Priory Centre serves as a hub for community groups and cultural events. However, its facilities are dated, layout is inefficient, and the building orientation does not engage with its prime riverside setting. This project is focused on developing proposals and a delivery plan to reconfigure and improve the layout of the Priory Centre, investing in its facilities, creating a stronger link to the town centre, and establishing a connection to the riverfront.
- 3.2 Towards this end, the Council has recently contracted with Agents of Change (AOC), a specialist in community and cultural facilities, to develop designs and proposals for the Priory Centre and to co-ordinate refurbishment works.
- 3.3 The work being undertaken by AOC is being carried out and organised utilising the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) plan of work, which organises the process of briefing, designing, and delivering a new or improved building. AOC have been commissioned to take the project from initial designs (RIBA stages 0 to 2), up to construction (stage 5). The project is currently at the concept design stage (stage 2).
- 3.4 The Council and AOC are working very closely with the sitting tenant for the Priory Centre, St Neots Town Council, on developing an improved facility which enhances the cultural activities provided in the town and improves the financial sustainability of the Priory Centre as a whole. This has included establishing a Building Delivery Group comprised of members from both organisations. We are also seeking to engage with Centre users and St Neots residents in the project's development and delivery as part of the communication plan for the project.
- 3.5 The project is funded from both Future High Street (FHSF) grant funding and the Community Infrastructure Levy. FHSF grant funding is conditional on all expenditure of this element being completed by March 2024. Consequently, the Council is seeking to deliver some initial improvements by this point. This may include both internal, for example, energy efficient measures and, subject to planning permission, external improvements. The full extent of the improvement works, however, will be phased over 2023/24 and 2024/25 with the detailed schedule of works to be confirmed.
- 3.6 It is not possible to undertake works of this scale without impacting on the Centre's operation. This may result in a significant period of closure to allow works to proceed as efficiently as possible. We will work with the Town Council to develop a mitigation plan to minimise the impact of these works and to provide

support to those with existing or regular facilities bookings to assist with identifying alternative facilities during the works period.

#### **4. St Neots CPCA Legacy funding (masterplan phase 1)**

- 4.1 Delivery of this sub programme includes several small to medium scale projects. This includes the development of a stage in the redeveloped Market Square, and a public art initiative for the town centre, both of which are being delivered in partnership with St Neots Town Council.
- 4.2 The Market Square Stage is intended to provide a focal point for town centre events, including future Christmas lights switch-ons, in addition to providing a facility for other events throughout the year, which may include music and other cultural celebrations. The design of the stage is being developed through a separate commission to the main Market Square scheme, however, the Market Square technical designs have specifically considered and incorporated the necessary infrastructure for a new stage. This includes the positioning of the stage within the Square and access to electrical and other infrastructure.
- 4.3 A procurement process to appoint designers for this scheme is scheduled to commence in early October. We are aiming to finalise the designs and seek planning consent for the proposals by early Spring. The construction of the stage would be incorporated into the main Market Square improvement works and delivered by the contractor Eurovia.
- 4.4 The purpose of the public art project is to deliver one or more public art installations throughout the town centre.
- 4.5 The project will be delivered through a single tender process, managed by St Neots Town Council, to be commenced during the Autumn 2023. The timetable for delivery will be confirmed as part of this process. The resulting commission will be divided into three key deliverables, including:
- Research, engagement and development of themes and vision (including proposed medium of work)
  - Design work
  - Creation and installation

The Co-Retail Project also forms part of this smaller programme of activity funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). This scheme is being delivered in partnership with a local Community Interest Company, which is designed to support social enterprises and the public good in the local area.

- 4.6 The Co-Retail Scheme will enable space within a local retail unit to be provided to start up retailers and independent traders so that their goods and produce can be brought in front of shoppers and help to support new and local entrepreneurs. The project is scheduled to begin in the Autumn 2023. The investment which is being provided will enable space within an existing retail unit to be redesigned to accommodate this unique use. This project will deliver tangible benefits in terms of supporting local entrepreneurs and driving economic growth.

