



## Report of the Head of Planning and City Regeneration

### Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Policy Development Committee – 18 February 2021

## What can the Council do to encourage more shops and support High Street Regeneration?

<b>Purpose:</b>	To update the Committee on actions being undertaken to encourage more shops and support High Street Regeneration.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The Committee note and comment on the update on the actions being undertaken to encourage more shops and support High St Regeneration
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Swansea High Street is the original historic retailing artery of our city. As business models, retailing and leisure habits have changed over time with shifts to out of town retailing, larger scale premises and more recently online retailing, high streets in most city and town centres have struggled to adapt. There are

however many activities underway exploring and implementing ways of addressing this. These problems are not unique to Swansea.

## **2. Encouraging more shops and support regeneration of High Street**

2.1 The Economic Recovery Plan sets out the range of initiatives that form the wider package of support needed for both the core retailing streets of the City Centre and the ancillary zones such as High Street. This applies equally to our district high streets. For High Street Swansea, a range of programmes are already being deployed through the Transforming Towns package of measures including property enhancement grant for new commercial space and 'homes above shops' funding to release vacant upper floors for market housing. The Palace Theatre, as per the existing Swansea Central Area Regeneration Framework is the catalyst building for upper High Street, with the refurbishment works tender now out to advert. The range of measures in hand is extensive, and set out in detail with timescales in the Economic Recovery Plan. A selection of these relevant to the High Street question includes:

- Support businesses to adapt to outdoor trading/ social distancing through delivery of Transforming Towns (TT) Premises Outdoor Adaption Grant (POAG) in city and district centres
- Explore potential for pop up activity (food related, cinema, cultural events etc) in city and district centres and the beachfront
- Explore potential for repurposing indoor vacant space (retail, leisure, commercial) for meanwhile uses to support growth and sustainability of new and existing business
- Accelerate investment in private rented/ owned city centre living
- Administration of WG Covid-19 financial support grants for local businesses
- Multi-hub start-up and enterprise service
- Small scale business grants (capital and revenue) to support new business starts
- Shop local Shop Swansea campaign to support local businesses
- Provision of low cost, flexible business premises (office, retail, leisure) on easy access terms to make it easier to start up a new business
- Continuing to provide modern, flexible floorspace and co-working space to accommodate new and growing businesses.
- Develop local hub concept
- Increase support for business start-up and growth
- Food incubator units for new start ups
- Business pathway tool kit – online resources
- Extend and adapt employability provision to continue supporting clients, including those who are newly unemployed
- Utilise labour market and business intelligence gained through the delivery of programmes, networks and business development function to identify vacancy trends and skills needs to help shape service delivery and create career pathways.
- Dedicated resource to support self-employment/ entrepreneurship

- Establish small start-up bursaries to support business starts/ self-employment
- Promote green infrastructure investment through delivery of the pilot Green Infrastructure schemes

### **3. Actions**

3.1 The Recovery Plan actions are in progress and being delivered, adapting as more is learned about emerging trends and requirements. Key points particularly relevant of High Street regeneration includes:

- Grant funding allocated to local businesses through the Premises Outdoor Adaptions Grant, to support local businesses to adapt to social distancing requirements.
- Continuing to administer Welsh Government covid-19 financial support to local businesses through schemes such as the Firebreak discretionary grant, Restrictions grant, cultural freelancer grant and start up grant.
- Recruitment of new business development officers to deliver a new start up and enterprise service
- Launch of a county wide Shop Local Shop Swansea campaign in November, with further publicity planned once restrictions ease
- Kickstart bid approved by the Department of Work & Pensions. Internal and external work placements have been set up and the scheme is live.
- Initial budget confirmed for small start-up bursaries to support business starts/ self employment

3.2 The Dyfatty Community Hub proposals around the vacant shop units presents a great opportunity to locate and test these approaches working closely with all relevant support services and providing a real opportunity to act as enablers in giving local people in particular the tools they need to strengthen the community and generate positive micro-business opportunities. The key is integration of these activities – no one sector or area of work has all the answers, but the opportunity to create a positive and cost-effective environment to enable people to realise their own futures is real, with a holistic package of support available at the same time at the right time.

3.3 As outlined above the report highlights positive progress as part of the overall recovery and how these actions can specifically assist in the regeneration of High Street.

3.4 The views of the PDC are welcome as to the actions set out and any areas that they would specifically wish to add as part of the work plan for the PDC in the months to come. It may be appropriate after considering both reports on the agenda to determine that a single combined action plan would be the best way to progress.