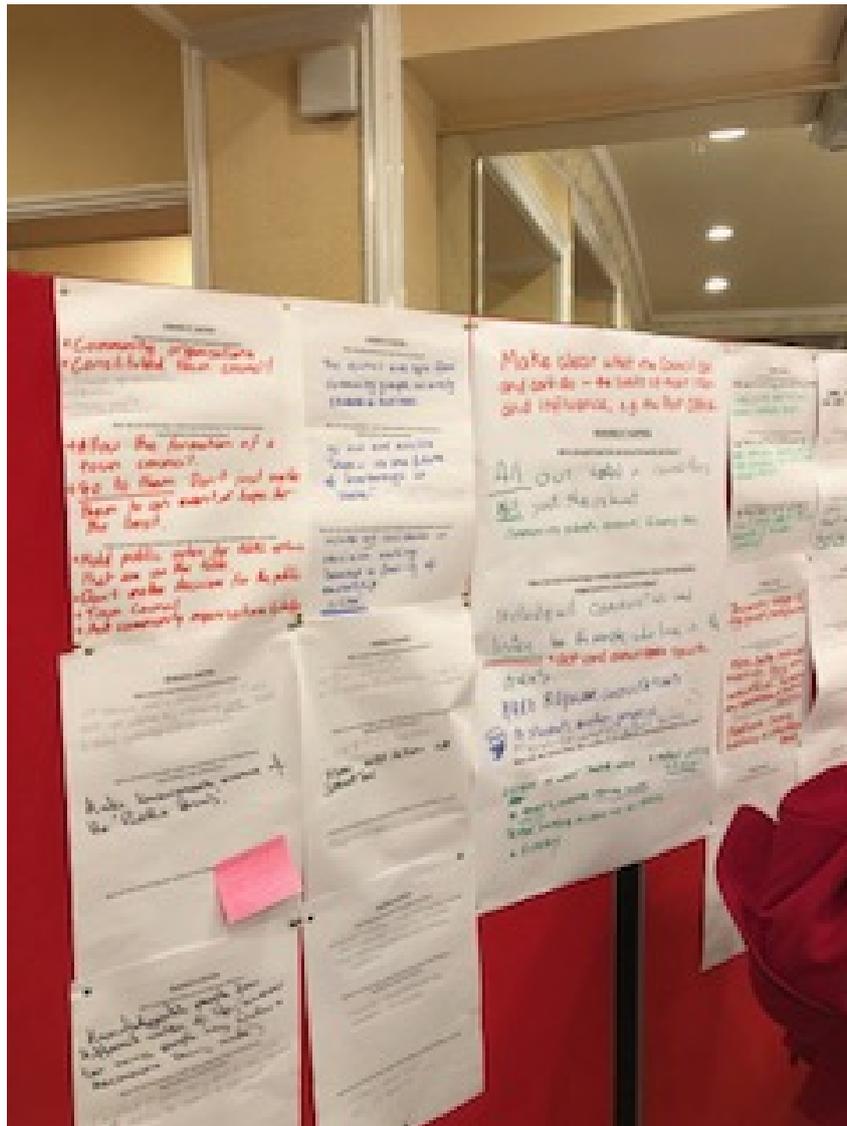


# SCARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

## Community and Stakeholder Consultation

### Report of Findings



## **Introduction**

The Council is in the process of developing a new strategy to guide the future of Scarborough Town Centre in the face of challenges to the traditional high street shopping environment. In the development of a new strategy for Scarborough Town Centre the Council has endeavoured to undertake a programme of engagement with key stakeholders and the community to ensure that a comprehensive range of viewpoints and opinions are reflected. Special consideration has been given to engage with more difficult and harder to reach groups.

An initial draft report has been written and is currently being progressed through the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board who have appointed a member led task group to oversee the consultation and engagement process which has been actively supported by the Cabinet Member for Transformation.

## **Consultation Programme**

The main focus of the community engagement centred around two specific consultation events; one for invited representatives of the business community and service provider stakeholders and an open event for representatives of community groups and members of the public. The discussion format for both events was similar and attendees at both events were asked the same questions on the same themes so as to ensure consistency.

In addition to the two public events follow up focus group and interview are also due to be undertaken with a number of key interest groups. These include:

- Representatives of local small business
- Students
- Yorkshire Coast and Ryedale Disability Forum
- Queen Street Pop In Club
- Representatives from Boots Chemist
- Area Management from Debenhams

During the course of the promotion activity for the community and stakeholder engagement events social media channels were used to disseminate key messages. These were distributed corporately by the Council and its partners and by local news media outlets. Where possible social media comments will be captured and incorporated into the findings and analysis of the research.

## **Methodology**

The engagement events focussed on getting the views of the community, businesses and stakeholders around the strategic objectives and the seven areas of focus in the draft strategy to guide the future development of the Town Centre. These were:

1. Be the best performing Coastal Town Centre in England by 2025 and the primary economic hub for retail, leisure, learning and living within the Yorkshire Coast Area.
2. Increase residential living within our town centre by 25% by 2025

3. Work together with public and private property owners and agencies to ensure the built environment and infrastructure exceeds the expectations of our customers and community by 2025.

And,

1. Making the Town a mixed use environment
2. An inviting public realm we can all be proud of
3. Developing a 'University Town'
4. The Night Time Economy
5. Introducing SMART Town Centre infrastructure
6. Building our identity, image and brand
7. Establishing a collaborative and supporting Town Centre community.

In order to streamline discussions around these proposed seven areas of focus they were adapted into four categories that were discussed and considered at the two events. The format for the engagement event with the business and service provider representatives involved detailed discussion groups around the pertinent points within the draft strategy that were independently facilitated and recorded. The format of the community group and resident engagement event was a little bit more informal and allowed for views, opinions and comment to be written onto large graffiti walls strategically placed around the room.

## **Consultation Event Findings**

### **Overarching Themes - Strategic**

There was considerable support from business / stakeholder and residential communities for the establishment of an independent group, separate from but supported by, the Council to lead the vision for the Town Centre. Most attendees at the engagement events were in agreement that the Council cannot deliver the process independently and in isolation. However it was highlighted on a number of occasions that the Council and key Public Sector partners do have specific areas of responsibility (Parking, Highways, Cleansing etc.) and that these services need to be brought into the collective vision for the area and not working independently of the bigger picture.

It was also identified that any action in the future needs to be properly resourced and that it should not fall onto community groups and volunteers to take on the whole burden. There were numerous comments made across both events suggesting that the Council and its partners should seriously consider the re-establishment of a Town Centre Manager.

