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Ribble Valley
Borough Council

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Dear Councillor

The next meeting of the **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** Committee will be held at **6.30 pm** on **THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2022** in the **Council Chamber, 13 Church Street, Clitheroe, BB7 2DD.**

I do hope you can be there.

Yours sincerely

M. H. Scott

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** (Pages 3 - 6)
3. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest in respect of matters contained in the agenda.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

ITEMS FOR DECISION

None.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5. **WELCOME BACK FUND** (Pages 7 - 68)
Report of Director of Economic Development and Planning enclosed.
6. **REVENUE MONITORING 2021-22** (Pages 69 - 72)
Report of Director of Resources enclosed.

7. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-23**

(Pages 73 - 76)

Report of Director of Resources enclosed.

8. **REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

None.

9. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

None.

Electronic agendas sent to members of Economic Development – Councillor Stuart Hirst (Chair), Councillor Richard Bennett, Councillor David Berryman, Councillor David Birtwhistle, Councillor Robert (Bob) Buller, Councillor Stuart Carefoot, Councillor Judith Clark, Councillor Louise Edge (Vice-Chair), Councillor Rosemary (Rosie) Elms, Councillor Steve Farmer, Councillor Stewart Fletcher, Councillor Mark French, Councillor Simon Hore, Councillor Ged Mirfin and Councillor Robert Thompson.

Contact: Democratic Services on 01200 414408 or committee.services@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Minutes of Economic Development

Meeting Date: Thursday, 20 January 2022, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chair)

Councillors:

D Berryman	S Farmer
D Birtwhistle	S Fletcher
B Buller	M French
J Clark	G Mirfin
L Edge	R Thompson
R Elms	

In attendance: Director of Economic Development and Planning and Head of Leisure and Cultural Services

Not in attendance: Councillor S Carefoot

596 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bennett and S Hore.

597 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

Councillor G Mirfin declared that as a County Councillors he sits on LCDL which owns land in Ribble Valley.

598 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

599 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

600 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking committee to agree a revised revenue budget for 2021/22 for this committee.

Committee were reminded that at this time of year the estimates are revised for the current financial year in order to predict the likely outturn on the budget. The budget this year had been particularly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst committee income and expenditure may increase or decrease at the revised estimate, items such as budgeted core government funding and council tax precept remain fixed. As a result, any compensating movement is within earmarked reserves and general fund balances. Decisions and actions required as a result of committee meetings have been incorporated into the budget setting process.

Committee were informed that the difference between the revised and original estimate was a decrease in net expenditure of £20,330, or £33,150 after allowing for

movements on earmarked reserves. A summary of the reasons for the movements was provided for members' information.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree the revenue revised estimate for 2021/22.

601

ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the draft revenue budget for approval by committee and then consideration at Special Policy and Finance committee.

The Council's three-year budget forecast had been presented to Policy and Finance committee in September 2021 when it predicted that there would be the following budget gaps: £82k in 2022/23, £139k in 2023/24 and £230k in 2024/25, after allowing for use of general fund balances.

Since that time there had been a number of significant changes affecting the budget. These included significant rises in inflation, an increase in national insurance contributions and implementation of a new pay line. Therefore, the budget gap for 2022/23 was estimated to increase to around £497k.

The provisional local government finance settlement announced in December 2021 was for just one year, with a national increase of 6.9% in Council's core spending power in cash terms between 2021/22 and next year. This is the fourth one-year settlement in a row.

Headlines for Ribble Valley include:

- Core spending power set to increase by only 0.2% (£11,000) next year from £6.849m to £6.860m.
- Business Rate Baseline funding level is £1.354m which is the same as the current year, however £111k compensation will be received due to the loss of income received by freezing the business rate multiplier.
- An allocation of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) of £215 despite RSG increasing nationally by 3.1% for inflation.
- Rural Services Delivery Grant of £113,250 – same as the current year.
- Lower Tier Services Grant of £60,754 up from £57,696.
- A new one off 2022/23 Services Grant has been announced worth £822m in recognition of services and includes costs of the increase in NI contributions. Ribble Valley will receive £93,368.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) – the Government have allowed a new round of NHB allocations for 2022/23 which will not attract any legacy payments. They have also allowed the one remaining legacy payment of £464k which has been allowed for. Next year there will be a payment of £741k for 2022/23 along with the legacy payment of £464k = £1.2m.
- The Lancashire Business Rate Pool has received designation to continue.
- The Council Tax can be increased by £5.

Taking these things into account reduces the budget gap from £487k to £233k.

Members were reminded that the fees and charges for this committee had been approved at their last meeting, and the consequential impact had been incorporated into the service budgets.

Once all committees had approved their detailed estimates, the overall position would be considered by the Budget Working Group and recommendations in order to produce a balanced budget would be made to Special Policy and Finance committee, before being presented to Full Council, at which point the Council Tax for 2022/23 would also be approved.

The draft proposed budget for 2022/23 was set out for each service area, starting with the original estimate for the current year and the predicted changes including inflation, movements in expenditure, income, support services and capital charges.

The net expenditure for this committee had increased by £43,840. The main reasons were summarised for committee's information.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the revenue original estimate for 2022/23 for submission to Special Policy and Finance committee.

