

# Cabinet

12 December 2024

## Leamington Town Centre Vision

### Recommendation

That Cabinet endorses the draft Leamington Town Centre Vision 2024.

#### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Leamington Transformation Board, established in 2021, is made up of the three tiers of councils covering Leamington town centre, those being Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council and Royal Leamington Spa Town Council. The Board was created to help guide, steer and enable closer working relationships for the development and delivery of inter-related town centre based projects to maximise opportunities and ensure the transformation needed in response to the challenges now facing town centres.

1.2 The Board identified two key priorities to focus on in the short term

- 1) a refresh of the Vision for Leamington Spa town centre (written in 2018), and
- 2) the development of a public realm masterplan for Parade.

In December 2023 specialist consultants were appointed to lead this work alongside officer teams from Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council and Royal Leamington Spa Town Council.

1.3 Extensive collaborative and inclusive work with both stakeholders and the public has been undertaken throughout 2024 on the preparation of a refreshed and updated Vision for Leamington town centre. The resultant Vision document, attached at Appendix 1, is now being considered for endorsement by each of the three Local Authorities. It was considered by the Leamington Transformation Board (LTB) on 8 October 2024, Warwick District Council Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024, and Royal Leamington Spa Town Council on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and in each instance was endorsed. This endorsement is of the high-level strategic vision for the town centre only, and that any projects coming forward will need to be considered by each relevant authority for project specific approvals concerning funding, regulatory and planning consents as required in the usual way.

1.4 The three pillars within the vision have a direct connection with the County Council's priorities:

<b>County Council Strategic Priorities</b>	<b>Leamington Vision Pillars</b>
Thriving economy and places	Healthy Place
People can live their best lives [safely, happily and independently]	Healthy People
A County with sustainable futures	Healthy Planet

- 1.5 It is envisaged that this high-level strategic vision for the town centre will guide new development and regeneration activity.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 There are no immediate or direct financial implications arising from the endorsement of the Vision. The preparation of the Vision is complete, and any costs incurred because of it have been budgeted and paid for.
- 2.2 There are likely to be project specific proposals that emerge in relation to Leamington town centre. These will have financial implications which will need to be considered and evaluated by partners and stakeholders at the appropriate time to determine whether sufficient funding is available to take them forward. At this time there is no commitment by Warwickshire County Council to fund anything further in relation to this work.

## **3. Environmental Implications**

- 3.1 One of the Vision's 3 pillars is "*Healthy Planet – Making sure that Royal Leamington Spa is always looking after the planet by ensuring a climate resilient, more biodiverse and net zero carbon town centre.*" This sets the strategic lead for future town centre projects and initiatives.

## **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1 The existing vision for Leamington Spa town centre was written in 2018. Since then, a lot has changed for all town centres, and it was felt a refresh was required to account for these. The key reasons for refreshing the vision:
- Town centres and high streets everywhere in the UK have gone through a period of huge upheaval and dramatic change;
  - The impacts of climate change, online shopping, working from home, a housing crisis, cost of living challenges, loss of nature and many other challenges are now being felt;
  - This rapidly changing landscape means that the vision drawn up in 2018 needs to be refreshed; and
  - A vision is needed to guide change in the town over the next decade or more.

4.2 The Vision has been developed over the past 10 months with early and meaningful engagement undertaken at important stages with key stakeholders and officers, elected members, businesses, and young people, via a series of meetings, workshops, and one-to-one conversations, culminating in a wide public engagement exercise in April - May 2024. The Visioning work was also introduced to Leamington residents at the Annual Town Meeting in March to gain early feedback. The data and intelligence from these engagement activities, has led to the resultant Vision document included as Appendix 1.

4.3 The public engagement exercise consisted of

- Ask Warwickshire online survey on draft Vision for Leamington town centre held from 26 April 2024 until 28 May 2024. A Child Friendly version was also available.
- Permanent unmanned exhibition at Leamington library during engagement period.
- 2 x manned drop in events with exhibition boards (Covent Garden market stall (all day) & 1 Mill Street (evening)).

Respondents were encouraged to place dots (red, amber, green to highlight their disagreement/agreement with the vision statements/themes) on the exhibition boards as a simple gauge of support for each statement/theme.

4.4 There were approximately 450 (from a population of circa 50,900) responses to the online survey which were subject to full qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data to inform the final Vision. A summary of public engagement on the draft Vision is provided at Appendix 2 and full survey analysis at Appendix 3. Key headlines from the public engagement are:

- Overwhelming majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed new Vision (77.7%).
- Overwhelming majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed new themes (pillars):
  - a Healthy People – 81.4%
  - b Healthy Place - 83.0% (most supported theme)
  - c Healthy Planet – 79.2%.

4.5 The top three issues of most importance to respondents were:

- Supporting/ encouraging businesses (94.5%)
- Conserving historic character of Leamington's buildings and places (89.7%)
- Air quality/pollution (87.7%)

4.6 All feedback from the community and stakeholder engagement on the development of the Vision has been incorporated into the resultant Vision.

4.7 The collaborative approach to developing the Vision has helped to build relationships with key stakeholders and enabled a deeper understanding of the current issues, opportunities and operational requirements of Leamington Spa town centre and potential for change.

4.8 Approval of the Vision sets the strategic ambition to guide future regeneration plans and projects within Leamington Spa town centre under the three pillars: Healthy People, Healthy Place and Healthy Planet.

## 5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 The Vision has been endorsed by Warwick District Council and Royal Leamington Spa Town Council and is supported by the Leamington Transformation Board.

5.2 Subject to Cabinet's endorsement of the Vision, plans will be developed with partners and stakeholders for how the Vision can be achieved through a well-developed programme of costed projects.

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Life In Leamington: A Vision for Royal Leamington Spa Town Centre 2024-2034

Appendix 2: Community Engagement Summary Report

Appendix 3: Business Intelligence Survey Analysis of Community Engagement Full Report

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Councillors Sarah Boad, Sarah Millar, Will Roberts, Jonathan Chilvers, and Bill Gifford

Other members: Councillors Jeff Clarke, Jonathan Chilvers, Sarah Feeney, and Jenny Fradgley