

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

<b>Committee</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>	Item 12	Page 1 of 4
<b>Report Originator</b>	Lisa Hyde – Executive Director	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A17/018	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All, but especially William Knibb and All Saints	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2017	
<b>Title</b>	<b>TOWN CENTRE DELIVERY PLAN- NEXT STEPS</b>		

**Portfolio Holders: Cllr Mark Dearing**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To set out the conclusions from the Town Centre Conference held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, and to propose some immediate actions for implementation, as well as to sketch out further engagement, work ahead of agreeing a final delivery plan.

### **2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 Kettering has a vibrant town centre and increasingly residents, businesses and visitors expect services and the internet at their fingertips.

2.2 Members have made their priorities for infrastructure and jobs-led growth clear – these are the prerequisites of growth. Members have indicated they wish to use the growth agenda to leverage three key and interrelated ambitions for the borough; namely:-

- ◆ A better offer for our town centres
- ◆ A better education and training offer
- ◆ A better employment offer – high grade, higher density jobs

Kettering Borough Council is aiming to ensure its town centre is a vibrant place that is characterful, distinctive and fun. There has already been significant investment to improve the public realm within the town centre.

2.3 Earlier this year Executive endorsed the proposal to embark upon an engagement and consultation programme for a new Kettering Town Centre Delivery plan centred around the following themes:-

- Planned and opportunity redevelopment sites – when, where and for what purpose?
- Getting the right mix of uses in the town centre, - residential retails, leisure and commercial
- Road and junction improvements, parking and access
- How the town is marketed and by whom
- Continuing to improve the night time economy

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>	Item 12	Page 2 of 4
-----------	----------------------------	------------	----------------

- Supporting and encouraging more events and attractions and making better use of existing assets
  - Its contribution to health improvements
  - Overall safety, ambience and appearance of the town centre
- 2.4. The first opportunity set up to engage and consult on these aspects was the Town Centre Conference held on the 13 September of this year. Over 70 people from the business community and statutory sectors attended the event, participated in the workshops and fed into the consultation process. They also contributed to the feedback after the event.
- 2.5. Attached at **Appendix 1** to this report is the key feedback recorded at the conference and recently sent to all attendees and those who couldn't attend but had registered an interest.
- 2.6 As previously stated the conference was only the first part of the consultation. There will be a range of actions that can be delivered across the short, medium and long term. The immediate outcomes are,
- Digital Training sessions on twitter to help people promote local business to be held during October in the Ohio and Lahnstein Rooms.
  - Christmas Event programme launched with a #ChristmasinKettering social media campaign
  - Clean & Refresh – a programme of small works to clean and tidy up the town centre based on local feedback
  - Views and comments on public car park management are to be fed into the overall review of car parking that will be reported as part of this year's budget setting process
  - Town Centre WiFi – a proposal to move forward to fund town centre WiFi. This is subject to a separate section in this report below
  - Purple Flag Weekend – Working with local business to promote and celebrate the national award during the weekend of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> October.
- 2.7 The subject of the town centre is also a topic on the Local Strategic Partnership Conference Agenda on the 10<sup>th</sup> October. A verbal update on the feedback from that event will be available at the Executive Committee.
- 2.8 Ongoing dialogue with town centre stakeholders was recognised as a core and important element of the feedback post the conference event. The actions listed in paragraph 2.5 above are designed to continue this dialogue, engage further with local business and encourage their involvement in future events.

### **3. TOWN CENTRE WI-FI**

- 3.1. One of the means to achieving greater profile, connectivity and longer dwell time in the town centre could be through the installation of a town centre WiFi solution. This could help residents and visitors connect with local business whilst staying in touch with events and promoting local opportunities. There are also

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

<b>Committee</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>	Item 12	Page 3 of 4
------------------	----------------------------	------------	----------------

potential advertising opportunities to be explored. Once registered, users can receive information on car parking, shopping discounts, forthcoming events and other town centre news.

3.2. A future proposal would be to also look at improving the connectivity for the A6 Market Towns

3.3. The Digital High Street Report (March 2015) suggests that around one in four people (24%) would be more likely to stay longer in a town centre that offered access to free WiFi.

3.4. A new Wi-Fi solution could maintain and increase footfall whilst supporting one of the key objectives of the Area Action Plan by creating a 'well connected town centre'

3.5 There are a number of expected benefits from a town centre Wi-Fi solution, including:

- **Instant marketing tool** – harnessing initiatives such as *ThisisKettering*, Kettering Markets and new ventures such as Small Business Saturday
- **Valuable data set of local users** – numbers, age, sex, email addresses, online preferences, demographic profile. This data could be an anchor for promotion and events across the borough.
- **Cost savings for residents and business** – connectivity to the internet without the need to connect and pay for mobile data.
- **Work, play and shop on the go** - there are expected to be 46m smart phone users by 2018. WiFi will allow business to work, market and engage fast and efficiently. It will allow residents/ visitors to shop, engage and invest in the town centre.
- **Online engagement**- allows easy access to web presences for services, shops and other local offers.
- **Real time monitoring** – understand the demographics of who is logging on, where they are moving to, zonal analytics, duration of stay, new vs repeat visitors and what are users preferences.
- **Stay Connected** – people have another reason to stay and interact in the town. Could be built up alongside social media – KBC Twitter/ Facebook, 'This is Kettering' and future apps – Periscope, Instagram etc. All utilising a town centre Wi-Fi solution
- **Ability to plug into national initiatives** – such as the [#WYDT campaign](#) which utilises social media and promoting the local offer.
- **Maintaining a competitive edge with other shopping destinations**

3.6 There are some potential drawbacks to town centre wi-fi.

- **Availability of mobile data** – Mobile phone contracts are allowing higher volumes of mobile data and ability to 'roll' data over, which means users are less reliant on public WiFi for connectivity when they are out and about.

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>	Item 12	Page 4 of 4
-----------	----------------------------	------------	----------------

There are questions about whether this is the preferred way to connect for users, compared to WiFi.

- **Emergence of 5G** – Kettering has significant 4G cover but 5G is on the way (no timescales as to when Kettering may see coverage). The tender will ask for a technical and commercial appraisal of the costs and benefits of investing in WiFi or ‘newer’ technology alternatives.
- **Business buy in** – To maximise the local economic return, local business must embrace the benefits of being ‘online’ and the fact all on street shoppers will be connected. Further training needs to be promoted to support our high street towards a digital future.
- **Running costs** – the maintenance costs and lifetime of the installations required to ensure the network operates efficiently will need to be met. The market engagement has estimated this to be between £5,000 and £19,000 depending on the level of service required to ensure a high quality product and service to the user

3.7 Work has been carried out to establish what the market can provide, at what costs. Whilst there is a wide range of options, the optimum figures would involve a £35,000 capital contribution and an ongoing revenue commitment of approximately £5,000. This is obviously a new item within the Council’s budget and needs to be factored into the overall budget strategy. The work to implement the proposal and maintain it can however be accommodated within existing staff resources.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

In respect of a public WiFi system:-

- a) To agree the principle of establishing free public WiFi in the town centre;  
and
- b) To seek tenders for the provision of a WiFi service and make provision in future capital and revenue budgets accordingly