602

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking committee to approve the 2021/22 revised estimate for this committee's capital programme.

One capital scheme totalling £66,750 had been approved by Special Policy and Finance committee and full Council in February and March 2021 respectively. The scheme had been moved from the 2020/21 capital programme to the 2021/22 capital programme.

During the year there had been budget changes resulting in a capital programme of two schemes totalling £101,750. These had now been revised to reflect their progress and estimated full year expenditure for 2021/22 which resulted in a proposed revised estimate of £50,000, a reduction of £51,750 from the total approved budget. The reasons were highlighted for committee's information.

Progress was reported on the two schemes. Lancashire County Council has informed us that the gateway signs would be installed over the next 4 – 6 weeks.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the 2021/22 revised estimate of £50,000 for this committee's capital programme as set out, and
2. Approve the transfer of £51,750 of the Economic Development Initiatives capital budget from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

603

CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking committee to consider the future capital programme for this committee following a review of the existing capital programme with proposed amendments and the submission of a new scheme bid.

For this committee, no capital schemes were previously approved for the financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25, so no scheme reviews had been required.

New capital bids had been requested to be put forward for 2025/26 and 2026/27. For this committee there was one new bid for 2025/26 for £55,000 for the Clitheroe Townscape scheme which had been deleted from the capital programme in February

2018. If the bid was supported by committee, it would be considered alongside bids from all other committee by the Budget Working Group and Policy and Finance committee.

The Chairman informed committee that a request for additional match funding on this scheme may be made by Lancashire County Council and suggested that should the detail be received in time for the budget process, it also be considered.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the new capital bid for 2025/26 for the Clitheroe Townscape scheme and forward it to Policy and Finance committee to be considered alongside the bids from all committees as part of the Overall Capital Programme.
2. Consider a further request for additional match funding on this scheme when details are received from LCC.

604 FEEDBACK ON LONGRIDGE LEVELLING UP BID

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating members on our bid to the Levelling Up Fund.

She reminded committee of the background to the bid and the decision to submit a bid for Longridge Town Centre under the Regeneration and town centre investment theme of the fund. This application had been considered by a central appraisal team and feedback had been received. The bid submitted was a reasonably strong bid in a highly competitive and oversubscribed application process. It had scored well in respect of its strategic fit and value for money, however the weakest area was that of deliverability. Specific feedback with regards to this area had been provided.

There was currently no more information on the Levelling Up Fund other than that there would be another round in Spring 2022. Committee would be kept informed.

605 TOURISM UPDATE

The Director of Community Services submitted a report for information on the general progress on tourism activity, with particular reference to measures taken to support the visitor economy during the pandemic, as well as the priorities as we continue through recovery.

Members requested officers to look at installing electric charging points on Council rural car parks and Longridge, and to consider extending our promotional offering to include cycling and golf.

606 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

607 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 6.57 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Olwen Heap olwen.heap@ribblevalley.gov.uk.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: THURSDAY 24th MARCH 2022
 title: WELCOME BACK FUND
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
 principal author: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the progress of the Welcome Back Fund following the resolution of this Committee in June 2021.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Ambitions-
 - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - To help make people's lives safer and healthier
- Corporate Objectives –
 - To work with our partners to ensure that the infrastructure in the Ribble Valley is improved
 - To promote stronger, more confident, and more active communities throughout the borough

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In May 2020, the Government announced a new £50 million Reopening High Street Safely fund to enable councils to support their local high streets get safely back to business. This Fund was introduced to prepare for the reopening of non-essential retail. The fund was aimed at Council's introducing a range of safety measures in a move to kick-start local economies, get people back to work and customers back to the shops. The intention was to enable high streets to reopen safely and to ensure that customers felt safe when returning to the high streets.

2.2 Ribble Valley were awarded a grant of £53,771 from the fund and quickly began preparing plans to enable our high streets to reopen safely and to enable the measures to be put into place before non-essential retail re-opened on 15th June 2020.

2.3 The following activities were undertaken as part of the fund:

- 2.3.1 Developed Action Plans
- 2.3.2 Creation of a marketing campaign
- 2.3.3 Signs and pavement markings, to raise awareness of the need to social distance
- 2.3.4 Localised temporary road closures/ one-way systems to allow for extra space for pedestrians and socially distanced queuing at shops
- 2.3.5 Increased pedestrian and cycle access in some town centres, through adjustments to traffic restrictions
- 2.3.6 Temporary suspension of some parking spaces and laybys, where extra space for widening footpaths to help pedestrians respect social distancing rules could be provided.
- 2.3.7 Engagement with local businesses including the provision of business guidance advice documentation

- 2.3.8 Production of guidance document for Queue Management and Social Distancing Advice Note
- 2.3.9 Shoppers Survey
- 2.3.10 Production of banners and bollard covers to advise customers the high streets were re-open and social distancing measures.

2.4 In March 2021 the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick, announced a new £56 million Welcome Back Fund to help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces, and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups. The intention of the fund is to support a safe and successful reopening of the high streets. The associated guidance was released in April.

2.5 Ribble Valley have been awarded £53,771 funding through the Welcome Back Fund however this can be combined with any underspend from the Reopening High Street Safely fund (RHSSF).