There was a strong desire to see continued communication and engagement with business representatives and the wider community. The November / December engagement events need to be the beginning of a continued partnership with residents and businesses and a number of suggestions were made regarding the possibility of developing a permanent engagement framework similar to successful Urban Renaissance / Town Team programme. Other suggestions called for a voluntary friends group to help inform the Town Centre strategy and keep it linked to the grass roots.

Finally there was recognition that for the strategy to hold any weight with the community it was noted that a series of quick wins would be needed, e.g. perhaps a series of smaller visual arts or environmental projects to let people know that things are progressing.

### **Overarching Themes - Facilities**

A number of facilities were highlighted throughout both events as integral to the future development and sustainability of the Town Centre area. Firstly there was a strong desire for the re-introduction of Tourist Information Centres in the Town Centre. If this is not financially possible there may be other partnership options that could be considered such as the co-location of such a service with a central community hub or with the transport terminals.

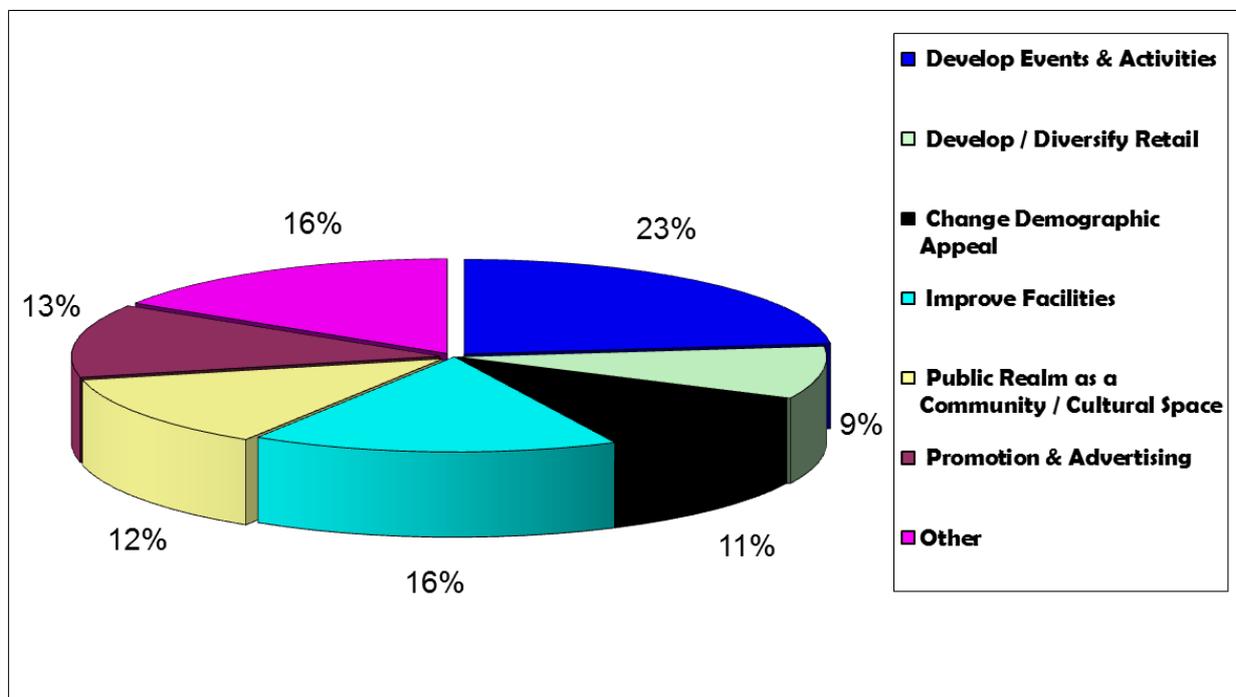
It was recognised that there is a need for Scarborough to have a Town Square to act as a focal point and centre of gravity for the Town Centre area. A number of suggestions were made regarding the possibility of demolishing the old Argos building on Eastborough and locating a new Town Square there – with added bonus that it would draw footfall past St Thomas Street and into the bottom part of the Town Centre boosting the prominence of the newly redeveloped Market Hall and Vaults. Various comments were made throughout the engagement events about the need to create a link between the Seafront and the Town Centre as the two are viewed and experienced as two separate entities by residents and tourists alike.

In the wider Town context it was raised that there is a lack of visitor attractions that are suitable in wet weather and that events and festivals need to be extended to all year round rather than just the Season.

Finally it was raised that the transport links to and from the Town Centre are in need of development. There needs to be later buses and trains to service the Town Centre for both residents and visitors if the Council is serious about developing the Night Time Economy offer.

### Making the Town a Mixed Use Environment

Both the discussion groups with business leaders and service providers and the graffiti wall consultation with local residents and community groups revealed a broad range of options for developing the Town Centre space as a mixed use environment. For the purposes of evaluation the transcription of comments received at both engagement events were grouped into themes which are documented in the pie chart below.

