

REPORT TO ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Meeting Date: 31 August 2021
 Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise & Housing
 Key Decision: No
 Policy and Budget Framework: No
 Public / Private: Public

Title: Carlisle City Centre Taskforce
 Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
 Report Number: ED.29/21

Purpose / Summary:

This report provides an overview of the proposals for a new city centre taskforce, made up of key stakeholders in the city centre, aimed at building new networks in the city to encourage greater vitality and viability in the city centre, and ensure resilience following the COVID 19 pandemic.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- i) Note the comments from Overview and Scrutiny regarding the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce
 - ii) Approve the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce, as per the Terms of Reference (appendix A), subject to any minor amends.

Tracking

Executive:	31 August
Scrutiny:	29 July 2021
Council:	

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the continuing strain on high streets across the UK was evident. Changing consumer habits, particularly fuelled by the rise of online shopping and out of town retail centres, have caused retail to contract in high streets and city centres. Due to the city's role as a service centre for around 500,000, the city has fared comparably well against similar cities in the UK. The vacancy rate has remained steady, and close to the national average of 12% between 2012-2019. However, the city has clearly faced challenges prior to this, for example the loss of the key anchor site in the historic quarter, Hoopers Department store in 2012, which has negatively impacted the viability of retail in this area. Carlisle City Centre has remained retail dominant- however the changes the high street faces means that the city needs to diversify towards greater experiential offer for visitors and shoppers and offer a range of uses beyond shopping- including residential, office and hospitality.
- 2.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges- and the closure of key retailers in Carlisle, including Topshop and Debenhams further exemplify the need for the city centre to adapt and change to the new role of high streets.
- 2.3 Carlisle City Council and its partners are in the process of securing over £100 million in funding for Carlisle City Centre. This transformational funding will be used to support the city's regeneration and allow Carlisle to grow and succeed in a new era for centres and high streets.
- 2.4 In 2020 the Carlisle's Town Deal Board was created to oversee plans for investment in Carlisle through the government's Towns Fund. This board is made up of key private and public sector organisations across the city- its remit covers the entirety of Carlisle's urban area. The Town Deal Board has overseen the creation of Carlisle's Town Investment Plan- submitted to government in October 2020 and is an example of successful collaboration working taking place to drive forward Carlisle's growth.
- 2.5 Alongside these activities, The Council is also looking to develop greater city-centre networks, to ensure greater city centre resilience going forward, through establishing the **City Centre Taskforce**. This will be a focussed collaboration, made up of key city centre- based organisations to identify the challenges and opportunities the city centre faces, and ensure local leadership for the city centre as it moves towards economic recovery following the impacts of COVID-19, and the delivery of significant city centre investment.
- 2.6 The Taskforce will aim to support greater collaboration working in the city centre, generating new ideas and gaining different perspectives on city centre economic issues.
- 2.7 Unlike many centres, Carlisle has does not have a Business Improvement District which has meant there is a gap in collaboration working for the city centre. The proposed task force would ensure that an effective collaboration body for the city

centre exists, this would also further support the plans and funds for the city centre coming forward- creating a strong forum for engagement across a range of projects.

3. The City Centre Taskforce

3.1 Remit

- 3.1.1 The role of the Taskforce is solely to act as an engagement group, providing feedback to Carlisle City Council on city centre regeneration activities. It will not have any formal decision-making status or financial implications for the Council, other than the costs of hosting the meetings.
- 3.1.2 The task force shall provide feedback to the Carlisle City Council on such matters including but not limited to:
- a) The development of the regeneration projects in Carlisle City Centre, including Borderlands, Future High Street Fund and Town Deal projects.
 - b) Highlight city centre specific issues that will be reported to the Council
 - c) Identify further/future opportunities for Carlisle's growth and development
 - d) Support the City Council in formulating new strategies and plans for the city centre and seeking additional funding

