

NORTH WALSHAM HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT	
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Executive Summary	This report outlines the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone programme and related initiatives. It shows the budget position to-date and the delivery timescales, outlining matters that have affected the cost and implementation.
Options considered	The report is for noting as the programme of works is already underway. No options are therefore presented.
Consultation(s)	Other than the usual consultation with Statutory officers, no consultation has been necessary as the report is merely for noting.
Recommendations	To note the contents of the report.
Reasons for recommendations	The Committee has taken a keen interest in this high profile project and should be kept abreast of its progress.
Background papers	None

Wards affected	North Walsham Market Cross, North Walsham East, North Walsham West.
Cabinet member(s)	Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth
Contact Officer	Robert Young, Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	<p><i>“Working with our Market and Resort Towns to reinforce their roles as local service centres, centres of employment and business activity, served by public transport” [sic.]</i></p> <p><i>“Maximising external grant funding to deliver the Council’s corporate objectives”</i></p>
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	The contents of this report do not impact upon the MTFS
Council Policies & Strategies	None

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	Is the item exempt, if so, state why.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Provide the dates of any previous decisions relating to this

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) and related activities. It sets out the overall programme of interventions, the budget position and the progress to-date. The Committee is asked to note the progress made to-date.
- 1.2 An end of project report will be provided once the evaluation of the HSHAZ programme has been undertaken following the completion of all of the interventions.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) grew from the ambitions of local stakeholders to regenerate North Walsham town centre. On the back of North Walsham's successful delivery of a project under NNDC's Market Towns Initiative, and the formation of a strong partnership of local stakeholders, a bid was made to the Government's Future High Streets Fund; although this was unsuccessful. Dialogue with local stakeholders and lessons learnt from that bid resulted in agreement to refocus on the built heritage of the town and a successful bid was subsequently made for funds from the High Street Heritage Action Zone administered by Historic England. At its meeting 20th November 2019, the Council agreed to equally match the initial bid of £975,000 and to implement the HSHAZ project.
- 2.2 The HSHAZ programme's aim was to capitalise on the built heritage of North Walsham's historic core to improve its vitality and attractiveness to shoppers, visitors and businesses. The programme initially comprised the following substantive elements:
 - a) Refurbishment of the Cedars (owned by NNDC)
 - b) Administration of a Building Improvement Grant (for owners of historic buildings)
 - c) Improvements to important area of the public realm (place making)
 - d) Historic research programme (undertaken by Historic England)
- 2.3 This integrated programme was supported by community engagement activity and the development of a town centre masterplan.
- 2.4 Subsequent to the commencement of the programme, further funding was sought and the scheme was augmented by:
 - A Cultural Programme (Historic England (HE) – agreed 22nd February 2021)
 - Additional funding for the place making project (funded by the Getting Building Fund, administered by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership NALEP – agreed by Council in September 2020)
 - A scheme to provide a bus turning and stopping facility located beyond the HSHAZ area but facilitating the removal of buses from Market Street (undertaken in partnership with Norfolk County Council (NCC) and North Walsham Town Council (NWTC) - agreed by Cabinet 1 November 2021)
 - A visioning and marketing toolkit (funded by C-Care Towns Challenge Fund (Interreg) September 2022)

3. Programme update

- 3.1 This section outlines the principal financial matters and the timescales for the programme of works. Each element of the programme is summarised below, where key issues relating to budget, programme or risk are identified.

Budget

- 3.2 The overall budget for the HSHAZ programme (and all related elements), broken down into the specific work streams and the funding sources, is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Budget		HSHAZ					Cultural Programme	Bus Interchange	Visioning & Marketing	Total
Work stream		Cedars	Place making	Building Improvement Grants	Wayfinding – Interpretation & Signage	Misc.				
Original budget	NNDC	225,000	385,000	210,000	22,000	130,253	0	0	0	972,253
	HE	150,000	385,000	320,000	18,000	140,908	90,000	0	0	1,103,908
	Other		1,170,000	private match	0	0	0	404,536	20,000	1,594,536
Additional funds	NNDC	90,000	400,000					9,749		499,749
	HE		298,298							298,298
	Other		tbc							tbc
Total budget		465,000	2,638,298	530,000	40,000	271,161	90,000	414,285	20,000	4,468,744
Total spend to date (provisional)		(479,546)	2,205,069	463,549	24,770	202,871	74,895	414,285	20,000	3,884,985
Total Remaining @ 9/23		-	433,229	66,451	15,230	68,290	15,105	0	0	501,519
Total committed @ 9/23 (provisional)		-	100,449	45,976	15,230	tbc	tbc	0	0	116,729
Predicted residual budget/overspend @ 9/23		(-14,546)	332,780	20,475	0	0	0	0	0	

