

TOWN CENTRE WORKING PARTY (TCWP)

Terms of Reference, August 2022

Glossary

TCWP - Town Centre Working Party; WTP – Wiltshire Towns Programme; MTC – Marlborough Town Council

Background

1. The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns had a significant impact on high streets and town centres across the UK and added to existing challenges including online shopping and out of town retail, conversions into living space and, in some instances, problems of anti-social behaviour. Despite the cessation of Covid restrictions, the closure of the Covid-19 grant schemes and ongoing government support means that businesses are facing an increasingly uncertain future. Exacerbated by the rising cost in living and energy bills we saw a 35% fall in retail spend in April 2022, while services, leisure (including food and drink), and tourism businesses located on the high street are also affected.
2. In light of this challenge, Wiltshire Council allocated £1m a year between 2021-2025 to support activity on market town high streets, to guide partnership working with town councils and high street businesses to develop action plans, projects and strategies that respond to the circumstances and needs of the local community to help:
 - 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.
3. Marlborough's share for 2022-23 includes a £20,000 'Activity Generation Allocation'. Further allocations will follow as towns build on best practice and develop effective interventions.

Objectives

4. The objectives of the Town Centre Working Party (TCWP) are to:
 - Identify and secure funding to deliver short-term improvements to the Town Centre by engaging with the Wiltshire Towns Program (WTP) to use the 2022/23 and future year allocations

- Use the WTP as a catalyst to develop a vision for the Town Centre with progressive, step by step improvement plans, with distinct outcomes to each element, through engagement with local businesses, organisations and residents.

Scope

5. The Town Centre has been defined by the following map to encompass retail, hospitality, business and green spaces on and around the High Street including The Parade, New Road, London Road, Hillier's Yard, Hughenden Yard, George Lane, Coopers Meadow, Kingsbury Street and Kennet Place.



6. Town Council decision making powers are limited by definition, whilst it has greater capacity to influence. The TCWP will aim to utilise this influence, applying for grant funds, which can potentially be added to by MTC, to achieve change.
7. Reducing traffic volumes on the A4 and A346 is not within the group's remit. Marlborough Town Council (MTC) has an interest in creating a 'traffic plan' for the town and this group will help co-ordinate and synergise, rather than duplicate initiatives.

Organisation

8. MTC agreed to set up a Working Party of Councillors to meet the objectives. It comprises
 - Cllr Jane Davies – Chair
 - Cllr Nick Fogg
 - Cllr Mark Luson
 - Cllr Kelvin Shantry
 - Cllr Caroline Thomas – Vice Chair
 - Cllr Jo Waltham
 - Town Clerk and other MTC officers as required.

9. Representatives from local businesses, organisations and residents will be sought once the TCWP has agreed its overall approach in order to ensure meaningful participation by new members.
10. Initially, the group has agreed to meet (in person) every 3 weeks and anticipate a commitment of at least 6 hours a month from its members.
11. The group will review its composition and approach before the end of the council year in early May 2023.

Timings

12. The WTP is looking for input from all market towns by this Autumn to understand their priorities. The TCWP's initial views will be presented, with community consultation in October used to develop the thinking.
13. The WTP is anticipated to run over the next 3 financial years to 2025, so planning needs to move fast to agree the projects we want funded in this period.
14. We can also apply for part of this funding to help develop a longer term more transformational plan, which will in turn help facilitate bids for more significant government funding.

Initial Steps

15. The WTP is looking for 'top three adjectives' to describe how we want our town to be regarded. The group agreed an initial set, which will be informed through the consultation. These are:
 1. *Historic*
 2. *Vibrant*
 3. *Beautiful.*
16. In response to other WTP requirements, the TCWP has developed a Town Centre 'Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis' that can be used as a tool to engage with the wider community, across all demographics, to help identify our short- and longer-term priorities.

The SWOT considers:

- The town centre open spaces including the Kennet as a key feature
- The Market as part of a mixed economy
- Parking – for residents, visitors, employees etc.
- Marlborough as a destination for visitors
- The environment, in terms of physical characteristics and sustainability
- Maintaining our town as an existing, excellent example of a vibrant High Street
- The wider economy.

17. A survey informed by the SWOT analysis will be used to consult via:

- Online
- Schools
- Community Facebook groups
- MTC website
- face to face via a stall on the market and 1:1 engagement

A supporting narrative will explain the consultation's purpose and the work of the group.

18. Looking forward, the TCWP will use emerging evidence of trends in 'high street' development and also consider:

- Ideas proposed by local residents as a catalyst for feedback on what might be possible/desirable.
- What other towns have achieved/are considering e.g., Frome, Bradford on Avon and Marlow.

19. The group will develop its working methodology to respond to the WTP over time.