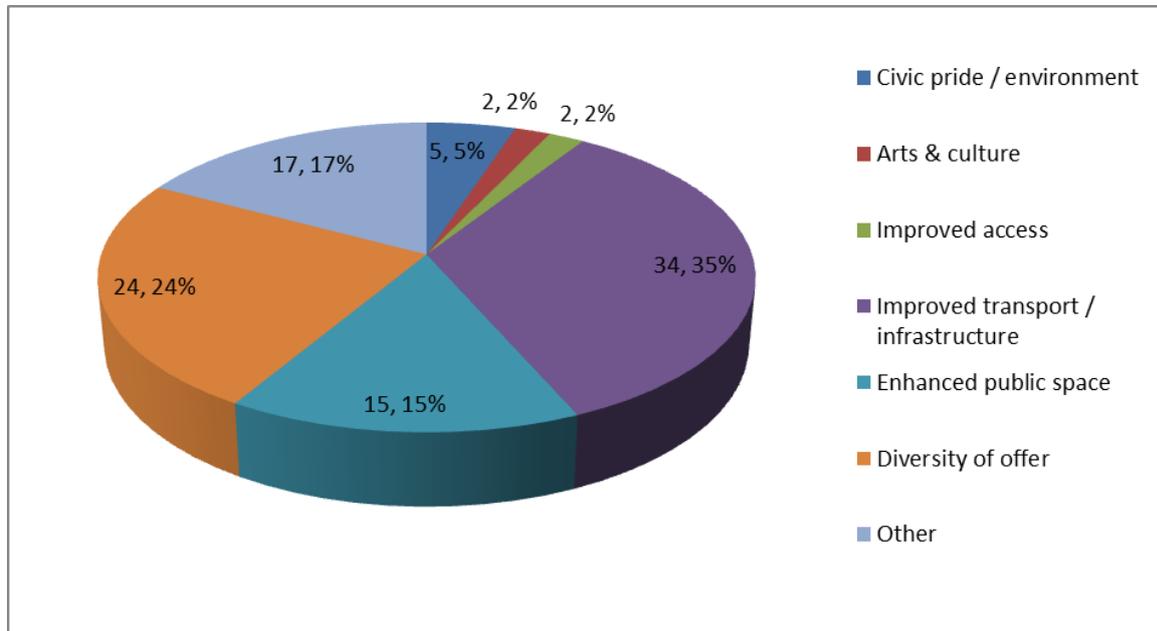


Interestingly comments received in this area recognised the need for a changing Town Centre experience that does not revolve solely around retail provision. Only 9% of the opinions and ideas expressed across the two events suggested developing or diversifying the retail offer however some interesting ideas in this area were suggested including producing a retail map and restoring market stalls to the Town Centre.

The largest number of comments received (23%) were concerned with the need for the development of more and improved events and activities in the Town Centre area, recognising the need to look beyond the traditional retail offer. People wanted to see an all year round itinerary of events at all times of year and all times of day as a means of attracting more people into the Town Centre. This included an expressed desire for more events that could be enjoyed during periods of wet weather; something that it was recognised is not provided at the moment.



and Borough. A number of familiar themes were brought up such as better parking and a mixed range offer in terms of retail, social and cultural activity. The results have been collated and categorised and are documented in the pie chart below:



The pie chart outlines three areas of priority with regard to how businesses and residents think the Town Centre could be developed into more of a focal point. Firstly it was strongly stated that Scarborough Town Centre needs better transport provision and infrastructure with 34% of comments highlighting this area as a priority for the Town. This includes a variety of comments around the need for better transportation links and the need for intra Town Centre transport to better link the various areas of the Town such as Westborough, the Market and the Seafront.

Secondly it was recognised that if the Town Centre is to become a focal point for the wider Town and Borough then there needs to be more on offer than is currently provided. There were calls for a better mix of retail provision including a healthy and diverse mix of local independent and artisanal traders alongside major national and international chains in order to attract more people.

Finally 15% of the comments linked back to the recurring theme of the need for an enhanced public space in the Town Centre area. Again there were renewed calls for the development of a Town Square with the old Argos building site being mentioned on numerous occasions as a potential location for this.

#### *Utilising Empty Properties*

The Council has identified that from time to time there are a number of empty properties in the Town Centre area and asked used the November / December consultation events to ask local businesses and residents what ideas they had for dealing with empty premises. It is worth noting here that; a) Scarborough is not unique in having empty shop units on the High Street from time to time, and b) the Council has limited powers in this area as it owns very little property in the actual Town Centre area.

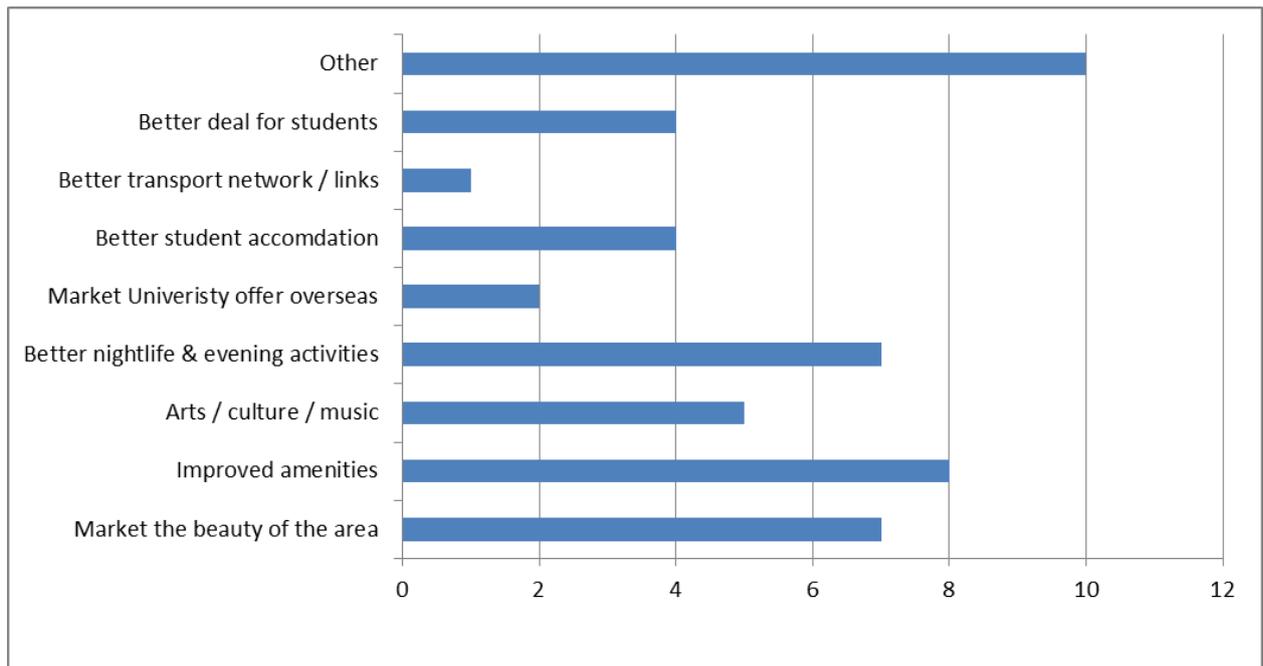
There were a number of calls for the Council and its partners to put continued and further pressure on landlords to fill their vacant units rather than leaving them stood empty. There was also a strong desire reflected for projects to be developed and delivered that could use empty shop spaces for arts and cultural purposes. Again this links clearly with the consistent suggestion of looking beyond shopping and retail for the future Town Centre vision. Music venues, performance space and arts exhibitions / galleries were all mooted as potential cultural possibilities within the Town Centre. This is a clear and consistent theme emerging through the strategy consultation and there needs to be strong and further developed links with the upcoming Scarborough Cultural Strategy.

