

SHEPTON MALLET TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting	Open Spaces Committee Item OS4.9
Date	28 July 2020
Author	Project officer
Subject	Benchmarking report

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For councillors to consider and agree to commission a town benchmarking report to track and measure the impact of the town plan on town centre activity.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The town council adopted the Town Plan for Shepton for 2020 - 2024 in June 2020. This plan includes a commitment to a more vibrant town centre.
- 2.2 To date and to the project officer's best knowledge, the town council has never conducted a benchmark survey of activity in Shepton Mallet. There is currently no way of measuring any changes – positive or negative – in terms of the dynamism, economic vitality and use of the town centre.
- 2.3 A benchmarking report would enable the council to set a benchmark against which to compare any changes over time. A further benchmark report should be commissioned at the end of the period covered by the current town plan. Some town councils opt to conduct a benchmark report yearly.
- 2.4 A benchmarking report could also be used as an evidence basis for any funding and regeneration projects the town council may wish to participate in.
- 2.5 A benchmarking report would measure elements including: footfall; vacancy rates of commercial units; town centre user survey; business confidence and shopper survey; market trader count; car parking count. Full details of a benchmarking report proposal by People & Places can be found in Appendix A.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 A costed proposal for the benchmarking report was submitted by specialist firm People & Places. The cost of the benchmarking report is set at £2100 + VAT. A budget of £2600 from EMR 313 (Town Improvements) is being requested.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The project officer will request that the benchmarking report be conducted in line with the council's environmental policy. Digital copies of the report will be circulated and paper copies will only be available where explicitly requested by a councillor or officer.

5.0 TOWN PLAN REFERENCE

- 5.1 The benchmarking report would enable a measure of the impact of the town plan on the town centre's overall dynamism and use by both local residents and visitors.

Place-making

Work with partners to provide and improve facilities throughout town, including a review of car parking	Undertake a review of car parking, and public car parks to ensure that the locals concerns are addressed as well as ensuring that visitors have easy access at affordable prices.
Ensure the town centre is attractive and welcoming	Invest in improvements in the Market Place, in partnerships with others Improve the signage, information boards and street furniture to make the town more welcoming

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 For councillors to consider and agree to commission a benchmarking report, and that a budget of £2600 be agreed for this purpose, from EMR 313 (town improvements).
- 6.2 For councillors to agree whether they wish this benchmarking report to be conducted in either in the autumn of 2020 or spring of 2021.