2.6 In June 2021 Members of this Committee approved the following actions in respect of utilising the funding:

- Appoint consultants to develop longer term strategic action plans for the three retail areas which will include engagement with stakeholders to understand any emerging issues and to explore options for pilot projects within the retail areas.
- Design and erect banners, bunting etc to make the retail areas more visually attractive and promote the areas- this would include advertisement material.
- Purchase temporary gazebos/ seating- potentially linked to the pilot projects to be explored by the consultants.
- Procure services of a local artist to beautify high streets possibly linked to themes, such as Christmas decoration, within the high street.

3 UPDATE ON FUND

3.1 Following the resolution in June the following actions have been undertaken.

3.2 Ark Consultancy were appointed to develop actions plans for the three retail areas covered by this fund. This piece of work involved assessments of the three areas along with engagement with various stakeholder groups. The report as a result of this work is appended to this report (Appendix 1).

3.3 Members will note that the report includes an Action Plan with numerous suggestions. These will form the basis of the Service Centre Action Plans which will be developed by the Economic Development Team for our three main retail areas. However some of the identified actions have been undertaken already as set out below.

3.4 A Christmas tree switch on event was organised at Clitheroe Market with the tree and lights funded through this fund. The lights were switched on by the Borough and Town Mayor.

3.5 One of the actions within the work undertaken by Ark was to investigate pop up events. Two pop up events have been arranged to promote our existing markets. Four temporary market stalls have been purchased which will be erected on Berry Lane and Calder Avenue, Longridge on 24th March to promote the existing market at the civic hall. A similar pop-up market will be held on Castle Street on Saturday 26th March to promote Clitheroe Market. The existing traders can utilise the stalls free of charge to promote what can be purchased on the main markets and will include advertising materials detailing the location of the markets and what they offer. Advertising banners to promote these events have also been purchased.

3.6 The Ark report identifies an oversupply of bins particularly in Clitheroe. Additionally, some of this infrastructure is in a relatively poor state detracting from the visual appearance of the high street. In this regard temporary bins have been purchased which can ensure sufficient provision is provided within the town and enable the street scene to be improved visually in advance of the Queens Jubilee celebrations.

3.7 One of the main actions identified within the Ark piece of work is to develop the #LOVERIBBLEVALLEY brand. The first step in this regard and to promote our retail areas three short promotional films have been commissioned which will be promoted through our social media channels to showcase what our retail areas have to offer and to encourage people back into our towns.

4 CHALLENGES

4.1 As set out within the previous report the use of this fund is very restricted and there are strict procurement rules which need to be adhered to. The funding is defrayed at risk with the Council submitting a claim each quarter for the money already spent. These claims are subject to strict scrutiny by the assessing department at Central Government level with only eligible spend, which has followed the procurement guidelines, being paid back. The procurement limits are attached at Appendix 2.

4.2 The purpose of this fund was to bring people back to the high streets however this had associated challenges with several periods of lock down and the omicron variant resulting in restrictions. These periods of lockdown and new variants restricted the types of activities this fund could be utilised for as it would have been challenging to host an event which attracted a lot of people in the retail areas during a time when the infection rates in the Borough were high.

4.3 Any activities funded by the fund have strict branding requirements which must be adhered to.

4.4 Several the suggested activities would not be suitable for our retail areas. One example would be the purchase of temporary planters. Although this would assist in improving the visual appearance of our retail areas the restricted nature of our high streets would mean that planters could cause additional obstructions at a time when social distancing restrictions were in place.

4.5 Any work undertaken by existing Council staff is paid at their standard rates as the fund cannot be used to fund overtime premiums. As our staff already have full time jobs the cost of offering additional tasks outside both their normal working hours and normal tasks would be borne by the Council not the fund.

4.6 This is a revenue only fund with the following restrictions:

4.6.1 This funding cannot support activities which provide direct revenue generation for local authorities as income/payments for the creation/running/maintenance of events. Activity is limited to public space (land in public ownership).

4.6.2 Temporary measures mean interventions that are:

- revenue expenditure only;
- items/activity that are moveable; and
- directly or indirectly connected to the purpose of making high streets, neighbourhood shopping areas and public spaces safer to users during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5 ACTIVITIES THE FUND HAS SUPPORTED

5.1 To date approximately in excess of £81,000 of the fund has been utilised (this includes some VAT which is recoverable) on the following:

- The production of Action Plans
- Creation of a dedicated webpage
- Direct high street interventions which included:
 - signage erected around the retail centres
 - Reverse graffiti utilised
 - One-way system signage and pavement markings
 - Signage detailing highway adjustments, location of car parks and Clitheroe market
- Shoppers Survey (July 2020)
- Introduction of free car parking to encourage shoppers back to the retail areas
- Information campaign- high street reopen which included:
 - Banners around the retail centres
 - Corex signage through the retail centres
- Initial letter drop to all the non-essential retail businesses within the three areas
- Production of guidance document for Queue Management and Social Distancing Advice Note
- Second letter drop/e-mail to all premises within three areas retail areas including:
 - Details of where to obtain guidance and advice
 - A copy of the Queuing and Social Distancing Guidance Document
 - A map of the highway adjustments which will take place in their retail area along with a timescale for implementation
 - Details of where to direct queries
 - ‘Staying COVID-19 Secure’ in 2020 poster
 - Info re #LoveRibbleValley campaign
- Highway adjustments undertaken within two of the main retail areas within one week of the non-essential retail shops reopening
- Correspondence with traders following implementation of highway adjustments
- Highway adjustments were altered following feedback
- Christmas Tree Light Switch on event Clitheroe Market
- Consultants undertook a review of the medium-term impacts of Covid on our retail centres
- Purchase of temporary market stalls
- Pop-up promotional market events in Clitheroe and Longridge
- Advertisement material associated with pop up events
- Purchase of temporary bins
- Three short promotional films commissioned

