

Terms of Reference

1.0 Title: High Streets, Town and City Centres Commission: Supporting high streets in Covid and beyond

2.0 Background:

- 2.1 In November 2019, Council agreed to revisit the work of the Towns and City Group, which met during in 2014 to discuss the shifts in consumer behaviour on retail and the future of high streets in our Borough. The original Towns and Cities Group reported back to Cabinet in October 2014 a series of recommendations as outlined un the report in appendix two
- 2.2 Whilst progress was initially delayed by the general election and later by the Covid-19 pandemic, the onset of recent global events will make the work of this commission more vital than ever. The economic impact of Covid-19 is yet to be fully understood, but in responding to this crisis Cheshire West and Chester Council is taking a proactive approach to continuing the work of the Towns and City Working Group by identifying and understanding the key issues and actions for supporting the recovery of high streets across our Borough.

3.0 Outline for the Group:

- 3.1 The Commission will meet six times using Microsoft Teams from June to September 2020. It will be supported by officers to develop collaborative and practical recommendations so that the Council and local partners can play their part in the economic recovery of our high streets, including an appropriate action plan for future activities that considers over-arching themes, as well specific measures in individual town centres.
- 3.2 The Policy Commission will not be a formal public meeting of the Council; however, it will be recorded for broadcast, stakeholder representatives and members of the public will be invited as appropriate to provide their views and expertise regarding the themes of the Commission.
- 3.3 The Commission will also hold a formal call for evidence, and a public evidence session, in which wider representatives will be invited to submit their evidence for consideration.
- 3.4 The final report of the Commission will be presented to Cabinet no later than November 2020. If approved, its recommendations will be reviewed by relevant regeneration boards and considered in line with current plans and proposals.
- 3.5 It is proposed that these meetings will last approximately 120 minutes, with context information and background reading being provided in advance as appropriate. These meetings will be structured around themes and issues,

with evidence and information being provided by officers and partner organisations to support discussion and planning.

4.0 Membership:

4.1 The following Members will form the Commission:

This Commission will be chaired by an appropriate Portfolio Holder, as appointed by Cabinet.

- Councillor Richard Beacham (Labour - Chair)
- Councillor Sam Dixon (Labour)
- Councillor Gillian Edwards (Independent)
- Councillor Charles Fifield (Conservative - Deputy Chair)
- Councillor Lynn Gibbon (Conservative)
- Councillor Sam Naylor (Labour)

The Chief Executive of the Council will be invited to attend Commission meetings as appropriate and available.

4.2 The Commission will be supported to conduct its work by relevant services across the organisation. Evidence will be provided by officers, external experts and other members (including members of regeneration members working groups) of the council as required

4.3 It is acknowledged that this Commission will be undertaking an intensive work programme throughout the summer and autumn of 2020. Whilst this Commission will require a time commitment from Councillors, it is advised that the group has a consistent membership across all meetings as far as possible to support better understanding of interdependencies across themes, and place recommendations into a broader context.

5.0 Areas of focus:

5.1 Analysis of economic, social and environmental impact of Covid-19 and other factors facing the high street, review any relevant reports and plans for high streets produced by the Council, consider various national publications regarding town and city centres, consider the local and national legislative framework that supports or restricts town centre growth and develop recommendations for change, receive expert witness reports from officers, Business Improvement Districts, local traders and residents where appropriate.