

SUBJECT:	Unlocking Monmouthshire's Town Centres
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	27th MAY 2020
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

To consider the Council's short term response and medium term recovery plan for Monmouthshire's Town Centres to aid the return to prosperity for our towns and communities as Wales moves forward whilst living with the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To endorse the outline plan as detailed in the report and the submission of an expression of interest to Welsh Government, for funding to aid local sustainable transport measures in response to Covid 19.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The UK as a whole is experiencing changes to our daily lives that are unprecedented in modern times. As we move forward and Wales starts to unlock following the Covid 19 pandemic, our citizens do so with the understanding that the virus has not gone away and there is currently no vaccine available. As a result, measures will need to be put in place to ensure that citizens are able to move around our County and shop in our local town centres whilst following all guidelines and restrictions that are applicable at that time, which is likely to include maintaining a social distance of 2 metres in order to reduce the risk of spreading the virus through the population.
- 3.2 Prior to the virus, the Council was already considering ways in which it could reduce carbon emissions to make visits to town centres a much more pleasurable experience for pedestrians and cyclists alike, creating environments where the car is no longer king and enabling town centres to become much safer and friendlier destinations. This approach is advocated by the latest Welsh Government transport and land use planning guidance. With this in mind, Officers have already been working on 'Active Travel' plans that take these cultural changes into account however the virus has now set the scene for the foreseeable future.
- 3.3 When considering this forward plan, the main influences and considerations have included:
- Social distancing – short term or the 'new normal'?
 - Getting our town centres up and running again in the medium term with the probable restrictions in place;
 - Welsh Government (WG) and Council focus on active travel (how do we encourage more people to walk and cycle, particularly in the context of Monmouthshire's demography and topography?);
 - WG emphasis upon public transport and the need to ensure it is accessible to all, empowering people to use it rather than to inhibit it;

- WG and Council emphasis on place making, green infrastructure, decarbonisation and community resilience;
- The Council's current Regeneration programme and public realm projects in Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk and Caldicot with a wider consideration of Chepstow;
- The Council's destination management aspirations and Destination Management Plan;
- The Council's Economic Ambition Plan and emerging Replacement Local Development Plan.

3.4 At present, no one knows the answers to all of the issues that we, as citizens, will need to face as we move forward, however the Council does wish to ensure that Monmouthshire is in the best place to respond to the changed circumstances. Set out in this report are proposals that support our towns, businesses and communities and how these various initiatives and opportunities might interact.

3.5 **Short Term – June/July 2020**

In consultation with the local business community, the Cabinet Member has agreed that short term, the focus should include setting a scene that would:

- 1) Support local businesses to reopen legally and safely within social distancing guidelines;
- 2) Give local people the confidence to shop in their local High Street and support local businesses; and
- 3) Develop a public realm that supports communities and businesses whilst enabling and promoting active travel.

The requirements that will be needed to enable this to happen will include:

- I. Initial, clear concise guidance from Welsh Government;
- II. A joint communication/marketing campaign with local Chambers of Commerce, local business/support networks and partner organisations;
- III. Clear simple messaging to assist local businesses to implement social distancing guidance, e.g. posters for shop windows, social media campaigns, local radio campaigns etc.
- IV. Clear messaging for residents to be rolled out in line with WG's traffic light guide for moving out of Lockdown <https://gov.wales/unlocking-our-society-and-economy-continuing-conversation> for example: 'Shop Local, Stay Safe, Shop Monmouthshire'
- V. Encouraging and supporting local business owners in incentivisation campaigns;
- VI. Implementation of plans that support citizens returning to their high streets and offering them confidence that they will be safe to do so.

3.6 A programme of continuing consultation will take place to discuss the short term focus and future activities which will include:

- The submission of an Expression of Interest to WG for funding for Local sustainable transport measures in response to Covid 19 to be submitted on the 21st May;
- A Member's Seminar on the 28th May; and
- Ongoing consultation with the local business community through the Monmouthshire Business Resilience Forum and wider local business/support networks and partner organisations.