Programme

- 3.3 The programme for implementing the HSHAZ (and related projects) is set out in table 2 below.

Programme	HSHAZ					Cultural Programme	Bus Interchange	Visioning & Marketing
Work stream	Cedars	Place making	Building Improvement Grants	Wayfinding	Misc.			
Substantive start date	Mar '22	Feb '22	May '21	Feb '23	Apr '20	Apr '20	Apr '22	Nov '22
Practical Completion date/final deadline	Aug '23	Mar '23	Mar '24	Dec '23	Mar '24	Mar '24	June '22	Mar '23
Key outstanding elements @ 9/23	Grounds & curtilage	Black Swan & Bank Lokes	5 projects nearing completion; 1 project soon to commence	One-off: soon to commence	Monitoring & evaluation	Range of events planned	Complete	Promotion amongst businesses

The Cedars

- 3.4 The scheme to refurbish the Cedars has resulted in the building being let to local organisations, following a long period of vacancy and disrepair. The building, at a principle gateway to the town centre, is visually and historically important and now provides valuable office space. The HE grant was committed to the scheme and NNDC funded the remainder of the cost of the works. The implementation of the scheme was delayed by the original contractor going into liquidation; this also added significantly to the cost of the refurbishment works. During the refurbishment works variations to the layout

of the rooms were agreed and also the building's principal heating source was changed from gas to electric. These changes also added to the cost of the scheme, at the Council's expense.

- 3.5 The outstanding elements of the scheme include the repair of the rear wall and the setting out of the grounds adjacent to the main building. Options for the eastern part of the site are under consideration but it is expected that revenue could be generated from this, which might help pay back some of the additional costs of the restoration of the main building.

Place making

- 3.6 The place-making scheme involved enhancing the amenity of key areas of public realm (owned by NNDC) and highway improvements to the accessibility and functionality of the Market Place and adjoining areas. The designs were based on the following four principles resulting from engagement feedback:

- improving public realm
- safe and active travel
- identity tied to history
- community and pride.

- 3.7 Due to the timing constraints of the external funding, it was decided to engage Norfolk County Council to manage the scheme and to employ their term contractor (Tarmac) to undertake the work (under an NEC3 Contract, which sets out various pricing options and change management procedures). This saved time (avoiding the need of a separate tender and procurement exercise), enabling the grant to be spent within the time constraints and additional grant to be drawn down. An iterative design process was thus followed.

- 3.8 Tarmac were involved as early as possible in the design of the scheme, which was led by the Council's design consultant, Influence. Due to time constraints, various pricing options from the term service contract were used in the construction of the scheme. The pricing option for the first phase (Church Approach) was on the basis of 'cost plus', meaning that actual costs incurred and contractors time, preliminaries etc. were charged plus the Contractors fee of 4.75% which is written into the term service contract. The pricing option used for the main works (Market Place), operated on the basis of a 'target price' so as to allow works to proceed at pace, whilst building in flexibility to make scope and design changes as it progressed, and the actual costs became known. This option involved agreeing a 'Target Price' from the designs ahead of works starting. Change is then managed in the form of compensation events which raise or lower the 'target price' depending on the value of the change. An element of pain/gain share, is then calculated at the end of the scheme depending on whether the final cost is over or under the final 'target price'. This means that cost savings would be shared, as would cost overruns that were not accounted for by agreed circumstances (compensation events). This was deemed necessary, since the place-making budget was 'fixed'; in other words, rather than setting out with a fixed *design* (to be built at a tendered price – with a variable budget and contingency included), the

design had to continually adapt to ensure it remained within the fixed *budget*. Each design change, however, incurred additional design costs. This was deemed the most suitable approach in order to meet the imposed time constraints of the external grants.