A number of ideas were put forward in relation to using empty shop units as a developmental space for new businesses perhaps under the 'pop up shop' format. This could allow some of the many independent traders in the Town who currently trade online a trial at using shop front premises as part of their business strategy. It was also noted how a number of smaller artisanal producers and traders could be offered empty shop units as an open work / production space where visitors and residents could both buy their products and also observe them being made. This would further add to the ongoing theme of diversifying the offer of the Town Centre and appealing to a broader range of demographics.

#### Developing a University Town

It has long been an ambition of the Council and its partners for Scarborough to become a fully-fledged University Town that is able to benefit from the diversity of economic activity that is needed to attract the student population. Historically the Town has benefitted from a small but important student community; initially with the Scarborough Campus of the University of Hull and more recently with the development of the Coventry University Campus and the University Technical College. The long term strategic aspiration of the Council is to become a destination for students both national and international and is working with education and employers partners to develop a range of higher education that are both appealing to students and in line with the needs of the local labour market. The Town Centre Strategy is integral in developing a place that potential students wish to come and live.

As part of the consultation process at the November / December engagement events those present were asked for their opinions on how Scarborough could be further developed under the brand of a 'University Town' and attract more potential students to the Town. The bar chart below outlines the suggestions given through the consultation, grouped into appropriate categories. As the chart shows there were a range of different ideas put forward, many of which linked to themes and suggestions highlighted throughout the consultation.



The three most popular suggested ideas were centred on the three themes of; improved amenities for students, a better Night Time Economy offer and improved marketing of the natural beauty of the area.

In terms of improved amenities for students the comments from business and community representatives indicated a strong desire for improved low cost residential accomodation for students as part of the necessary offer that the Town needs to provide. Improved sports and leisure facilities were suggested including capitalising on some of our natural assets such as clean sea water and ideal surfing conditions. More music venues and events in the Town Centre area as well as the improvement in quality of music and arts venues in the Town was also suggested. The provision of non-entertainment facilities for students was also suggested with ideas such as study halls and improved conference facilities for academic events standing out as possibilities.

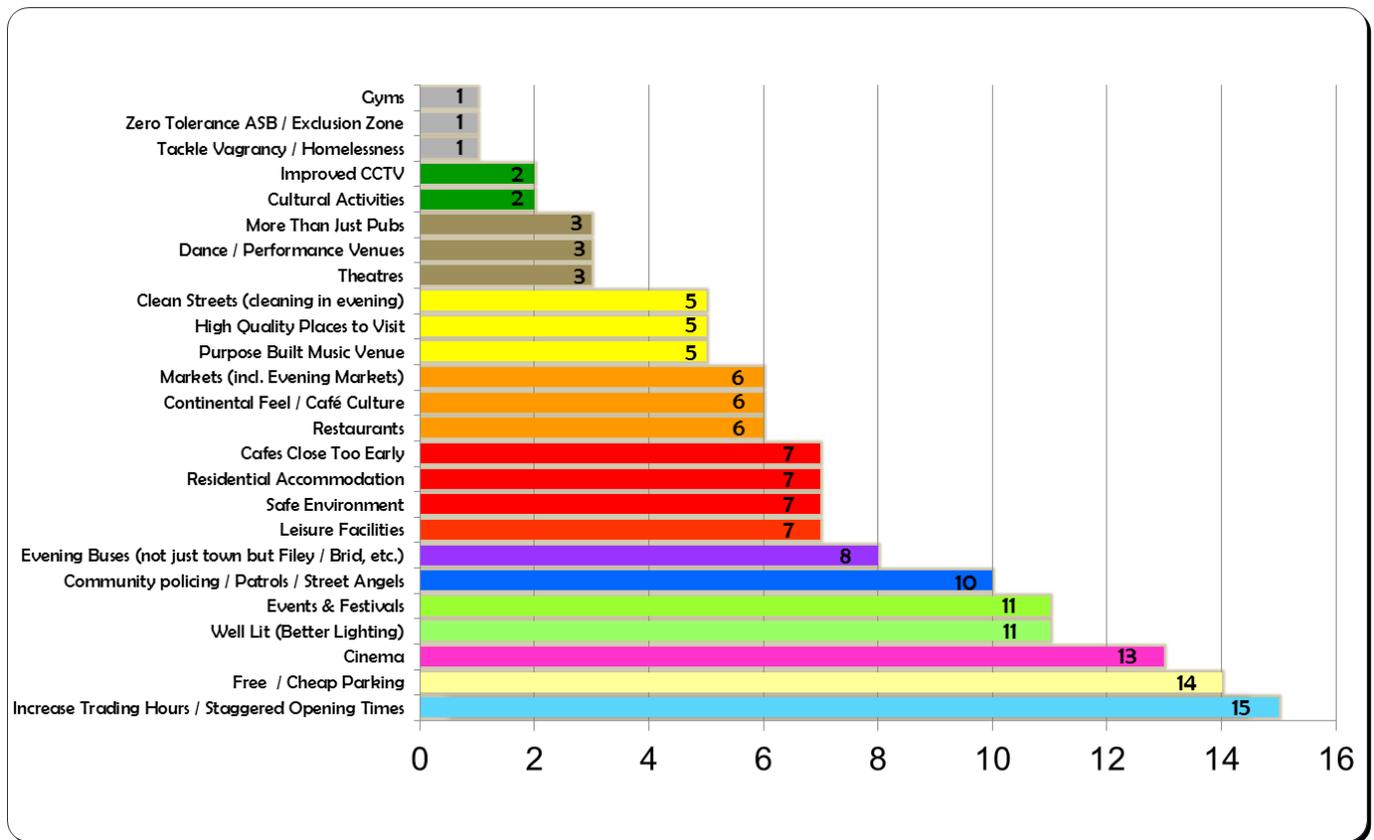
The theme of a safe and vibrant Night Time Economy remained consistent through many of the comments and opinions received. There was an suggestion that the current night life offer is not appealing and needs to be improved and diversified.

Finally there was a strong theme running through the individual comments that Scarborough is uniquely placed as a student destination with such a rich natural heritage of coast and country that many larger cities and urban areas are not able to offer. We should capitalise on this and seek out appropriate avenues to market the educational, social and cultural offer that Scarborough has to potential students nationally and internationally.

### Night Time Economy

It has long been recognised that the viability of Scarborough's Town Centre depends on a safe and vibrant Night Time Economy. Moreover it has been recognised that both the Day Time and Night Time economies work independently of each other and that there is a distinct 'dead time' in the Town Centre between around 5pm and 8pm when the Day Time Economy has closed down and the Night Time Economy has yet to start.