3.2 Composition

- 3.2.1 Taskforce members will be nominated by the Council and include individuals from key city centre businesses and organisations. The membership would aim to reflect the key sectors based in the city centre for example, including organisations from:
- Retail and hospitality sectors
 - Property and landlord sectors
 - Professional service sectors
 - Community and public sectors
- 3.2.2 The Taskforce shall meet as and when required- aiming to provide flexibility to changing demands and timescales of key projects, with an expected number of around 4-6 meetings taking place every year (with options to meet virtually, using teleconferencing facilities in place). 2 hours will be scheduled for each meeting.
- 3.2.3 The Taskforce will be chaired by Carlisle City Council's Portfolio Holder of Economy, Enterprise and Housing.
- 3.2.4 Support and administrative arrangements will be provided by the Council.
- 3.2.5 A full Terms of Reference is available below (Annex A)

3.3 Progress on establishing group

- 3.3.1 The Council is currently identifying potential members to be invited to join the taskforce, aiming to ensure that a broad representative membership is achieved, drawing on the range of sectors as above.
- 3.3.2 We are aiming to hold the inaugural of the Taskforce meeting by September 2021.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A report (ED27/21) covering the establishment of a city centre taskforce was taken to Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 29 July 2021.
- 4.2 The Panel were asked to provide feedback prior to submission to Executive, and the following comments were received:
- Members asked that efforts were made to ensure a diverse membership of the taskforce, including someone with an interest in / led on climate change.
 - Members asked that consideration be given to opportunities to involve members of the public in the work of the Taskforce.
- 4.3 The Council, when identifying members, will ensure to target people who do not usually get involved in the work of the taskforce, and will keep scrutiny involved in the developments relating to the taskforce to ensure their input.
- 4.4 Input from the public on the work of the Taskforce will also be encouraged and facilitated, when appropriate.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- i) Note the comments from Overview and Scrutiny regarding the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce
 - ii) Approve the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce, as per the Terms of Reference (appendix A), subject to any minor amendments.

6. Contribution to the Carlisle Plan priorities

- 6.1 These activities will contribute to the following Carlisle Plan Priorities

- P1: Supporting business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle.
- P3: Improving the quality of our local environment and green spaces so that everyone can enjoy living, working and visiting Carlisle.

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Appendices Appendix A: City Centre Taskforce Terms of Reference
attached to report:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – There are no legal implications arising from this Report other than to comment that the Task Force would not be a decision making body and actions would lie with the different stakeholders.

PROPERTY SERVICES – No property comments

FINANCE – Other than the costs of hosting events and meetings, which will be funded from existing Economic Development budgets, there are no financial implications arising from the establishment of this taskforce.

EQUALITY – The Terms of Reference for the Taskforce state:

‘The Taskforce is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work and will adhere to the Council’s Equality Policy. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out, as appropriate, when developing plans, policies and projects.’

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – There are no information governance implications with this report

Carlisle City Centre Taskforce

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Carlisle City Centre Taskforce is a collaboration established to identify issues, and explore opportunities to support the growth of Carlisle City Centre, as well as support the City Council by sharing views on the emerging regeneration projects for Carlisle, as the city moves towards recovery from the impacts of Coronavirus pandemic.

2. Status

The City Centre Taskforce will act in as an engagement group to provide feedback on city centre issues and activities to Carlisle City Council (hereafter the Council).

3. Membership

The membership of the Taskforce aims to reflect the range of organisations based in the city centre, and includes representatives from key sectors, including retail; property; cultural/community organisations and professional services as well as the public sector.

The taskforce will be chaired by Cllr Paul Nedved, Portfolio Holder of Economy, Enterprise, and Housing of Carlisle City Council.

Membership may be changed at any time. Membership will be managed by the Council.