- 3.9 The first phase of the project involved the redesign of the amenity area at the eastern end of Market Street (referred to as Church Approach). The second phase involved the extensive remodelling of the Market Place, including the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order that altered the arrangements for through traffic, parking and stopping in the historic core of the town. The final stage of the scheme is to improve two pedestrian routes into the Market Place: Bank Loke and Black Swan Loke.
- 3.10 After the initial agreement of the HSHAZ programme, the Council purchased a parcel of derelict land to further augment the place making project by providing a quicker, more accessible pedestrian link between the main town centre car park (at Bank Loke) and the Market Place – Black Swan Loke, to the rear of a Grade II* Listed Building. The purchase of the site (~ £100,000) was funded in equal parts from the Place Making budget and a further grant from HE (£50,000). Planning Permission to remodel the site was granted and preliminary works have commenced. The planned path that will connect the car park with Black Swan Loke, together with landscaping of the site, are hoped to commence before Christmas. Works to Bank Loke will be far simpler, involving the rationalisation of clutter, improved lighting and enhanced signage to improve the legibility of the route to pedestrians.
- 3.11 Changes to the design of the place-making project responded to stakeholder feedback and addressed practical matters as they came to light as the scheme progressed. Substantial 'de-scoping' (reducing the extent of the project) also took place in order to achieve the maximum benefit from the improvements within the budget constraints. Once the detailed cumulative costs of delivering the first two phases of the scheme were known (which included considerable inflationary costs as well as impacts from unforeseeable practical issues (e.g. underground services, cellars etc.)), it was predicted that additional funding (£227,000) was needed to complete the Market Place improvements to the expected standard. There were also therefore, insufficient funds to undertake the intended enhancements to Bank Loke and Black Swan Loke. An additional budget of £400,000 was consequently agreed by the Council (from reserves), bringing the total Place Making budget to £2,638,297 - sufficient to complete the revised scheme.
- 3.12 It is important to note that the final designs for Black Swan Loke have yet to be agreed and the implementation of that will follow an iterative process to ensure the scheme is undertaken within the residual budget (accordingly, the construction contract has yet to be let). **The final budget position will therefore be reported once the cost of completing Black Swan Loke is known, together with any recommendation as to how the residual budget might be used**, for example: to further augment the place-making project, supplement other areas of the HSHAZ programme, or be transferred to some other budget.

Building Improvement Grant

3.13 A core element of the HSHAZ is maintaining historic buildings in a good state of repair. The project set out to do this by providing the opportunity of grant aid to the owners of eligible buildings. A grant programme was thus established and the amount of grant available generally varied between 60% and 80% (with one exception of a grant of 100% for a project that greatly improved the public realm). To date, a total of eleven grants have been awarded, amounting to £508,475. Work has been completed on five buildings, with five nearing completion and one more, which is soon to commence. The improvement work has varied from reinstatement of historic shopfronts to conversion to new uses, including residential above retail premises (on the basis that vacancy is one of the key issues that bring buildings into disrepair). The largest grant was for the conversion and renovation of the former Barclays Bank building, occupying a prominent location in the Market Place, into a community space operated by the Phoenix project.

3.14 The grants have proven very popular with building owners and businesses, and a prioritisation process had to be undertaken part way through, in order to focus the grants on the projects that would best achieve the overall HSHAZ objectives.

Wayfinding

3.15 The improvements to the town centre and the historic buildings within it are hoped to lead to increased footfall and thus enhanced trading conditions for town centre businesses. Improving the accessibility of the town is a key aspect of this but so too is signposting and way marking of key routes, as well as interpretation of significant historic features and spaces within the town centre. A wayfinding scheme has thus been designed in order to enhance the visitor experience and build a greater sense of civic pride. This project is soon to be implemented.