Recognition of this 'dead time' and suggestions to counteract it were identified strongly during the engagement events as documented by the bar chart below.



Residents of the Town expressed a clear desire to see a more considered approach to transition between the Day Time and Night Time Economies with suggestions of increased day time trading past 5pm or a holistic approach to staggered opening to maintain a sense of purpose and vibrancy to the area in the early evening. Whilst the Council is not in a position to mandate businesses with regard to their opening hours it is in a good position to facilitate a collective dialogue with businesses on how this could be achieved.

The second most suggested idea was for the Council to provide free or cheap parking to assist the Night Time Economy. There may need to be an education campaign delivered in this respect as Council Car Parks and on street parking is free across the Town after 6pm yet this message does not seem to have gotten across.

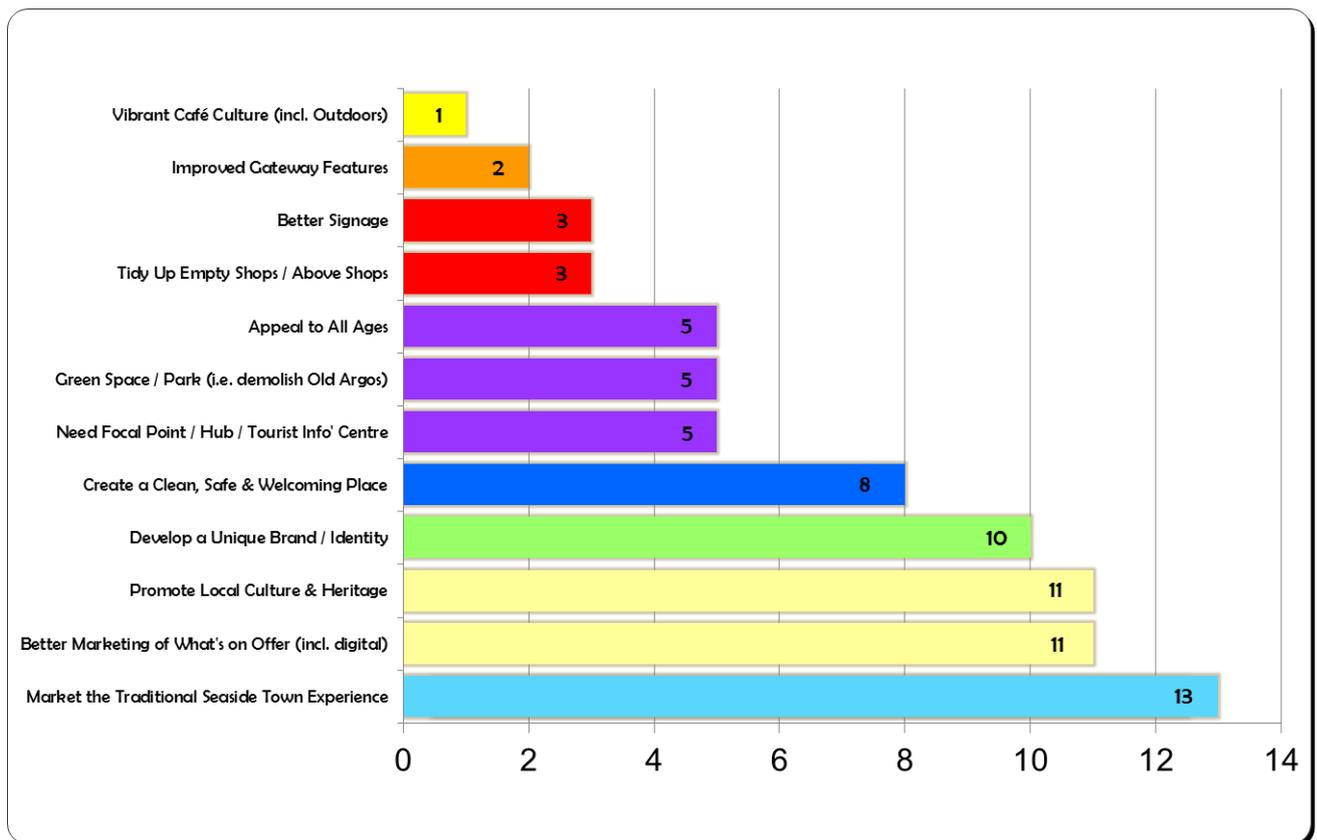
Again a call for more leisure activities and events and festivals was evident through the comments that were received. Notably and in line with comments received throughout the whole consultation was the idea of a Town Centre located cinema. Better street lighting and public toilet provision was also highlighted strongly and the Council and its partners may wish to explore their provision in respect of these.



As the image above suggests, there were a number of varied ideas put forward as to how the Strategy could incorporate new digital technologies into the future development of the Town Centre. Whilst further consultation with the local digital sector is required in this area it is clear from the comments raised by businesses and residents that there is a desire for the Strategy to embrace and exploit new digital technologies. Better marketing through social media in particular was highlighted as an area for development as well as the use of interactive digital display screen and maps located throughout the Town Centre area.

Build our Identity, Image and Brand

A large part of the future Town Centre strategy will be concerned with the image, identity and brand that Scarborough develops and projects within the wider national tourist and retail context. In this respect Scarborough needs to distinguish itself from other similar Towns as a destination to attract tourists and a keep residents using local shops and facilities. The bar chart below highlights the suggestions that were received regarding how the Strategy could build an identity, image and brand for the Town.



