

Wiltshire Towns Programme

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council

Parvis Khansari, Corporate Director for Place

Victoria Moloney, Head of Economy and
Regeneration

Wiltshire Towns Programme

- Town centres have faced a number of concurrent challenges over the previous years, including:
 - Impact of Covid-19 and related shifts in shopping patterns
 - a historic reliance on a shrinking retail offer which is vulnerable to changing consumer habits such as opportunities for online shopping and out of town retail
 - long term empty units/high levels of occupant turnover and a shrinking retail offer driven by the rise in on-line shopping; absentee landlords; mixed quality redevelopment and conversions into living space; and, in some instances, problems of anti-social behaviour.

Wiltshire Towns Programme

- Retail supports approximately 20,000 jobs in Wiltshire and is a top 3 sector by employment and specialisation. This does not include services, leisure (including food and drink), or tourism businesses which are located on the high street and are also affected.
- After the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, one study judged that close to half of Britain's retail businesses carried a significant risk of failure.
- Following an initial rise in spending in Q1 2022, retail spend fell 35% in April. This was balanced by an increase in leisure spending.

In light of this challenge and recognising the contribution of these sectors to Wiltshire's economy, Wiltshire Council allocated £1M a year between 2021-2025 to support activity on the high street, providing meaningful support to grow businesses, support employment and transform Wiltshire's high streets to meet the needs of the local community.

Wiltshire Towns Programme

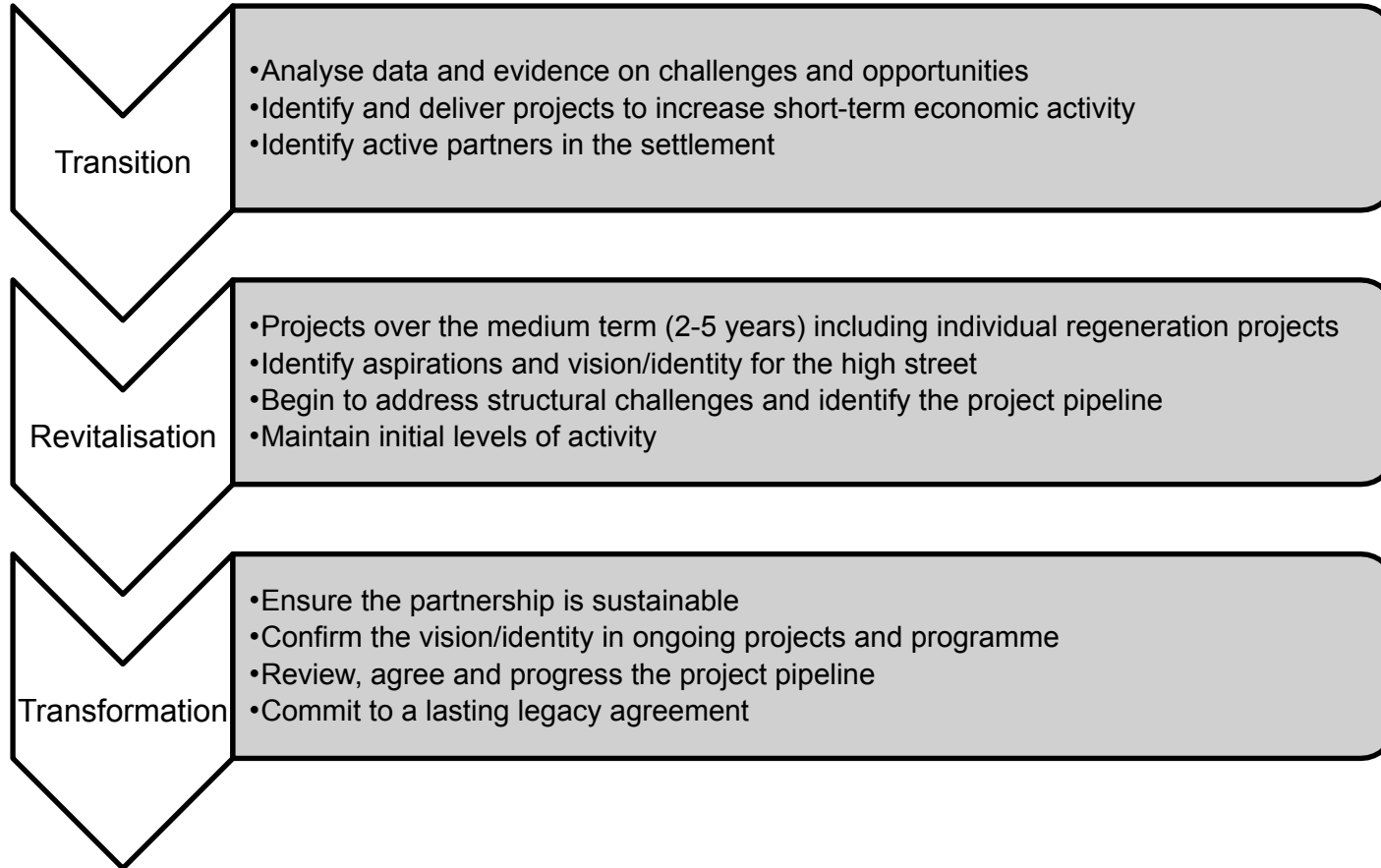
The Institute of Place Management identified 25 factors that most influence the vitality and viability of the high street