3.7 **Medium (August to Christmas non-permanent, trial period for any changes) to longer term focus (2021 onwards permanent re-sets)**

3.7.1 The on-going future of the 'High Street' was being debated long before the Covid 19 pandemic against the back drop of a greater customer preference for on line shopping, crippling business rates and decreasing footfall. However, as we move forward there is a school of thought that High Streets will be re-energised as residents who are continuing to work more from home shop more locally, a renewed sense of place and belonging spilling over from the support generated as a result of the 'lockdown local' mentality and the re-invigoration of the High Street as a destination as cafés, restaurants and pubs open their outdoor space and embrace café culture.

3.7.2 As the Cabinet Member considers a forward strategy based on the assumptions detailed above, there is a need to consider what is within the Council's power to re-imagine our High Streets and town centres as destinations, promoting the uniqueness of Momouthshire and its independent shopping experience, creating spaces where people and businesses choose to be. The following will therefore be taken into consideration:

- **Infrastructure:**
 - Embracing the place-making, green infrastructure, de-carbonisation and resilience agenda;
 - Taking forward the Active Travel programme through the increased creation of more pedestrian friendly High Streets with more cycle lanes, shared spaces, etc.;
 - Enhancing the connectivity of High Streets with their wider communities through Active Travel networks and improved public transport;
 - Supporting businesses with Council policy changes to enable them to change how they trade for example the ability to have tables, chairs, displays and signage outside or prominent to the buildings.
- **Highways/Road Safety:**
 - Reducing speed limits, etc. to improve the safety of our High Streets;
 - Implementing one way systems;
 - Pedestrianisation and shared spaces;
- **Public Realm:**
 - Seek to bring back into use vacant space in High Streets either through Compulsory Purchase Orders or re-purposing e.g. more affordable housing above shops to increase footfall and support the night time economy?
 - Further investment in public realm improvements including Active Travel and green infrastructure to improve quality of life and place, enhance town centres as destinations and help mitigate the impacts of climate change;
- **Marketing Campaigns**
 - In line with WG's traffic light guide for moving out of lockdown and in conjunction with local Chambers of Commerce, local business/support networks and partner organisations;
 - To support the overall strategy with a focus on maintaining and increasing footfall and supporting local businesses.

3.8 Local sustainable transport measures in response to Covid 19

- 3.8.1 As a result of the restrictions imposed, the nation as a whole has seen large reductions in motorised traffic on all parts of the road network, high levels of home working and, so far anecdotally, higher rates of walking and cycling, both for essential journeys and for daily exercise. Welsh Government is keen to lock in this modal shift towards active travel type activities into our daily lives as we move forward in order to protect the climate and maintain the public health benefits. Similarly, sustaining increased levels of working from home will reduce congestion and the County's carbon footprint, improve air quality and is likely to result in a greater proportion of income being spent locally, which can support local businesses.
- 3.8.2 With the travel shift in mind, WG has sought expressions of interest from Councils for low cost, high impact, experimental measures to be introduced into town centres. Titled 'Expressions of Interest for local sustainable transport measures in response to Covid19' the exercise seeks to fund measures that will take into account the current societal changes and promote the safety and reliability of sustainable forms of transport during and following the Covid 19 crisis. As the future is not yet clear, the measures can be experimental but may well provide an opportunity to make some changes that will help us achieve that much sought re-invigoration of our local High Streets as independent shopping, leisure and cultural destinations.
- 3.8.3 The Welsh Government has suggested the following measures to protect public health. These are most relevant to City Centres, although some of these might be useful in Monmouthshire. (There is ongoing work in Monmouthshire to consider how we might improve cycling safety into our towns from outlying areas):
- Footway widening, by using carriageway width;
 - Road closures, with modal filters for cyclists;
 - Lane closures, or one-way systems with counter flow for cyclists;
 - Temporary parking removal or restrictions, including loading bays;
 - Cycle lanes and tracks - using segregation or soft segregation;
 - Decluttering of footways, e.g. by consolidating signs; removal of guard rails;
 - Temporary new crossing facilities;
 - Bus lanes, bus gates and bus only roads
 - Bus based Park and Ride facilities, as well as Park & Share and car sharing lanes (with car sharing to be used once social distancing measures allow)
 - Enhanced waiting facilities at key stops and bus stations, including facilitation of
 - social distancing
 - Real time information systems, including occupancy levels
 - Infrastructure to enable enhanced cleaning regimes on public transport
 - Parking enforcement, in particular on active travel routes;
 - Measures to reduce traffic speeds;
 - 20mph limits, trialling the exception methodology for the planned introduction of default 20mph speed limits;
 - Marketing activities to communicate the reasons for the proposed changes.