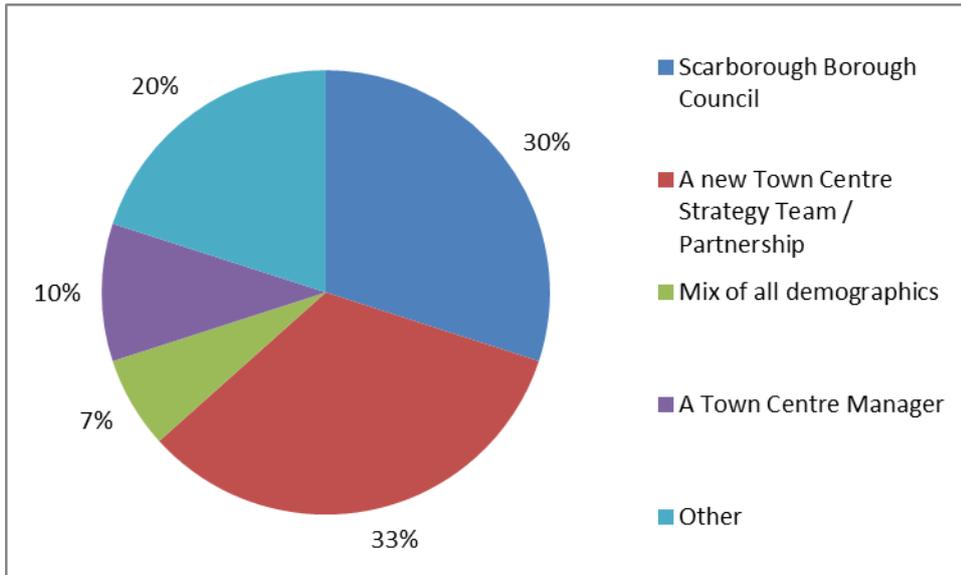
The largest number of comments received were themed around utilising and building on the traditional seaside image that Scarborough already has. It was noted on a number of occasions that Scarborough is Britain's first seaside resort and that this is something that should be capitalised on. To many visitors the traditional seaside image is how they already view Scarborough and it would be unwise to downplay this and instead a suitable way forward would be to promote and capitalise on it. There are also clear links here with other suggestions in other areas that have come out through the consultation such as the need to build on our areas culture, traditions and natural beauty.

Businesses and residents also expressed a desire for better marketing of what is on offer in the Town Centre and the wider Town area. A number of comments specifically related to digital marketing and this is an area that could perhaps be further developed and enhanced.

### Establish a Collaborative and Supportive Town Centre Community

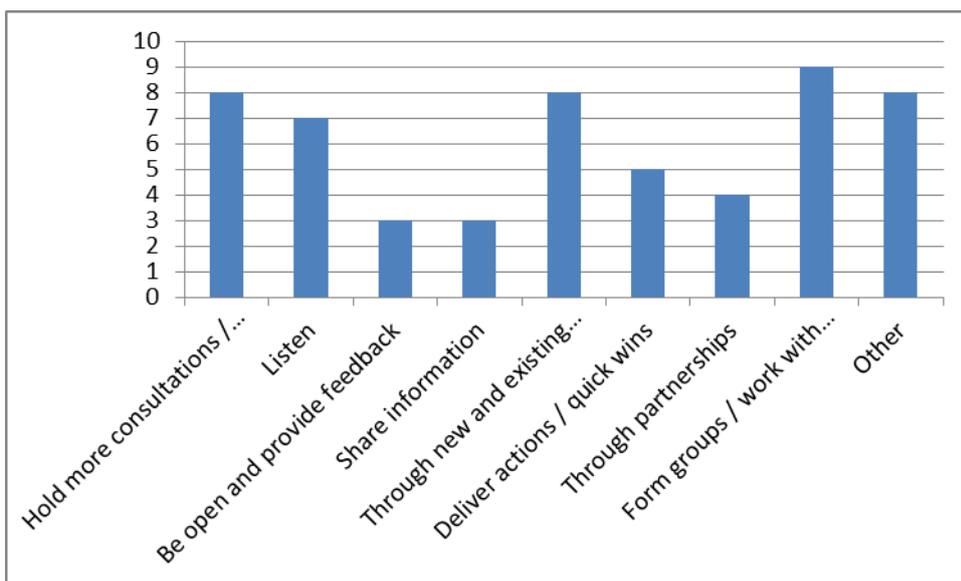
#### *Who Should Lead the Process?*

The consultation asked those involved who they deemed as best placed to drive the strategy forward. There were two clear favoured proposals here, as documented in the pie chart below. 30% of comments reflected the need for a newly established independent body or partnership to be formed with representation from Public, Private, Voluntary and Community Sectors. In contrast 20% of comments signified the belief that it was the Borough Council's responsibility to lead the development of the strategy. A possible way forward here may be the creation of an independent group that receives strong support and guidance, and perhaps even facilitation, from the Borough Council.



*How can we Engage and Meet all Needs?*

Finally in the engagement events held with businesses, stakeholders and residents we ask those present how the Strategy and the Council could further engage to ensure that all viewpoints were listened to and represented and that all needs were met. As we can see from the bar chart below there was a varied mix of views and opinions. There was a clear desire for continued engagement throughout the process and a requirement for the Council and its partners to listen to the views of the community and business as well as providing feedback in an honest and transparent manner. A number of comments through the consultation revealed a mistrust of the Council and this is something that will need to be addressed if the Town Centre Strategy is to be embraced by the wider community. Interestingly there were a number of suggestions for the process moving forward to not reinvent the wheel and that groups and partnerships were already in place and working and that whoever is responsible for taking the Strategy forward should be going out and engaging with what is already established rather than holding new meetings and expecting people to turn up.



## **Specific Interest Representation & Focus Group Findings**

As part of the consultation comments on the draft strategy and the future of Scarborough Town Centre were welcomed from service provider partners within the Borough Council. This invitation included a specific meeting with Service Unit Managers to collect service specific information. The following comments were collected:

### Forward Planning

Whilst we obviously prefer to see retail development take place in the identified town and district centres it is not as simplistic as restricting any development that runs counter to this. The sequential approach sets out that the preferred option for 'town centre uses' is for them to be in town centres. Where sites are not available, suitable or viable the policy allows for sites further out to be explored. These are defined as edge-of-centre and then out-of-centre. The Local Plan defines what would be classed as edge and out of centre. There is also a further policy consideration if we are to consider 'town centre uses' outside of the town centre. Depending on the size they may also have to submit an impact assessment. This requires any developer of retail developments (over 500 sq m) or other town centre uses (over 2500 sq m) to fully assess the impact of their proposed development on the vitality and viability of the town centre. If it is shown that by locating such a use (even if it meets the sequential test) that it would have a significant adverse impact on the town centre it would likely be recommended for refusal.

### Community Safety

Regarding empty shops in the Town Centre - can we try and encourage other businesses to try a pop up shops diversifying what they sell like old fashioned sweet shops , crafts etc. If this is not possible can we look to put up decorative frontage on the empty shops that make them look like they are a shop or business ? Community Safety have met with North Yorkshire Police and the businesses on Huntriss Row and we have had a number of issues on this street mainly in relation to young people causing ASB in the location of McDonalds. We have taken out benches and increased patrols in the area and this has reduced the ASB and crime in the area. We have been asked to explore gating for the alleyway that leads from Huntriss Row to Vernon Road this would need to go to Public Consultation. if there is evidence from North Yorkshire Police and support from the public , and the Council to start to look at this. Huntriss Row needs some work in relation to buildings especially the old Conservative club and the businesses are happy to support any action in uplifting the area as it is as a main thoroughfare.