5.2 Members will note that not all the Council’s funding has been allocated. This is due to the restrictions seen within the Valley throughout various stages of the pandemic along with the very strict eligibility criteria associated with this fund set by Central Government and the ERDF.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources-** the ERDF funding rules are very complex and detailed. All agreed areas of activity will be checked to ensure compliance before undertaking any activity to seek to guarantee that any funding defrayed can be claimed back from the fund within the next claim period.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal**- in accordance with the ERDF Procedure Rules the areas of activity will either be subject to formal tender or requests for at least three quotes.

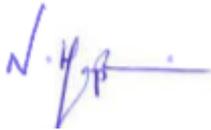
- Political**- None

- Reputation**- developing plans for the medium to long term impact of COVID19 on our local economies is considered to be a benefit to the Borough as a whole.

- Equality & Diversity** – None.

7 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

7.1 Note to work done to date in respect of the Reopening High Street Safely/ Welcome Back Fund and the associated challenges.



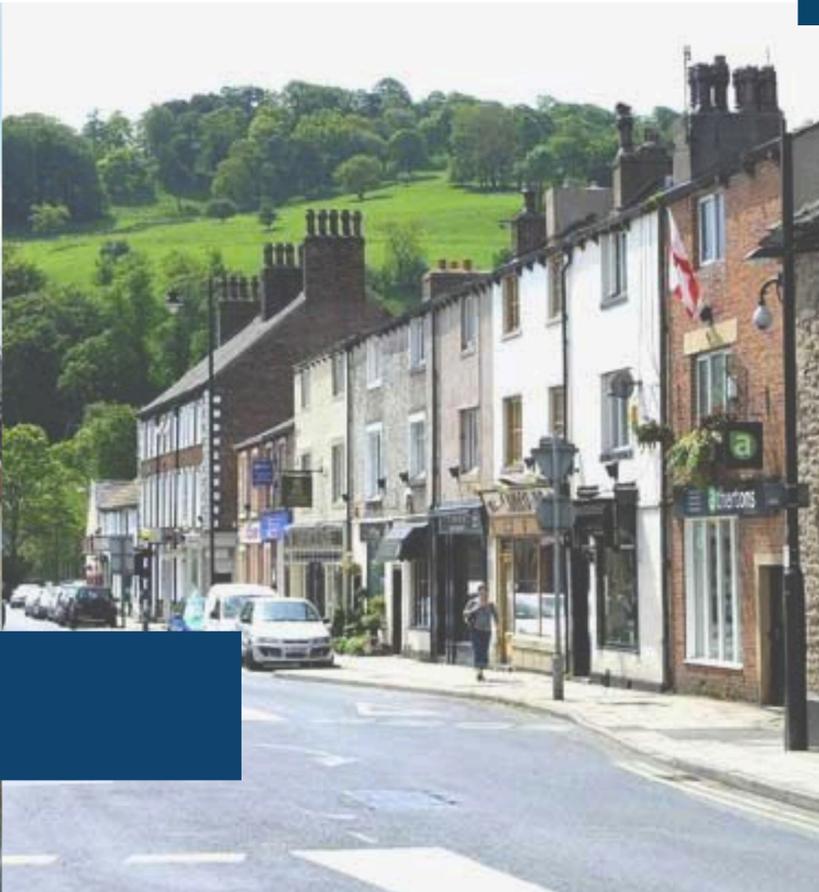
NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Appendix 1- Ark Report

Appendix 2- Procurement rules

Value of contract	Minimum Procedure	Advertising Required
£0 - £2,499	Direct award	None
£2,500 - £24,999	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and services	None
£25,000 – Relevant Public Contracts Regulations threshold	Formal tender process in line with the Interpretative Communication and the relevant guidance set out below	1) Advertised on Contracts Finder and 2) the opportunity is advertised on the ESIF grant recipient’s website for a reasonable time period.

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Welcome Back Fund

Prepared For: Ribble Valley Borough Council

Funded by...



Introduction

We are delighted to provide this report to Ribbles Valley Borough Council (RVBC) to support the recovery of the borough's high streets in Whalley, Clitheroe and Longridge as part of Covid-19 recovery.

RVBC commissioned ARK Consultancy Ltd (ARK) in November 2021 to explore the medium-term impact of Covid-19 on the borough's three main retail areas: Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. This piece of work is funded by the European Regional Development Fund's Welcome Back Fund. The objectives of the project were to:

1. Develop longer term strategic action plans for the three retail areas
2. Engage with stakeholders to understand any emerging issues
3. Explore options for pilot projects to support the visitor economy
4. Work with RVBC to identify options to make the retail areas more visually attractive and promote the areas

To complete the project, we assessed all three centres in December and January. These visits were supported by desk top research and interviews with shoppers, stakeholders, and businesses to shape and inform our recommendations. Whilst some of the observations and challenges are common across all three areas, there are also distinct findings for each.