Bus Interchange

3.16 In order to redesign the Market place in a way that enhanced the environment and the experience of customers/visitors, it was deemed important to remove buses from the Market Place. Previously buses would stop on the main shopping street, often leaving engines idling and casting a shadow on businesses on the north side of the road. Bus stops elsewhere in the town centre caused congestion vehicular a certain pinch points and conflicts with pedestrians. In order to remove through buses from the Market Place, and not impose substantial route deviations for the bus operators, it was necessary to identify a location where buses could turn. It was desirable also to design a space where passengers could wait in relative comfort and have facilities nearby. The Council therefore offered the use of the front part of New Road Car Park for this purpose (see decision by Cabinet on 1st November 2021). Norfolk County Council agreed to fund the works and North Walsham Town Council contributed towards the cost of the bus shelters. Improvements to the footpath through to Memorial Park and to the wider amenity of the area (funded by NNDC) were undertaken alongside the construction of the new bus interchange.

Cultural Programme

3.17 The Cultural Programme (CP) is a vibrant and diverse programme of cultural activities and events in the HSAHZ geographical area to bring about key outcomes. It is managed by a local 'cultural consortium', which has agreed a

wide range of events and activities intended to build 'social capital' and enhance the vibrancy of the town centre. There was a grant of £90,000 to deliver this work over a 4-year period. Events supported by the Programme have included: orchestral concerts, children's photographic workshops, craft workshops, pantomimes, plays, an upcycling project and fashion show, pop up events, street performance and a spring festival. Between the drafting of this report and the end of the Programme, the following events will be supported:

- Pop-up bookshop
- Creative writing workshops
- Orchestral events
- Buy-local event

Visioning & Marketing

- 3.18 Following the successful bid to an EU fund administered by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, a Vision and Marketing report was developed and delivered (March 2023) for the town. The report analyses North Walsham's 'offer' and the final report contains some key actions and a toolkit for individual businesses or groups to utilise. The desire is for the Town Council and Business Forum to adopt the strategy, to take it forward, and to build on the town's existing strengths to create a long-term strong and successful future business community. The report /toolkit will be valuable for other locations and the team will look at ways in which it can be adapted and shared more widely.

Miscellaneous

- 3.19 The elements of the programme within the 'miscellaneous' budget heading include the following key areas:
- Staffing costs
 - Mobilisation
 - Engagement, consultation and communication
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Research.

- 3.20 Clearly, any project requires resource for administration, project management etc. That is especially the case for a complex programme of work such as this, involving high profile and controversial proposals. Dedicated staffing was paid for out of the HAZ budget, but in addition to that, time was dedicated from the Council's Economic Growth team, as well as other support services. The research element of the programme was supported by experts from Historic England. It is vital to understand the impacts that the programme has had and to learn lessons from it. Monitoring is a key requirement of the HE grant and investment was made early on in the programme's implementation to ensure that processes were in place to provide data against which the scheme can be evaluated. The monitoring and evaluation will follow HE guidelines and will be completed towards the end of the programme.

Governance and project management arrangements

- 3.21 When the HSHAZ programme was approved, Cabinet resolved to establish Working Group, when the Corporate project management arrangements changed, this subsequently became a Project Board. The programme has therefore been steered by the HSHAZ Project Board since then, with reports of issues, risks etc. being brought to the attention of the Cabinet Major

Projects working Party. Following a recommendation of OSC, the project management arrangements were the subject of a GRAC review, which found the procedures to be sound. The programme has also been the subject of regular reports to OSC and it is suggested that a project completion report be brought to the Committee at the appropriate time, including the monitoring and evaluation report.

4. Corporate Priorities

4.1 The programme of town centre improvements outlined in this report were undertaken to achieve key objectives of the previous administration's Corporate Plan and it links closely to the following objectives of the new Corporate Plan.

“Working with our Market and Resort Towns to reinforce their roles as local service centres, centres of employment and business activity, served by public transport” [sic.]

“Maximising external grant funding to deliver the Council's corporate objectives”

5. Financial and Resource Implications

5.1 There are no financial / resource implications arising from this report as it provides an update of activity already undertaken and budgeted for.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

None

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications or concerns arising from this report.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

None

7. Risks

7.1 No issues arise from this report.

8. Net ZeroTarget

8.1 No issues arise from this report.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1 No issues arise from this report.

10. Community Safety issues

10.1 No issues arise from this report.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

11.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