In the New Year we are starting a begging initiative that will encourage the public to give to charity rather than the individual in order to reduce the amount of people begging in the Town Centre. We also have the Public Space Protection Order in place.

The road closure for St Nicholas street should be starting on a Saturday evening from 11pm to 5am this will also bank holiday Sundays, New Year's Eve and Boxing Day evening. This may help in relation to investigating a cafe culture style afternoon /early evening with businesses in that area and maybe considering utilising the St Nicholas Street gardens going forward if we already have the road closure availability.

## Other Submitted Comments

Throughout the consultation period a number of comments and suggestions were submitted to the Council by interested individuals. These have now been collected and collated into the specific themes of the draft strategy identified previously.

### Making the Town a Mixed Use Environment

- Many shop units which have been home to large chains such as Argos are only really suitable for another large chain. If those chains cannot be attracted to the town then the units need to be made attractive to smaller local businesses. A good way of doing this would be to split the space in to smaller units, creating a more bustling environment a little bit like more markets. Offering shorter term let's would also allow smaller businesses to test the market. Smaller vacant units could be let as pop up shops on small term leases.
- We need a outdoor market. The market outside Brunswick brings a nice feel to the town, but there isn't a good enough variety of stalls and it's not there often enough. More businesses need to be attracted to it and the marketing around it needs to be better.
- Buskers - There needs to be a better quality and variety of outdoor acts. Some of the singers are so bad they put you off hanging around the town. There is plenty of talent, plus I'm sure plenty of dance troops and performance groups around the town. They need to be encouraged to perform in the town centre, if possible.
- Street food - Whilst there is plenty of food on offer in town there isn't much variety. Toasties, tea and cake and fish and chips. People are more adventurous now, they want to try Thai, West Indian, Korean etc. and they don't necessarily want to go into a place, sit down and pay a premium to eat it. Some stalls selling food, even baked potatoes and seafood, would just offer a bit more variety.
- The Market Hall and Vaults could be used as an incubator for new businesses. This idea could be developed further by developing Rowntree House on Aberdeen Walk and bringing it back into use as a location for new businesses to progress to - i.e. it could be subdivided into smaller individual units.
- There are no hostels in the Town Centre and there is a gap in the market for one to attract visitors of all ages.

### An Inviting Public Realm we can be Proud of

- There's a disjoint between town and the market. The market renovation is fabulous but it feels empty and I think in part that is because a lack of marketing, and a failure to encourage shoppers from town to walk down there. If you were a visitor to the town I don't even know how you would know the market is there?
- There are major problems with homeless people sat in the shop doorways using foul and abusive language, drinking and reportedly taking drugs. Landlords need to step in and put gates over the fronts of doorways to prevent this.
- Locate new trees on the central reservations between intersection / roundabout of Dean Road and Columbus Ravine extending all the way up Columbus Ravine.

- Upgrade the current bus shelters with more modern up to date ones.
- There are problems with vehicles parking near the Post Office building on Aberdeen Walk on the pedestrianised area. It makes the Town Centre look cluttered, its unsafe and does not make an enjoyable experience for visitors or the local community. The prohibited parking rule is completely ignored and overlooked and the Council needs to enforce.
- We need a new civic space intervention to improve the area outside the station. Why not remove the low wall and open up the space between the Train Station and bus stops?
- The large Tarmac area outside the Grand Hotel, perhaps including the St Nicholas Cliff parking area and central grassed garden - I would propose a new civic intervention in this area. A new high quality street carpet of stone installed outside the Grand Hotel entrance, replacing the poor quality tarmac. This new surface could be just the area outside the hotel or extended from the top of Falconers Road, down to the Grand Hotel and to the Spa bridge. A new matching street carpet could be installed on the opposite side of the area, outside the Travelodge. Also, the whole central parking area, central garden which does not and cannot be used realistically, needs some rethinking. Could the car parking be altered, as it does hide the view across from Falconers Road to the sea. And makes the whole area cluttered and clumsy looking. Couldn't the whole area be thought through and a new, cohesive vision be brought to life.
- New Pedestrian crossing points - I believe that the town centres one way road system is the priority when pedestrians need to be the priority in the town centre. No person driving a car spends money whilst in the car, only a pedestrian actually spends money in a shop, a cafe, a hairdresser or using banking services etc. So, we need to promote pedestrian use of space. To achieve this, I propose installing several 'informal crossing points' at various key locations. The crossing points will simply be a new surface, perhaps a stone surface similar to the new paved area near St Nicholas Street and Newborough. The new surface could even be slightly raised to slow down drivers slightly with each kerb lowered at that point. The crossing points will always connect from the pedestrian precinct or pavement, go across the one way road, to another pavement. The pedestrian street carpet crossing point on Foreshore Road work well for instance. Proposed locations are;
  1. From the bottom of Huntriss Row precinct across to Falconers road pavement (this could be quite a wide crossing point, similar width to the precinct width itself),
  2. From the entrance to the alleyway to the back of the Royal Hotel across to the pavement next to the sunken gardens.
  3. From the external Palm Court Car Park pavement across to the middle and then across again to the sunken gardens pavement.
  4. From the pavement next to Brights and Sons across to the Customer First Centre.
  5. From the pavement next to Wetherspoons across to the bus shelters next to Ryman's. Currently it is very difficult to cross and if you want to cross you have to go up and back or down and back, as a pedestrian.
- Removal of unwanted street furniture, railings and signage etc. in the town centre. Although I really like the new area done by NYCC near St Nicholas Street with its new surface, railings design, wider pavement and reduced car parking, I do believe the number of railings could have been reduced. The railings were the last thing to be installed and prior to their installation, the new space was so attractive, clutter free and pedestrians were encouraged to

explore the new area and were empowered. Then all the railings were installed and it was disappointing to witness. Perhaps consideration could be given to the possibility of removing some of the railings. Also, the railings that are on the pavement outside Pavilion House are particularly obstructive and unattractive. If they were removed, it would improve the feel of this area. Railings only serve to make traffic drive faster, they also act as a visual block so neither pedestrian nor vehicle driver can see the other. Again, the railings outside the SJT are ugly, as are the ones on both the central reservations in this intersection. The idea of safety shouldn't be an issue as the traffic lights stop or at least slow traffic down, in every direction. The clumsy railings in the central reservation on Westborough opposite Wetherspoons need removing. What are they for? There is already a central kerb. Again, it's more street clutter which is ugly and will cost money to upkeep and replace, and offering no viable service for road users or pedestrians.