Throughout the project it was clear that the borough's residents and businesses are extremely proud of the area and were keen to show/tell us what there was on offer as well as what could be improved. The individuality of the centres is driven by a strong independent business community with loyal customers. This has been a major factor in the areas emerging from the pandemic in a much better position than larger centres and especially those reliant on chain stores.

It is this fiercely independent spirit that not only makes the retail areas unique but also perhaps represents the biggest challenge in how to bring people together in each area. The aim of the project was to identify what was working well and what might need more focus to enable businesses to be more resilient and grow in the future as Covid-reopening continues and shopping habits change. As such, the report is action focused in identifying how proposals can be implemented and positive change brought to each area.

Centre Reviews

Our assessment is supported by a scorecard approach, which will help to identify some critical action areas and provide an overall measurable assessment to monitor progress over time. The rating criteria is as follows:

- 1 - Significant improvement required
- 2 - Improvement required
- 3 - Adequate
- 4 - Good
- 5 - Excellent

Image deck: This report is accompanied by an image deck which includes photographs taken during our site visits to the three centres. Please read the report in conjunction with the image deck as this will help to provide a visual understanding of the points made. The points and actions identified in the report, and the associated pages of the image deck are referenced throughout.

The project revealed common themes across each of the three centres which included:

Aesthetics: Post-pandemic the retail areas look tired and not befitting of a quality heritage borough, infrastructure is tired e.g. pavements, bins and signage

Culture & Governance: There are a mix of well-established stakeholder groups. However, what's missing is the consensus required to deliver change in the centres individually and as one group across the borough. The disjointed stakeholder groups and the ability to deliver change is further impacted by responsibilities for infrastructure and delivering services being spread across Parish, Town, Borough and County Councils

Activation: Event programming is inconsistent and public spaces underutilised e.g. Castle Park, Clitheroe, The Abbey and Back King Street, Whalley and Towneley Gardens, Longridge. There are few activities for younger residents or families, however large annual festivals including the Jazz, Mod and Food and Drink Festivals are well established and attended

Markets & Trading Places: There is a lack of space in the centres and on the high street with few vacant premises. Whilst this is good news for the retail areas, it presents limited opportunity for people to start new businesses or to diversify the offer. High occupancy rates also put pressure on rent and business costs. Alongside this, Clitheroe market's infrastructure looks tired and the opening hours and location prove a challenge to people using it regularly. Across all retail areas opening hours are inconsistent and more so on Sundays with low numbers of businesses opening

Meeting Places and Public Spaces: All the areas have public spaces that could serve as hubs for events and social activities. However, the quality, usability and programming of these spaces varies across the three areas and in general these spaces are underutilised. The pavements in these spaces are in need of investment, particularly in Clitheroe

Movement and Connectivity: Signage and wayfinding is limited, often with no obvious route to the key assets and linking back to the high street businesses e.g. green spaces across all centres, castle, park and Holmes Mill in Clitheroe. Car parking issues were raised across all three areas (however, this is difficult to evidence at this stage) and cycling provision is poor

Vision, Identity and Purpose: Pre-visit, there is limited online presence for the three areas. On reaching them, there is a lack of a sense of arrival be it with signage or via a major entrance road/marker to indicate reaching the main centre. There appears to be a lack of a vision in terms of their role within the borough, who they serve and attract, what their offer is and how they work together to promote the area, both to the local population and further afield via the tourism marketing. There is a strong independent retail and particularly food offer that lacks promotion. Issues specific to each area include:

- **Longridge:** a lack of events space/focal point for activity
- **Clitheroe:** the Castle and green spaces are underutilised, the market infrastructure is tired, connectivity especially with Holmes Mill is poor
- **Whalley:** the growing night-time economy and its effect on the Village centre (positive and negative)

Context

Ribble Valley is the largest borough in Lancashire, covering 583 square kilometres, with a growing population. RVBC have been awarded both Reopening the High Street (RHSSF) and Welcome Back Funding (WBF) to support Covid-19 recovery in the three largest retail areas of Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge. The areas are highly individual in their makeup and character and face different challenges.

In March 2021 the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick announced a new £56 million Welcome Back Fund to help Council's boost tourism, improve green spaces, and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups. The intention of the fund is to support a safe and successful reopening of the high streets post-Covid-19 pandemic. RHSSF underspend can be combined with the WBF to maximise its impact.

The WBF includes two new strands of activity, over and above the RHSSF, which mean it can be used to:

- Promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy.
- Develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of Covid-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street.

RVBC are concentrating the use of the remaining funding on the two strands of activity listed above across the three retail areas.

Regional Context

A key component of the project was to place the centre review and recommendations in the context of existing plans. The key documents we accessed were masterplans, housing assessments and climate change frameworks. Also at a regional level, we considered the Lancashire LEP Strategic Economic Plan, the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing strategies as well as the LEP's report A Cultural Investment Strategy for Lancashire

A strategic review of current strategies, activities, data, and the impact of Covid-19 was carried out to provide the relevant context we need in developing longer-term strategic action plans for each of the three retail areas. This review clarifies the main objectives of the key policy documents and their relevance to the Project. For example, the availability of potential funding, commercial and political considerations, and future events and activities. In addition, to exploring ideas, projects and recommendations that could be funded with the remaining RHSS funding available.