The timetable for the expressions of interest is very short with forms being submitted to WG by 21st May. As such officers have prepared several forms addressing matters such as improved cycling facilities, wider pedestrian areas, spaces for businesses to expand

into in the street whilst maintaining social distancing, more space for travellers using public transport etc.

(Given the compressed timescale in putting together the Expression of Interest, the opportunity for discussion and consultation has been limited however the forms require little detail at this stage. A Member’s seminar has been arranged when the detail surrounding the submissions can be examined in greater detail)

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The Assessment demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken in Table One below.

Table One: Options Appraisal

Option	Benefits	Risks	Comments
Do nothing	None identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local communities will be unable to access town centres safely; Local businesses will risk closure; Current shift towards sustainable modes of transport and active travel activities will be lost. Local businesses may try to make adaptations to the highway and public realm areas without a consistent approach 	
Proceed with proposed developing plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to capitalise on the renewed sense of community and place; Opportunity for local High Streets to benefit from those workers working from home and the potential for them to shop locally; Opportunity to reimagine and re-energise our town centres for future generations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some changes may be misunderstood so a strong communications campaign will be required to mitigate uncertainties; Some residents will be resistant to change which may invoke local tensions; A cultural change will be needed to accept that the car is no longer king. 	An opportunity to reinvigorate and reimagine our town centres.

6. REASONS

6.1 The UK is living through unprecedented times. As the country moves forward and life starts to return to a semblance of normality or move to living with COVID and a “new normality”, it will be against a backdrop of extreme uncertainty for our communities and our local businesses. As a Council, the Strategic Aims of our Coronavirus Strategy include ‘Providing clear purposeful civic leadership’ and ‘Helping local businesses to survive’. The outline plan in this report provide a short and medium term focus to the activities that will be need to be undertaken to support our citizens, businesses and communities along the road to financial recovery.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The full programme of activities is yet to be determined and as a result, yet to be fully costed. An expression of interest has been submitted to the Welsh Government for the low cost, high impact, experimental measures that may be introduced into town centres however the outcome of the submission is yet to be determined. Time hasn't allowed for proposals to be costed in any detail so the application forms have contained some very approximate estimates of cost. However as lock down is eased the proposals will need to be introduced relatively quickly to support public confidence to return to the town centres and support businesses. As such it is likely that changing road layouts, pedestrian areas etc. will be created using bollards, cones, planters, signage etc. (relatively low cost) rather than any significant civil engineering works. Nevertheless, if successful, these temporary measures could be made permanent or at least inform Active Travel and Town Centre Regeneration plans that have been bid for in 2020/21 and potentially in the future (at the time of writing this report we await WG decisions on grant awards for active travel, local transport fund, road safety).
- 7.2 To introduce changes, plans will be drafted and consultation will be undertaken but to facilitate the implementation of measures at speed it is recommended that responsibility be delegated to the Chief Officer for Enterprise to introduce measures for future activities and associated spend within budget in consultation with the the relevant Cabinet Members.

8. CONSULTEES

- Monmouthshire Business Resilience Forum;
- Senior Leadership Team;
- Cabinet;

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. AUTHORS:

Cath Fallon, Head of Enterprise and Community Animation

Mark Hand, Head of Place making, Housing, Highways and Flood

Roger Hoggins, Head of Strategic Projects

Ian Saunders, Chief Operating Officer Monlife

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Appendix B



Future Generations Evaluation (includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact)

<p>Name of the Officer Cath Fallon</p> <p>Phone no:07557 190969 E-mail: cathfallon@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Unlocking Monmouthshire's Town Centres</p>
<p>Name of Service: Enterprise</p>	<p>Date: Future Generations Evaluation 14th May 2020</p>

NB. Key strategies and documents that may help you identify your contribution to the wellbeing goals and sustainable development principles include: Single Integrated Plan, Continuance Agreement, Improvement Plan, Local Development Plan, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan, Green Infrastructure SPG, Welsh Language Standards, etc.

1. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below?

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>Providing the safe infrastructure to enable citizens to social distance within Town Centres and support local businesses.</p>	<p>There is a strategic imperative to maximise our economic growth and wealth creation capability, and increase our productivity in order to increase the GVA for the county and the country. If trial measures are successful they can be made permanent.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and</p>	<p>Improvements to green infrastructure, pedestrianisation, and cycle ways will raise awareness of biodiversity and</p>	<p>Improved infrastructure can also enable citizens to walk and cycle thus reducing carbon emissions.</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	climate change issues and encourage positive participation.	
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Improvements to our town centres will help provide increased raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity.	Improved place-making and green infrastructure will provide the opportunity to increase physical activity and support physical and mental wellbeing.
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Improved access to our town centres will reduce social isolation and promote independence.	Improved infrastructure will encourage wider participation in community and voluntary work.
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	Improved access can raise awareness of these issues and promote positive activity.	
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Improved access can raise awareness of culture, heritage and the welsh language and encourage positive participation.	
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Improved access can enable citizens to fulfill their potential, whatever their background or circumstances.	

2. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>Improved access to town centres and green infrastructure short term will assist with medium and longer term priorities</p>	
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>A partnership approach will be undertaken to ensure the best solution for communities can be found. This is likely to be with Welsh Government and a range of private sector partners including the business community.</p>	
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>Citizens are invited to get involved by participating in local meetings and consultations. A call for ideas has already been launched on social media.</p>	
 <p>Prevention</p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Measures being proposed will enable social distancing measures short term and will have wider health benefits longer term as more citizens will have access to green infrastructure, cycle ways, etc. thus reducing pressure on Highways longer term.</p>	<p>Improved physical health and mental wellbeing will reduce demand for medical and health services.</p>
 <p>Integration</p> <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>Improved access for cyclists and pedestrians will reduce carbon emissions, rural isolation and rural poverty.</p>	

3. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below. For more detailed information on the protected characteristics, the Equality Act

2010 and the Welsh Language Standards that apply to Monmouthshire Council please follow this

link: <http://hub/corporatedocs/Equalities/Forms/AllItems.aspx> or contact Alan Burkitt on 01633 644010 or alanburkitt@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	Improved access to town centres will reduce the barriers to access for people with protected characteristics.	Any negative impacts can be reduced if suitable safeguarding strategies are put in place.	Affordable and accessible solutions will be identified to maximize opportunities for all.
Disability	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above. In addition, the proposals will take the needs of the disabled population into consideration during the development phase.
Gender reassignment	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Marriage or civil partnership	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Pregnancy or maternity	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Race	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Religion or Belief	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Sex	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sexual Orientation	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Welsh Language	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	In addition, all signage will be compliant with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 as specified in the Standards applied to Monmouthshire
Poverty	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	Affordable and accessible solutions will be identified to maximize opportunities for all.

4. **Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on important responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect either of these responsibilities?** For more information please see the guidance <http://hub/corporatedocs/Democratic%20Services/Safeguarding%20Guidance.docx> and for more on Monmouthshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy see <http://hub/corporatedocs/SitePages/Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy.aspx>

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	<i>During the delivery of the programme of activities, safeguarding will be at the forefront to ensure that any future service delivery promotes the well-being of children and vulnerable adults, preventing them from being harmed and protecting those who are at risk of abuse and neglect.</i>	As above	As above
Corporate Parenting	<i>During the delivery of this programme of activities the needs of any 'looked after' children will be considered to ensure any future service delivery protects their welfare.</i>	As above	As above

5. **What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?**

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act;
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act;
- Prosperity for All;
- Growth & Competitiveness Commission Report Review and Recommendations Page 22;
- Cardiff Capital Region “Powering the Welsh Economy”;
- Equality Act 2010; and
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

6. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The Assessment demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

7. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible	Progress

8. MONITORING: The impacts of this proposal will need to be monitored and reviewed. Please specify the date at which you will evaluate the impact, and where you will report the results of the review.

The impacts of this proposal will be evaluated on:	Six monthly via Economy and Development Select Committee
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9. VERSION CONTROL: The Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stages of decision making, and then honed and refined throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable development wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet	27th May 2020	