*How much influence each factor has on the vitality and viability of town centres/high streets? In other words, **what matters?***

*How much local control there is over each factor? In other words, **what can you do about it?***

TH	Management	Experience	Retailers	Physical	Programme
IPM 25 Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience Appearance Necessities Walking Accessible Safety/Crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity Place Marketing Markets Experience Appearance Non-Retail Offer Retail Offer Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail Offer Anchors Merchandise Attractiveness Barriers to Entry Adaptivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessities Walking Accessible Recreational Space Liveable Redevelopment Functionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and Strategy Data and Analysis Place Management Networks and Partnerships Functionality
AIM	Ensuring the existing aspects of the town centre are well managed and maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving a quality experience for residents and visitors Delivering new experiences to drive consistent footfall 	Supporting small-medium Wiltshire businesses to access the high street and its opportunities.	To reduce vacant or space in town centres and deliver sustainable mixed-use centres which attract residents and visitors	Build an understanding of local high streets, and developing sustainable models of place leadership

Wiltshire Towns Programme



Wiltshire Towns Programme

Transition Stage: Existing Projects

- a) Footfall Data: working with town councils to provide data
- b) Town Centre Spaces: short-term support to create appealing high streets, through provision of facilities, green spaces, street dressing.
- c) Digital Training: Fewer than 20% of Wiltshire's high street businesses have a social media presence. This provides training for businesses on creating and maintaining a digital presence.
- d) What's on in Wiltshire App: Officers are working to develop the What's on in Wiltshire App, a platform to bring together events and activities that will attract visitors into one convenient location.

Wiltshire Towns Programme

Proposals

Vibrant Wiltshire	Funding to support new businesses opening on the high street and existing businesses to upgrade their offer and become more resilient.	500,000
Business Support	Support for businesses in receipt of grants to access good advice and ensure business plans are robust and tested	50,000
What's on in Wiltshire App	Events app with supporting marketing activity to support residents re-accessing the high street	80,000
Heritage App expansion	Increasing performance of heritage app and expanding county wide	80,000
Town Centre Strategy	Work to develop masterplans and projects for principle settlements	50,000
Pipeline Development	Funding to support developing a pipeline of projects to support further bidding activity, with particular consideration for workspaces	150,000
Staffing, monitoring and evidence	Resource to support the programme across the number of settlements and manage projects, monitor progress and develop evidence on what works	100,000
Generating Activity Programme	Fund for TCs to bid into to create activity on the high streets, looking at events, marketing and promotion, supporting new businesses and increasing the access for the local community.	300,000
Wiltshire Visitor Promotion	Campaign to promote Wiltshire as a destination to our residents and catchment area and bring footfall back to the high street	150,000

Generating Activity

To increase capacity and support immediate work to encourage people back to the high street, officers are working with town councils to develop and fund activity generation plans to:

- Drive footfall and spend to town centres
- Reach a wider catchment, with a focus on new audiences and inclusion
- Support an increased retail, community and social function that encourages visits during the day and evening.
- Support perception of the town centre as a place that will create a convenient and attractive destination for both local residents and visitors
- Extend the visitor season for town centres – providing support through quieter periods.