4.7 The final project within this programme is the Digital Information Screen initiative. This is being delivered as part of wider program including Huntingdon, St Ives and Ramsey. Further information about this project is included under paragraph 4.1.

## **5. Huntingdon and St Ives funding allocation**

5.1 The Huntingdon and St Ives programme is funded from a CPCA funding allocation which was provided as part of the original Market Town Programme, but which was only recently allocated to projects in March 2023. Just over £800,000 is provided to projects which will deliver Shop Front Improvement Grants in both town centres, a new Community bandstand in St Ives, an expansion of Cromwell Museum and a Visitor Information Centre in Huntingdon and a highways improvement scheme at The Broadway in St Ives.

5.2 The Shop Front Grant Scheme was launched during July 2023, generating a great deal of interest. By August, we have already approved four shop front grants across both St Ives and Huntingdon town centres. A further seven grant applications are currently under consideration. The value of grants approved varies from £2,000 to £10,000. We expect that the scheme will deliver between 20 to 30 shop front grants in total. The grants and the improvements they encourage are an effective way in which to promote and enable physical improvements to both Huntingdon and St Ives town centres.

5.3 The Shop Front Grant Scheme is being delivered in partnership with Huntingdon BID, who are supporting applications in both St Ives and Huntingdon. We are also working with the BID on delivering a Visitor Information Centre (focused on the town centre and shopping). The Centre is being provided with the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall. Work is currently underway, and the Centre is scheduled to be completed during the early Autumn.

5.4 As reported previously we have also provided financial support to the community driven project to provide a new bandstand within St Ives. This project was successfully completed during July.

5.5 We are also working with the Cromwell Museum and Huntingdon Town Council to deliver a major expansion of the Museum. This project may involve the acquisition of a currently disused building within Huntingdon town centre, a short distance from the existing Museum. Should this acquisition proceed, it would present an exciting opportunity to provide more exhibition and display space in addition to enhanced customer facilities. The new building, if acquired, would not replace the existing Museum, but would be treated as an extension of the Museum's offering.

5.6 Another project being delivered in partnership is the highway improvements scheme proposed for The Broadway in St Ives. This is a County Council driven project and will provide for improved pedestrian/cycle links and other highway enhancements in and around the shopping units at this location. Whilst an initial scheme design was developed for this project, further improvements are being made and once confirmed, the scheme construction is provisionally expected to commence in April 2024.

## **6. Digital Wayfinding**

- 6.1 Following consideration previously reported in these quarterly updates, the Digital Information Screen programme was reinitiated and is being delivered across all four main market towns in Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Ramsey. The objective of this scheme is to provide up to eight digital screens in high footfall locations for the purpose of providing local information based on tourism, retail, culture, and heritage as well as practical information concerning events, facilities, and transport links.
- 6.2 The Council is working closely with local partners including Town Councils in all four areas, local community organisations and Huntingdon BID. This includes identifying the most appropriate locations for the screens and how best to link to and incorporate local branding and other initiatives including local town apps which have been developed in several locations. The Digital Information Screens will be updated and managed by local partners.
- 6.3 All development costs, including maintenance of the screens for a period of five years, will be funded wholly from the wider Market Towns Programme. At the end of this period, local partners can continue to operate the Digital Screens or alternatively opt for the removal of the screens should technology have advanced or for any other reason. The Council is undertaking a procurement exercise to confirm a contractor, responsible for delivering all aspects of this project. Following this appointment, expected during October 2023, work will begin on designing the systems to be used and planning project delivery, which we expect will take up to 12 months for full completion.

