

STOCKPORT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET– SUMMARY SHEET

Subject: Scrutiny Review District Centres Post Covid-19 Pandemic

Report to Cabinet

Date: 28th June 2022

Report of: (a) Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Key Decision: (b) NO

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency (Mark with a Y if applicable)

Summary:

As the pandemic has shown, our district centres are incredibly important centres and lifelines for our communities. Local residents have shown a strong desire not only to support one another but to support local retailers, hospitality and leisure businesses all of which assist in creating strong viable centres. The Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Review on District Centres post Covid was very timely as the second phase of work with MMU's Institute of Place Management was due to recommence, the review therefore considered the scope of the work, reviewed the role and responsibilities of the 2 new District Centre Managers along with the relevance of the emerging Stockport Economic Plan in creating vibrant and thriving District Centres.

The Panel met on 4 occasions between February and April 2022 and was supported Paul Richards, Director of Development & Regeneration, Helen Walters, Town Centre Manager and Richard Mortimer, Head of Economy, Work & Skills.

The Panel noted that Stockport's District Centre all have an important and broad ranging role at the heart of the local communities they serve. In addition to being retail centres they support the local economy, provide a wide range of services and leisure opportunities, serve as a focal point for social interaction, and essentially act as hubs for the local community. The review panel report was agreed to be recommended to Cabinet by members of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 16th June 2022.

Comments/Views of the Cabinet Member: (c)

This review was particularly relevant given the important role District Centres have played in supporting our local communities during the last 2 years. The Panel was pleased that IPM were hosting series of workshops as part of their Phase 2 work, these have been well attended by range of stakeholders with lots of discussions which is very encouraging. It was good to hear the 2 new District Centre Managers are supporting local retailers and helping to deliver events and activities. It was also good to hear that all our District Centres have vacancy rates significant lower than the national average and also have a higher proportion of independent retailers which is positive as they help attract visitors.

Recommendation(s) of Cabinet Member: (d)

Whilst significant progress has been made to ensure District Centres are a priority the Panel has a number of recommendations which it feels would help ensure District Centres continue to thrive:

- i. The Panel requested opportunities to be explored to help improve the attractiveness of district centres such as installing planters which also have many environmental benefits.
- ii. The Panel requested the District Centre Managers work in partnership with businesses and local organisations to ensure the centres remain clean and tidy for shoppers and visitors.
- iii. The Panel requested other opportunities be explored to help promote the breadth of businesses within District Centre such as posters and maps.
- iv. The Panel asked if there was any funding from existing budgets that could be allocated for District Centres. The funding could support the delivery of small scale projects in each centre. This will require further investigation.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee (if decision called in): **(e)**

Background Papers (if report for publication): **(f)**

<https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1010&MId=28388&Ver=4>

Contact person for accessing background papers and discussing the report

Officer: Helen Walters
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'Urgent Business': (g)

No (Please circle)

Certification (if applicable)

This report should be considered as 'urgent business' and the decision exempted from 'call-in' for the following reason(s):

The written consent of Councillor _____ and the Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer/ Borough Treasurer for the decision to be treated as 'urgent business' was obtained on /will be obtained before the decision is implemented.