The Appendix section contains full list of the reports and documents that were read as part of this review. The documents included RVBC reports to the Economic Development Committee; the 2010 Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan through to the Longridge Levelling Up application. Observations and questions raised by the review are included on page 5.

Clitheroe

Clitheroe is a picturesque market town and the largest retail centre in the borough. The centre is steeped in history and offers attractions such as a 12th Century Castle, which is now home to a museum and 16 acres of landscaped gardens, housing a bandstand, amphitheatre, children's playground, skate-park and Lancashire's first Labyrinth. The Grammar School is also located within the centre and students using the high street were clearly visible.

The High Street has a good mix of independent shops and chain stores including Boots, Fat Face and WH Smiths. Independent stores range from new additions such as Green Theory, a packaging free store to well established local businesses including Cowmans famous sausages and H M Sowerbutts & Co Furniture who have traded in the town for over 130 years. The centre is also home to a Booths supermarket and the Holmes Mill mixed use development which includes a food hall, hotel, Everyman Cinema and the Bowland Brewery Beerhall. The combined offer serves a wide catchment area attracting visitors wishing to explore Pendle Hill and the Forest of Bowland which are both nearby.

Longridge

Longridge serves as a shopping and social centre for the surrounding rural district including a number of villages within North Preston. The centre consists of a linear high street offering a mix of independent shops, services, antique galleries, a pet shop, IT store, coffee shops, a local supermarket medical centre and a prominent YMCA charity shop.

As well as serving the local population, Longridge's setting in attractive countryside makes it a popular starting point for country walks and cycle rides. The village has Townley Gardens at its centre, a public park that represents the only events space except for the Civic Centre car park. The 'Old Market' cinema is currently closed and available to let.

Whalley

Whalley is located on the banks of the River Calder. It is an affluent and attractive village, filled with historic buildings, independent boutiques and a large selection of cafes, restaurants, and bars. Again, the village serves local residents well with amenities including a library, supermarket, pharmacy, medical centre, and village hall all within a 10-minute walking distance. The village no longer has any banking facilities and is becoming increasingly popular as an evening food and drink destination, attracting customers from Manchester and beyond served by its direct rail link.

What we did

To meet the requirements of the project we carried out a five-stage process which included:

1. Project Inception: clarification of the brief, communication channels project timescales, milestones, stakeholder lists and project deliverables
2. Insight Review: familiarisation with current activities and sites which could have an impact on the future experience for visitors and businesses across the three centres. Tasks included identifying relevant case studies; asset and stakeholder mapping and policy review
3. Site Assessments: assessments of the public realm and built environment in the form of an end-to-end customer journey analysis to provide a complete report for each of the three town centres. The assessment included everything from public realm and the associated infrastructure (e.g. benches, litter bins) through to the landscape features, accessibility and the wider streetscape
4. Engagement: during this process we engaged a range of people from the Ribble Valley community including shoppers. Businesses (and associated groups) Ribble Valley Borough Council and Town and Parish Councils at a local level
5. Report and Recommendations: this final report sets out to include a detailed town by town 'scorecard' and outputs; recommendations including short and medium term actions

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The Ark Assessment Team consisted of Chris Seeley (Lead Consultant), John Anderson, Diane Cunningham, Chloe Purcell and Matt Bell.

Chris Seeley: Chris has strong track record in neighbourhood research and placemaking as well as significant project and programme management experience and crucially managing relationship building between delivery teams, residents and stakeholders.

Chloe Purcell: has a background in architecture and the stakeholder and community engagement required to shape and visualise a vision and concept around the strengths and needs of a place

John Anderson: experienced in Community Communications & Engagement - working in partnership and stakeholder environments and managing teams tasked with delivering communication led objectives.

Diane Cunningham: a High Streets, Pop-ups and Markets development expert with 15 years' experience across the UK.

Matt Bell: experience has been gained within the retail, commercial and property sectors specialising in the creation of commercialisation and placemaking concepts and strategies

Findings

The following section of the document contains the findings by town from the document review and site assessments. Each of the three centres was assessed in the form of an end-to-end customer journey using the following stages:

- Pre-Visit Experience
- Inbound Travel
- Experience
- Return Travel
- Reflection

The results were then used to create an individual scorecard for each retail area. This approach allowed us to view the areas through the eye of a visitor and identify the issues and potential actions to improve each stage of the experience when visiting each of the retail centres. The findings of the assessments are included on page 5.