## **7. Smarter Towns**

- 7.1 The purpose of the Smarter Towns project is to develop a network of smart technology which can provide up-to-the-minute data on local conditions. This can include air quality or the capacity of local car parks for example. This project is being delivered in partnership with Connecting Cambridgeshire.
- 7.2 Communication routers, which local sensors (potentially owned and managed by a wide range of public organisations) have been installed in our larger Market towns and a network of sensors has been deployed, for example in relation to monitoring river levels, for the purpose of providing flood warnings. This project is due to conclude shortly, and we are in the process of installing the final initial sensors before the network is opened and promoted more widely to other public organisations.
- 7.3 As part of this final stage, the Council is focusing on deploying sensors to monitor air quality in typically high pollution areas, for example, close to major road networks. This data can then be utilised in several ways by both the Council and partners, in planning appropriate mitigation activities.
- 7.4 As part of a pilot scheme, we are also working with local Housing Associations to provide sensors which are capable of monitoring environmental conditions in local housing stock. This can be used as an early warning system concerning damp and fuel poverty, for example, where accommodation is not reaching appropriate levels of heat during Winter. Should these activities be considered successful, partners will be able to directly invest in low-cost sensors and continue to expand and access the smarter towns network.

## **8. Ramsey Produce Hub**

- 8.1 The Ramsey Market Produce Hub project has an allocation of £1.1 million of funding from the Local Growth Fund, in addition to a parallel project focused on public realm improvements of £300,000. The purpose of the Hub is to provide space within the Great Whyte area for new retail start-ups and independents to provide products and produce which can also generate footfall and business for existing shop keepers. We are working closely with the town council to ensure this objective can be realised as effectively as possible.
- 8.2 The proposed location for this facility would require the loss of up to 8 on street parking bays. To better understand car parking capacity, not only relating to this project but also the wider Vision for Ramsey, the Council has undertaken a car parking capacity study. A key excerpt of the conclusions set out in the report is included below:
- There is available spare capacity within the town centre but if some spaces are removed from the Town Square and the parking demand increases in line with expectations, people may have to park slightly further from the heart of the town centre than they currently do. Spaces could be retained in the centre for disabled parking or EV charging, but standard vehicles may have to relocate by a small distance. The available space is further to the north along Great Whyte or greater use of the spare capacity in the Mews Close short stay car park.*
- 8.3 Whilst the overall impact on parking according to this report is relatively low scale, it is important that we do consider this issue in the design and deliver of the Market Produce Hub and other projects in Ramsey town centre. This will be of particular importance in accommodating or adding to disabled parking and EV (Electrical Vehicle) charging for example.
- 8.4 As noted in previous quarterly reports, a critical challenge to the Produce Hub scheme and the proposed location is the presence of the river culvert underneath. We have undertaken technical and engineering assessments which have confirmed that whilst the original concept is technically deliverable it would require significant civil engineering works which would impact on cost.
- 8.5 Consequently, we are considering alternative options for effectively delivering the original benefit in footfall, jobs and diversifying the shopping offer available in Ramsey town centre. Different approaches may include smaller more flexible spaces which could provide a 'shop in a box' concept, utilising structures which can be more easily relocated around town centre needs and activities.
- 8.6 A good example of this concept can be found at 'The Courtyard' in St Ives which provides a small space for startup and independent traders, some of whom are predominantly online, e.g., Etsy traders. This relatively new concept has been very successful and provides a great variety of retail and cultural choice. Whilst the setting is very different to Ramsey, we consider there are positive lessons to be learnt from 'The Courtyard' in how we plan and develop the Ramsey Produce Hub. An options appraisal has been commissioned and we will be working closely with local partners to review this and consider how to progress this project.
- 8.7 In terms of the public realm improvements, we are liaising closely with the County Council Highways Department and Ramsey Town Council to develop

proposals for this project. Any improvements delivered will be required to integrate and add value to the resulting 'Hub' in whichever form this is delivered.

8.8 Several improvements have been identified as part of this process, which we consider will not conflict with the 'Hub' scheme. This includes decluttering of the highways, and the creation of additional disabled parking bays to compensate for any loss due to the 'Hub' building itself.