- Christmas Lights and Christmas Tree - New, High quality lights and tree need to be selected and installed for Christmas. There can be no doubt that the town centre lights and tree, need to improve. The last ones were awful, childish and apologetic. The town centre is never going to be bustling with Christmas shoppers whilst its lights are so mundane. And the Christmas tree, with barriers and no lights was even more apologetic than the Christmas lights. What is the point of a green tree with no lights, encased in ugly metal barriers. If we want to create a vibrant centre, especially when it goes dark in winter, lighting is key.

#### Build our Identity, Image and Brand

- We need a niche! Malton is known as the food capital of Yorkshire and Whitby is renowned for Goths. Scarborough needs to have a niche, maybe it could be the vintage capital of Yorkshire or the art capital of Yorkshire, or something similar. Marketed as such you could attract more businesses of that type to the town, but also more people interested in that area too, just look at Hay on Wye literary festival.
- The town needs to recognise the value of social media as a marketing tool. Make the town 'instagramable' and more people will be encouraged to visit. Reach out to Yorkshire bloggers when events are on and invite them. It's a very under-utilised tool.

#### Other

- Too many shops in the Town Centre do not have appropriate disabled access such as ramps next to doorways. Steps into or out of shops mean they are prohibitive to wheelchair users and people with other mobility issues.
- The vacant Argos unit in the Brunswick - It's a big space and it's good to see that it's sometimes used for local art etc, but again it would possibly make a nice little food court with a good variety of world food. Think Trinity kitchen on a smaller scale.
- Dog friendly - There are always people waiting outside Brunswick with dogs. Most people's dogs are housetrained, surely they could be allowed into the shopping centre even if not in the shops? People would spend more time in the shops if they knew they're partner and dog weren't standing out in the rain.

## Focus Group Findings

Three separate focus groups sessions were held as part of the ongoing consultation activity. This gave an opportunity to conduct a more thorough engagement with some of the issues pertaining to a number of the key interest and demographic groups relevant to the strategy. The focus groups were conducted over January and February by the Council's Senior Community Regeneration Officer and each lasted between 45 minutes – 1 hour. The basis for these discussions remained the core consultation questions from the business and community consultation events however there was scope to deviate from these where relevant to explore some of the bespoke experiences of the various groups.

Focus groups were held with; representatives from local small businesses (with assistance from Yorkshire Coast Enterprise), Students from Coventry University and a group of disabled residents. The main points of interest from each focus group are detailed below:

### *Small businesses*

- It would be good to see a centre / building where small artisan producers could produce their goods. Like market serves for retail. Could be a tourist attraction. A space where there could all brought together - like a working museum where people could see the products being made and it could include a joint retail space. These producers could then run a number of workshops as well which will provide a social function for the community.
- Rental prices too high for start up businesses
- WE need a hook to bring people to the town. Malton has Food Festival, Whitby has goth weekend, what does Scarborough have?
- There is nothing open at the bottom end of Town and lead down to market and seafront. Especially now Argos is closed. There is nothing to bring people to the bottom end of Town.
- The Strategy delivery needs to be tendered out.....it needs people with passion to take this forward so that the public have faith in the process.
- Empty shop units could be used for advertising local businesses. This could be an income stream, will help struggling local businesses and will improve the visual appearance of the area.
- Still a need for collocated business space to encourage younger people starting out in businesses and a hot desking ethos.

### *Students*

- The problem with events and festivals for students is that those from outside of Scarborough arrive in September when the events season is finishing and they go home in April when it is starting up again. Scarborough cannot be marketed as a University Town if the Town shuts down for the time that students are here.
- Secondary shopping areas are in constant decline and are underinvested in. Too much focus is concentrated around the Brunswick.
- If we try not to replicate larger towns and city centres and concentrate on secondary shopping areas such as Victoria Road, Falsgrave, Bar Street etc...this would give us a sense of uniqueness that would allow us to compete.

- Could anything be done with what used to be the old skating rink next to the Hole in the Wall pub?
- Investment is needed in Scarborough Train Station if it is to deal with the growing amount of people visiting the town and there needs to be a way to connect the Train Station to the Beach.
- Scarborough is an elderly population and doesn't have the vibrancy of a large young people community to call it a true university town.
- With Coventry University the type of courses that are offered here link well with the local labour market for the Uni's graduates but the poor leisure and entertainment offer is stopping graduates staying here.

#### *Disabled Residents*

- Accessibility wise the Town Centre is mixed. Some places are good but a lot of the smaller shopping areas such as Barr Street are not accessible for wheelchair users as they have 'one step in' and many places do not have a ramp. A lot of the shops are not aware that they are not accessible.
- Many of the restaurants are not accessible for disabled people. For example the toilets are sometimes down stairs and therefore not suitable for people in wheelchairs.
- Who is checking the new builds to ensure that they are accessible? For example the new Coventry Uni building does not have a loop system in the reception.
- There is too much street furniture and clutter in the Town Centre and this causes hazards to people with visual impairments. Also there is no enforcement of vehicles accessing the restricted pedestrianised area during daytime hours. This causes major concern for visually impaired people especially those who have guide dogs.
- There are a number of hidden gems such as the Italian Gardens that too many people are not aware of.

## **Conclusions**

The information and findings presented in this document will help towards the development of the future Scarborough Town Centre Strategy and associated action plan. It will ensure that the Strategy has not been developed in isolation and that due consideration has been given to the views of residents, community groups businesses and service providers.

It is intended that community and stakeholder engagement will be an ongoing feature of the Strategy development and there will be various opportunities throughout the process to re-engage with the community and to update this document and the Strategy action plan where appropriate. A number of potential next steps have been identified by the Council as it begins to move towards adoption of the Town Centre Strategy and these have been developed in line with the findings of this report. These next steps include:

- The recruitment of a Town Centre Strategy Delivery Manager to lead on the development of a dedicated partnership Town Centre Team.
- The development of a comprehensive action plan that will act as a working document to guide the delivery phase of the Town Centre Strategy. The Town Centre Team will oversee the delivery of this action plan and ensure it is updated and amended to adapt to changes in the socio-economic landscape and future funding environment.
- An ongoing campaign of community engagement and development to ensure that the Town Centre Team has the capacity, skills base and leadership abilities required to drive the Strategy forward. It is vital that the Town Centre Team includes representation from key stakeholders as well as representation from marginalised and underrepresented groups.