Summary of Document Review

1. **Re-opening the High Street Report**, there were a couple of seemingly minor comments worth noting. For example,
 - a. There was a good use of noticeboards. Could this be continued in promoting events, activities and other key council and community messages (We noted that the noticeboards were underused when we visited especially Clitheroe)
 - b. Although the restrictions have now ended the consumer research carried out during this project highlights that there are still safety concerns stopping some visitors returning to the High Street. Co-ordinated events programming and promotion will be required to attract people back to the High Street – at the same time creating an opportunity to reassure people through their experience when visiting. This will require a co-ordinated effort by all stakeholders at every touchpoint
2. Are there still any ideas within the **Longridge Levelling up application** that could be supported? In particular the measures proposed to support the activation of Towneley Gardens including the reconfiguration of the Youth and Over 60's Centres
3. **In the Review of High Street Footfall in England 2021, High Street Task Force Report**, the study stated that a high number of archetypal retail centres have shifted to new multifunctional and speciality models, and its vital that local place makers understand what type of town they are working in, and what type of change in footfall patterns they want to encourage. A clear vision for each retail area is required including how the three work together to create a borough wide offer
4. **The Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy 2021- 2030**. Could some of the remaining RHSS budget be spent on climate efficiency activities and events; advice for business; assisting businesses in seeing the value of becoming greener
5. **Remade: A Cultural Investment Strategy for Lancashire May 2020**. Is there anything in the Lancashire Cultural Investment Plan that could be secured for Ribble Valley?
6. **Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan 2010**. With this document being over 11 years old, we appreciate that many of the objectives and projects have either been achieved or not relevant to Clitheroe's current challenges and opportunities. We noted the following sentence, "With the exception of the Clitheroe Castle, many of the people we have spoken to feel that there are no clear, strong, unique and easily recognisable features, identities and activities to attract shoppers and visitors. There are lots of individual successes, but no big picture messages that reveal the true nature of the town". – does this still ring true

7. **Response and Recovery Plan for Tourism and Hospitality**. Could some of the RHSS budget help towards the objectives of the Plan e.g. Deliver confident, consistent messages to existing and new audiences Engage with local businesses, communities, and stakeholders, to support and champion the voice of tourism in Ribble Valley
8. **Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Strategy**. Could there be linkages between the High Street and the messages associated with this strategy. For example, the utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons, use of the open space near the castle. Also concerns around social isolation for both service users and carers – perhaps local café's operating 'Happy to chat tables'

Recommendations

1. Recommendations 1. From the literature review there is little evidence to suggest that Covid had a major economic impact and lasting effect on the High Streets of Ribble Valley. (that is not to say that individual businesses have not suffered through the pandemic but a reflection on the collective of the Borough's high streets) Nationally, research shows that cities have been hardest hit by Covid with local parades of shops and smaller / market centres holding up well
2. The additional RHSS budget, could be distributed across the three locations in partnership with the Town Councils with RVBC acting as the responsible body. Targeted at events and signage
3. There seems to be demand for premises. How can more space be created? With existing vacancies could look at a temporary pop up One Stop Shop? Community Creative Hub or art gallery?
4. Has there been an evaluation of the Clitheroe Masterplan? Overall does this document still provide ideas and learning for the town and across the Ribble Valley?

We also met with key stakeholders at town, borough and county level where some of the content related to these documents. More details can be found in the engagement section on pages 13 - 17.

AREA REVIEWS

Clitheroe is a traditional market town which has a wide range of amenities serving local residents. The market is at the heart of the centre, but its location is hidden and it only opens three days a week making it considerably underutilised including its car park. Markets across the UK performed well during the pandemic and Clitheroe's market represents an opportunity to create a 7 day a week offer that serves different customer groups e.g. night food markets and monthly craft markets. As previously mentioned, there are a number of attractions located within Clitheroe including the Castle (also home to a museum) and 16 acres of landscaped gardens, housing an Amphitheatre, children's playground, skate-park and a Labyrinth.

From our visits these facilities are currently underutilised, with no apparent events programme, signage, or promotion around the centre - unless visitors knew about these assets beforehand, they would be unaware that they are even there. Overall Clitheroe has all the pieces needed to create an attractive offer that appeals to locals and visitors alike if it can join up its heritage, cultural and independent retail offers with consistent and co-ordinated programming, promotion and navigational signage. Oswestry has been provided as a case study below to highlight how this can be achieved by a Cultural Consortium which could be established as part of the Town Team.

Key Observations:

Activation:

- **Non-Retail Activities:** good range of activities and places to do things other than shop e.g. kids activity café's, etc.

Markets and Trading Places:

- **Market:** contains a solid traditional offer when open but only serves a section of the local community and only on three days a week, infrastructure tired and car parks underutilised
- **Retail Offer:** a good mix of independent and chains for both retail, food and drink

Meeting Places and Public Spaces:

- **Assets Underutilised:** lack of consistent promotion and programming e.g. Castle and Park had no events promoted in December as opposed to Longridge which had a full programme

Movement and Connectivity:

- **Wayfinding:** signage is poor, especially to the market and Holmes Mill which acts as a major reason to visit the centre
- **Arrival:** the initial approach is attractive via Moor Lane, however if unfamiliar or using Sat Nav you can be taken around some very small back streets with the roads in disrepair; and signage to car parking is also damaged. This was a consistent issue across the three areas and is included as an overarching action in our proposed recommendations
- **Accessibility:** most shops are accessed via steps making it difficult for the elderly or disabled, pavements are in severe need of repair and very thin in certain areas
- **Connectivity:** with Clitheroe's central location at the heart of the Ribble Valley, close to the key strategic routes of the M6 and A59, with rail connections to Manchester and Preston makes the area as a natural gateway to the Ribble Valley.