8.9 We are also investigating partial pedestrianisation of the area proposed for the Hub, to support town centre activities such as the Saturday market, whilst ensuring access for deliveries to local shops where required as a priority. To simplify and streamline delivery of this scheme, we will be seeking to deliver this fully in partnership with the County Council and their current Highways contractor. A timetable for delivery has not yet been developed as this is subject to the development of an acceptable design, which can be consulted on, however, we are targeting early Summer 2024 for completion.

## 9. FINANCE UPDATE:

9.1 The overall sources of confirmed funding for the MTP are shown below in Table 1. All funding identified below has been secured and is subject to contractual obligations and must be spent within the agreed guidelines and allocations only.

**Table 1: Overall MTP funding sources and status**

<b>Market Towns Regeneration</b>				
<b>Funding sources</b>	<b>£ Grant secured</b>	<b>£ Spend to date</b>	<b>£ Grant balance</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>St Neots Regeneration</b>				
Future High Street Funds (MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) now DLUHC)	£3,748,815	£1,388,463.29	£2,360,351.71	Progress on spending commitment and activity is reported to DLUHC quarterly.
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 (Community Infrastructure Levy), will utilise time limited funds before CiL.



CPCA	£3,100,000	£0	£3,100,000	Funding has been reprofiled for spend during 2024/25 financial year.
National Highways	£3,493,218	£0	£3,493,218	Funding agreement finalised January 2023. Drawdown of funding from NH (National Highways) will be in three tranches, scheduled for December 2023, May 2024, and November 2024.
CPCA Masterplan phase 1 St Neots (post change control)	£260,000	0	£260,000	CPCA Board approval has been provided to carry forward remaining funds and allocated to revised project activities.
<b>St Neots Regeneration Sub-total</b>	£15,431,976	£1,388,463,29	£14,043,512.70	
<b>Huntingdon &amp; St Ives</b>				

CPCA Masterplans & Accelerated Funding (*post change control March 2023)	£802,150	£50,000	£752,150	<p>The funding programme was originally due to conclude by March 2022.</p> <p>CPCA Board have confirmed approval to rollover of previously unallocated funding of £802,150 from these funds into 2023/24 and 2024/25.</p> <p>The original total funding allocation was £3,000,000. This has been deducted from the 'total grant secured' as the majority of the original allocation has been completed or closed.</p> <p>However, £295,000 of the original £3M allocation, is still active, and reserved to public realm improvements in Ramsey and is listed below*.</p>
<b>Sub-total</b>	£802,150	£50,000	£752,150	
<b>Ramsey Great Whyte Revenue funding (supporting Market Produce / Retail Hub &amp; staffing costs)</b>				
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£221,000	£8,498.46	£212,501.54	Funding confirmed. Expenditure profiled for spend into 2024/25.
<b>Sub-total</b>	£221,000	£8,498.46	£212,501.54	
<b>Ramsey Market Produce / Retail Hub</b>				
Local Growth Fund (CPCA)	£1,153,525	£7,843.50	£1,145,681.50	Funding awarded December 2022.

CPCA Masterplans & Accelerated Funding – original allocation (Ramsey Public Realm*)	£295,000*	£0	£295,000*	Expenditure profiled for completion by June 2024.
<b>Sub total</b>	£1,448,525	£7,843.53	£1,440,681.47	
<b>PROGRAMME TOTAL</b>	<b>£17,903,651</b>	<b>£1,454,805.28</b>	<b>£16,448,845.70</b>	

