

UPDATE FROM CABINET TO ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20TH JUNE 2019

Submitted by: Cabinet

Portfolio: All

Wards affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide a response to the Scrutiny Committee on items previously raised by Committee Members at the last meeting on 14th March 2019.

Recommendation

That the responses from Cabinet be received and noted.

1. Economic Development Year 1 Action Plan (Newcastle Town Centre)

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee recommended that Cabinet develop and undertake a benchmarking exercise with successful town centre locations and to undertake a fact finding mission, visiting successful areas.

Response from Cabinet:

Officers have undertaken an exercise to identify appropriate benchmark towns, based on a range of available data, including weekly earnings, markets, out of work claimants, car parking, vacancy rates, attractors, wider regeneration plans, population, reputation and average Index of Multiple Deprivation position.

The research has shown that Markets are at the heart of many successful towns – but with other significant attractors including Heritage, Canals and Rivers, Railway Stations and Festivals. The Portfolio Holder, and officers, is visiting a number to towns to discuss the strategies adopted and the impact which these are having.

The first town to be visited is Nantwich and the Portfolio Holder will provide further information about this at the meeting.

- 1.2 The Scrutiny Committee asked Cabinet to consider conversion of Council owned town centre properties to residential accommodation.

Response from Cabinet:

The strategic intent, captured within the Council Plan, is to diversify property use in the Town Centre, with a view to having more people living in the town centre, and more people working in the town centre. Cabinet is undertaking a review of the Council's overall property portfolio to identify options to improve commercial performance. The potential conversion of some town centre assets will be considered as part of this review.

- 1.3 The Scrutiny Committee asked that suitable Borough Museum displays and exhibits be relocated to the Guildhall to help inform and enhance the experience of visitors.

Response from Cabinet:

Opportunities to exhibit at the Guildhall, or other venues, will be considered alongside other events. Maintaining the security of displays is an important consideration, which needs to be balanced against increasing public exposure to the Borough's collection.

2. Consideration of Car Parking Issues

- 2.1 That the evidence of benefits of changes to parking charges in relation to footfall within the town centre be requested from the BID.

Response from Cabinet:

Footfall figures for the town centre are routinely collected by the BID. Isolating the impact of parking charge reductions within this is difficult, as factors such as events, weather, etc. would all have an impact. However, the Council is currently preparing a parking strategy which includes surveying car park users. It is anticipated that this exercise will provide insight into the impact of changes to parking charges.