4. Remit

The Taskforce will operate as a stakeholder engagement group, providing feedback to the Council on such matters including but not limited to:

- a) The development of the regeneration projects in Carlisle City Centre, including Borderlands, Future High Street Fund and Town Deal projects.
- b) Highlight city centre specific issues that will be reported to the Council
- c) Identify further/future opportunities for Carlisle's growth and development
- d) Support the City Council in formulating new strategies and plans for the city centre and seeking additional funding

5. Meetings

The Taskforce shall meet as and when required- aiming to provide flexibility to changing demands and timescales of key projects, with an expected number of around 4-6 meetings taking place every year (with options to meet virtually, using teleconferencing facilities in place). 2 hours will be scheduled for each meeting.

In consultation with the Chair, members of the taskforce may nominate substitutes if they are not able to attend a meeting, taskforce members may invite colleagues to Board meetings to observe and provide technical support, as required.

All agendas, minutes, and supporting documentation will be circulated, electronically, to taskforce members five days before a meeting.

The quorum for any meeting of the Taskforce shall be **25%** of its membership, including the Chair.

6. Secretariat

Support and administrative arrangements will be provided by the Council.

7. Code of conduct and conflicts of interest

Each Taskforce Member is under an obligation to act in accordance with the Council Code of Conduct, i.e. in performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality, objectivity and within the law.

Conflicts of interest may arise where an individual's personal, family, business or organisations interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the group or meeting that taskforce members are attending. All Members will declare interests as set out in the Lead Council's Code of Conduct.

8. Complaints

Complaints received from stakeholders and members of the public will be considered and responded to in line with the Council's Complaints and Feedback Policy.

9. Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and procedure of the Council will be applied in all cases.

10. Equality and Diversity

The Taskforce is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work and will adhere to the Council's Equality Policy. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out, as appropriate, when developing plans, policies and projects.

11. Freedom of Information (FOI)

All Freedom of Information request will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's policy and procedure.

12. Amendments

Any of these procedures and terms of reference may be altered or amended from time to time by resolution of the Taskforce. Notice shall be given of the proposed alteration(s) in a paper for the meeting of the Taskforce at which they are to be discussed.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 29 JULY 2021

EGSP.48/21 CARLISLE CITY CENTRE TASKFORCE AND GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director of Economic Development gave an overview of the proposals for a new city centre taskforce, made up of key stakeholders in the city centre, and the new City Centre Business Growth Grants, aimed at building new networks in the city, and providing new businesses with meaningful support, to encourage greater vitality and viability in the city centre, and ensure resilience following the Covid-19 pandemic. (ED.27/21)

In considering the report the Panel raised the following comments and questions:

- What work was being undertaken to ensure a diverse Membership, not just using existing contacts/ familiar faces, and was there a possibility of including the public?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development responded that it was difficult to get a good mix of stakeholders and individuals to attend groups such as this, however, the Council would target and encourage people who did not usually get involved to join the Taskforce. Scrutiny would be involved in the work to add more variety to the input and public would be encouraged to feedback if and where possible.

A Member asked that the Taskforce try and include someone who had a particular interest or led on climate change.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that climate change ran through all of the work and she was happy to take nominations for Taskforce membership.

- Were Taskforces successful in other areas and would we pick up on their lessons learned?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development explained that other Taskforce's had been very successful, however, many were supported by BIDs. She added that learning came from other areas and the Grimsey Review to engage retailers and leisure operators to bring something different to the city centre.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder commented that Carlisle was behind in the establishment of a Taskforce and he hoped once established it would be the pre cursor for the aspiration for a Carlisle BID.

- Referring to the Carlisle City Centre Business Support Grants, a Member asked:
How the grants would be advertised?
Could businesses who had been supported by the grants display a logo or some publicity?
Would there be any merit in additional criteria which assisted 'green' businesses to qualify for the strong case £5,000?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development responded that there had been publicity and there was an application process in place for the grants. She supported the suggestion of a logo or publicity and the initiative would have to be considered further depending on how successful it was.

RESOLVED – The Panel:

- 1) noted the progress and updates relating to the City Centre Taskforce, and Business Grants which aimed to strengthen city centre resilience (ED.27/21);
- 2) provided feedback on the proposals for the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce;
- 3) asked that consideration be given to opportunities to involve members of the public in the work of the Taskforce.