## 10. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 10.1 The Panel discussed the Market Towns Programme Autumn Update 2023-2024 Report at its meeting on 4th October 2023.
- 10.2 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Jennings, that feedback from other Local Authorities on their experience with the wayfinding project had been sought and an update would be brought in the next quarterly report to the Panel.
- 10.3 Councillor Pickering expressed concerns on funding deadlines from the Future High Street Fund in relation to the Priory Centre project, however the Panel were reassured that although the project was working to tight deadlines, it was felt that these remained achievable. In addition, the team were working closely alongside the funding provider who had indicated that a commitment to spent the funding would be sufficient to secure the funding if the project timescales did slip.
- 10.4 Following a question from Councillor Corney, the Panel heard that the results of the Ramsey Parking Survey had been shared with the local Town Council, however these can also be shared with ward members if it has not yet filtered through.
- 10.5 Councillors Slade and Gardner expressed the importance of ensuring that communication with local residents is underway prior to the commencement of the project. The Panel were assured that the project would be project managed by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council, an agile Communications Plan was in place, with any feedback or input from local Councillors welcomed.
- 10.6 Councillor Slade further enquired whether there was a conflict of interest with the appointment of CIC as they were also leading on the Inclusive Steering Group under the Place Strategy. The Panel heard that the Executive Councillor had no concerns over this but would follow up with Councillors outside of the meeting.
- 10.7 Councillor Gleadow raised a concern over the risk of inflation affecting the budget for the programme of works in St Neots market Square, following which, the Panel were assured that a detailed costing procedure had been undertaken to ensure a deliverable scheme could be achieved and that risk factors had been accommodated for within the budget.

- 10.8 Councillor Pickering observed that 7.4 related to sensors for Housing Association properties and enquired how these would be funded. The Panel heard that these sensors would be useful for the Environmental Health team in monitoring properties rented by Private Landlords and opportunities to co-ordinate with Local Housing Associations were being investigated.
- 10.9 It was observed by Councillor Slade that there had been negative press in St Neots relating to the Shopfront Scheme only being available to businesses in Huntingdon and St Ives. The Panel heard that the available funding had been solely for those two towns, however following several successful applications some funding remained available and it was believed that the funders may be open to negotiations to expand the scheme subject to a review of spend at the end of the next quarter, into the other market towns. Councillor Gardener further enquired whether this could in turn be opened up for Key Service Areas across the district, whereupon the Panel were advised that this funding pot was specifically for the market towns however, other funding opportunities would be investigated as they came to light.
- 10.10 Councillor Corney requested to record his appreciation for the hard work done by the team and noted that feedback received from colleagues across district and town councils is positive, a sentiment echoed by the Panel. Further to this, the Panel heard that regular engagement events were being built into the diary to provide further updates for Councillors and local Councils.
- 10.11 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

## **11. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS**

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

### **Budget management risk**

- 11.2 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 the scheme progresses. The construction industry has seen materials and labour costs significantly increase in cost over the past 18 months. Inflation continues to be high.
- 11.3 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.

### **Programme Timescales risk**

- 11.4 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. In order to ensure this is achieved we are seeking to reallocate funds within the programme to those projects most capable of meeting this deadline. Any FHSF reallocated will be replaced by CiL allocation, for expenditure beyond the current financial year.
- 11.5 The CPCA funding of £3.1m also has a deadline of March 2024, however, a change control request to move these funds into the 2024/25 financial year, has been submitted to the CPCA and will be considered by the CPCA Board during September. CPCA recognise the strategic importance of this programme, and we do not anticipate any issues in CPCA accepting this request.
- 11.6 The MTP team continue to provide regular updates to funding bodies, briefing them on progress, risks, issues, and inter-dependencies.

### **Programme Resources risk**

- 11.7 The MTP requires different skills, expertise, and external technical support at various stages of 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.
- 11.8 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.

### **Reputational Risk**

- 11.9 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.

## **12. LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2026**

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

### **13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Council, based on previously successful funding bids and Cabinet decisions, has entered into several grant agreements with associated delivery and outputs frameworks.
- 13.2 All funding agreements and contracts are subject to review by the 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.
- 13.3 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.

### **14. EQUALITIES**

- 14.1 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.
- 14.2 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.

### **15. ENVIRONMENTAL**

- 15.1 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 2023 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.

15.2 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.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report to Cabinet (FHSF (Future High Street Fund)) 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) 23<sup>rd</sup>. February 2021 can be found [here](#)

Market Towns Programme Spring 2022 Update to Cabinet, 17th 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](#)

Market Towns Programme Spring 2023 Update to Cabinet March 2023 can be found [here](#)

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