

MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME SUMMER UPDATE

- 10.2 The Panel discussed the Market Towns Programme Summer Update Report at its meeting on 10th July 2024.
- 10.3 In response to a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that in relation to St Neots, only a small number of the shop front grants had been successful, this was due to the remaining applications not fulfilling the criteria for the scheme. The recommendation was that the scheme is expanded to include areas outside of the market towns and previously unsuccessful applications would have the opportunity to reapply.
- 10.4 Following requests for clarification from Councillor Cawley and Councillor Gardener over the proposed purchase of an additional location for the Cromwell Museum and the long term ownership of that property, the Panel were assured that whilst the ownership would sit with Huntingdon Town Council, grant agreement documents would have clauses built in to protect this asset and clarify the use of funds from any future sale.
- 10.5 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Pickering, that the gas boiler at the Priority Centre was in good working order and it was not planned to replace this until necessary. In addition it was noted that the current timescales for the project were based upon industry standard assumptions but that it was hoped that additional efficiencies could be established once a contractor was appointed.
- 10.6 Councillor Catmur enquired whether any further hidden risks were anticipated within the St Neots market square project, following the discovery of a previously unidentified pipe through the project, following which, the Panel were advised that all the interrogation into the ground works was now complete, therefore no other unexpected discoveries were anticipated. The Panel were further assured that tolerances had been built into the project timescales and that this was not expected to impact the overall project timescales.
- 10.7 In response to a question from Councillor Martin, the Panel heard that the objections received for the Priory Centre application were no unexpected and that the team were working through those comments. The Panel were also advised that 80% of the anticipated works were internal works and that the external works were looking to bring a more vibrant visual impact for the centre. Work was continuing with the team liaising with planning consultants, conservation team and English Heritage to provide the best solution for all.
- 10.8 Councillor Martin praised the overall plans for the Ramsey project but expressed concern that the proposed pop up shops may affect the street scene and visibility for existing and established businesses. The team were assured that retail champions had been employed to ensure that the scheme would benefit all residents and business owners. The Panel was also assured, following an enquiry from Councillor Catmur, that the popup shops and

pedestrianisation of the area were being developed to be accessibility compliant.

- 10.9 Following a question from Councillor Gardener regarding the location of sensors on the Great Ouse River, the Panel heard that detail on this would be sought and brought back to the Panel.
- 10.10 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.