Generating Activity

Town	Shop Numbers	Employment Measure	Total Generating Activity and Current Activity Fund
Salisbury	452	45075	45000
Trowbridge	283	21925	45000
Chippenham	244	21340	45000
Devizes	212	11450	30000
Warminster	191	19485	30000
Melksham	127	11295	30000
Marlborough	160	10095	27000
Calne	90	5250	20000
Corsham	81	9145	20000
Westbury	80	4490	20000
Royal Wootton Bassett	109	8145	17000
Bradford on Avon	87	7175	17000
Amesbury	82	8885	17000
Malmesbury	79	8340	17000
Pewsey	59	3130	10000
Cricklade	29	1610	5000
Tidworth	29	2043*	5000
Tisbury	26	1831*	5000
Ludgershall	23	1620*	5000
Mere	23	1285	5000
Wilton	21	2465	5000
Downton	12	845*	5000

Vibrant Wiltshire Programme

The programme will support the development of currently underutilised or vacant spaces located in Wiltshire market town centres. The focus will be on bringing new types of uses into the area, strengthening and diversifying the current High Street offer.

High Street Business Start Up Grant

- This grant will provide funding to businesses looking to open in a currently empty retail unit in the high streets. The aim of the grant is to bring empty retail premises back into use and the grant range is anticipated at £2,500 to a maximum of £10,000. Exceptional circumstances will be considered.

Business Diversification Grant

- It is important for a high street business to be able to adapt and diversify to survive. This grant will be available to high street businesses and is anticipated to provide a range of funding from £500 to £10,000. Applicants will need to set out a clear proposal for support.

Successful applicants will also have access to additional business support to assist them in developing their plans and becoming future proof

Visitor Promotion

What's on in Wiltshire App: Officers are working to develop the What's on in Wiltshire App, a platform to bring together events and activities that will attract visitors into one convenient location.

Heritage App Trails: provision of free heritage trails to drive footfall

In addition, the programme will support a promotion campaign that focuses on generating additional visits and spend to our towns and high streets, and restoring consumer confidence. The campaign would focus on these priorities:

- To encourage locals to visit Wiltshire towns and high streets.
- To drive additional visitors and spend, achieving a ROI
- To improve sector productivity by increasing visits to our towns and high streets during key off season and shoulder season periods.
- To provide a campaign platform that Wiltshire tourism and hospitality businesses can get involved with via a 'Residents Campaign' initiative, that builds longer-term demand.

Pipeline Development

Where high streets are most significantly exposed to a decline in retail, it will be necessary to plan for and encourage multi-use spaces that maintain community facilities while being commercially viable. Under the Towns Programme, officers will work to develop plans and projects where sensible, based on a combination of challenge and opportunity.

In addition, to successfully bring in capital funding for transformative schemes, a project pipeline is required that would allow officers to adapt to short bidding windows and any forthcoming opportunities. Under the banner of the Wiltshire Towns Programme, we propose providing support to develop the pipeline, including outline design, costings and resourcing for green-book business case development.

Future Strategies and Workstreams

Officers will consider a number of workstreams that will link the high street to its wider economic or spatial impact including:

- a) Public Art and the High Street
- b) Design and the High Street
- c) A Wiltshire Food and Drink Strategy (including the Wiltshire Marque and shop local/low carbon produce)
- d) Evening and Night-time Economy
- e) Workspaces on the High Street

These strategies will be progressed as projects emerge.