

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

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Report Title	FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES REPORT
Purpose of Report	To consider the contents of the enclosed final report and to agree to further discussions with the relevant town councils and stakeholders to take forward its recommendations.
Decision(s)	Committee resolves:- 1. To note the contents of the Future of Town Centre report 2. To support further discussions with town councils and key stakeholders to take forward its recommendations and related projects designed to improve our town centres.
Consultation and Feedback	There has been internal consultation with relevant departments and discussions held at Planning Review Panel. Environment Committee considered the draft report in February 2017. External stakeholder consultations have subsequently been undertaken including with all five town councils which have informed the final report.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications directly related to this report. Adele Rudkin/Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk There is a risk that without positive co-ordinated action from the public, private and voluntary sectors, our town centres will suffer decline reflecting long term national trends.
Legal Implications	No significant legal implications to report. (Ref:r24/8c31/8d31/8) Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	David Lowin, Principal Planning Officer Tel: 01453 754345 Email: david.lowin@stroud.gov.uk
Options	Options are: 1. note the report and recommend discussions with town councils to deliver its recommendations, or 2. amend the report in particular the policy recommendations, or 3. undertake further consultation before finalising the

	report.
Performance Management Follow Up	Follow up discussions with town councils and stakeholders to be reported to the Planning Review Panel and, where action is required, to relevant Council committees.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Future of Town Centres - Stroud, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Dursley, Wotton Under edge, August 2017

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** National planning policy advocates that local planning authorities should develop planning policies to promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.
- 1.2** The adopted Local Plan mirrors generally the thrust of national planning policy and Strategic Objective SO3 aims at: ‘Improving the safety, vitality and viability of our town centres, which link to and support the needs of their rural hinterlands’.
- 1.3** Notwithstanding the current policies of the Local Plan, the aim of the current report is to consider both the potential spatial policy responses to the new challenges for town centres which are emerging, and also to consider what other powers the Council has to influence positively and support the town centres studied.
- 1.4** Following consideration of national trends set out in an initial report to Environment Committee in February 2017, discussions have subsequently taken place during the spring and early summer with all of the town councils to identify local issues and potential future opportunities and relevant policy responses.

2. SUMMARY OF ‘FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES’ REPORT

- 2.1** Section two of the report considers the national context, dealing with the growth and form of e-retailing, the rise of ‘cafe culture’ and the growth of leisure uses and spending. The report also considers the current effects of electronic business on the numbers of physical premises such as banks, building societies, travel agents, estate agents and other retailers whose business model has been changed and challenged by the introduction of electronic service provision.
- 2.2** Section three of the report considers past and current planning policy, both national, district and neighbourhood and the current evidence base. Section four details the current character and health of each of the five towns, updating previous survey material and considering the current health of each centre together with a consideration of the likely direction of travel.

- 2.3 Section five of the report sets out the results of the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken with town councils during the spring and summer.
- 2.4 The sixth section of the report sets out a consideration of the stakeholders responses and introduces a SWOT analysis for each of the towns. The final section of the report, based on the SWOT analysis and the feedback of the stakeholders suggests potential spatial and non spatial policy responses for each of the towns.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's approval, meetings will be set up with the five town councils to discuss the findings, in particular the suggested policy recommendations, and to agree priorities for action by all parties.
- 3.2 The results of those meetings will be reported back to the Planning Review Panel initially and may feed into the Local Plan review process and, where relevant, other work programmes of this Council.