Vision: in June 2010 the Council formally adopted the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan. This work was intended to provide a framework for sustaining and promoting growth in Clitheroe. It set out several approaches including potential development areas and townscape improvements. The vision was to offer a rich diversity of contrasting lifestyles, activities, and experiences, all set against the impressive backdrop of the heritage townscape and landscape scenery of this historic market town. The document is no longer live (it is still the adopted plan groups refer to) and the conditions under which the centre's develop are now much more fluid. Therefore, the recommendation would be to move to a more dynamic plan.

Case studies: comparison places for Clitheroe

Skipton: throughout the project comparisons were drawn between Skipton and Clitheroe by businesses and residents. Skipton was cited as a bustling market town with a thriving shopping and business centre. Comments were made on its excellent selection of shops, a busy outdoor market 4 days a week, many interesting pubs, restaurants and a range of places to stay. Skipton High Street was also awarded 'High Street of the Year' in 2009. In our opinion Clitheroe has a much stronger potential offer with improved co-ordination, the benchmark set by Skipton is also highly achievable through a co-ordinated events plan and the targeting of a younger audience than the coach trip driven trade in Skipton. Clitheroe Food Festival also has the potential to rival the Yorkshire Dales Food & Drink Festival.

Rawentstall Market: The recent refresh of Rawentstall Market presents a benchmark for the potential refurbishment and repositioning of Clitheroe Market. The Council led refurbishment improved the offer. Key changes included moving to a market where traders set up each day and alternate days to create a market that targets different consumer groups on different days e.g. farmers markets, craft markets and also ensures that the offer varies so regular visitors pop over more often, because they know they will see something new alongside a core of existing essential traders

Oswestry: Oswestry is a town in Shropshire of a similar size and demographic to Clitheroe and facing similar challenges, in particular co-ordinating smaller independent operators into a consistent programme and offer. The town has the benefit of a Heritage England Heritage Action Zone a scheme which Clitheroe would also benefit from but has been unsuccessful in its bids to date. The elements of the HSHAZ that could be delivered without the funding would be the cultural consortium. In Oswestry this has been established not join the dots between venues, events and promotional activity. The outputs being a Love Oswestry, logo, events programme and the establishment of cross sector group to co-ordinate this activity. An approach that could be replicated in the three centres using the existing groups such as Clitheroe Town Team and Love Longridge.

Please see appendix/image deck pages 2 - 7 or further details

These observations are summarised in Clitheroe's scorecard overleaf.

Scorecard: Clitheroe	Criteria	Rating (Out of 5)	Comments
Before Visit	Info finding/fact finding	1	There is very little available in terms of social media presence, and it doesn't have its own website. The only information available to visitors is that on the Visit Ribble Valley and Visit Lancashire Website
Inbound/Return Travel	Inbound/Outbound Travel	2	Arrival into the centre by car is easy and attractive. We followed the sat nav there to the market car park which was tucked away and easy to miss. Sat nav takes you round some very small back streets - the ones nearest to the station car park covered in large potholes
	Car parking - availability, signage, condition, cost etc.	3	During our visit the station car park was full, and so we had to search for another car park. The route from the station car park to the next nearest car park was not a pleasant one, as we were taken down narrow back streets. The station is only easy to find if you know where it is as the signage was poor. The parking prices are reasonable for the location
	Bus/Rail routes and frequency	3	The station is very central and so is easily accessible if you know where you are going. Signage to the station could be improved. Bus stops are centrally located, but signage to the bus station could be improved.
	Active travel and cycling infrastructure	2	On first inspection there is a very limited provision for cyclists
	Points of arrival/departure and the facilities	4	Arrival by car is easy and route very attractive for day trippers
Town Experience	Public realm and the associated infrastructure (e.g. benches, litter bins)	2	Market infrastructure is tired and signage poor. Toilets are located at the market Multiple bins that do not match and are duplicated in locations Decent busker added to atmosphere and the only centre of the three we saw any activity like this
	Landscape features (including trees)	4	The park was a lovely feature, including the walkway to the castle - it was very well maintained with some interesting features and artwork but no sign of any visible programming or activity
	Overall cleanliness	4	Generally, the area was kept clean, although the oversupply of bins will create duplicated workloads for street teams
	Perceptions of safety	4	Police station with an open door was something unusual and reassuring. During lunch hours there were very large groups of school children congregating outside of cafes and alleyways who could be better accommodated with some seating
	Offer	4	Attractive and affluent Market Town with a good range of shops, amenities, cultural and heritage assets. There is a good mix of chain/independent stores and food and drink. The Market itself was busy and open when we visited initially but closed on further visits. Holmes Mill, Varey's and Cowmans famous sausage shop, etc are regional destination shops. Holmes Mill in particular was 5 mins walk away and really impressive: hotel, Everyman cinema, large beer hall, brewery, food hall, etc. Castle is set within Castle Park but had no visible programming planned for Dec 2021. The park has a skatepark, nursery, open air theatre, the café was opening soon.
	Wider streetscape	3	The majority of buildings are well maintained, but there are a few tired old buildings that could do with a light touch up e.g. Dil Raj restaurant. Gateway buildings all occupied and in good condition - e.g. the Emporium. The entrance to the Market area would benefit from being updated in particular to draw people in
	Accessibility and wayfinding	2	Stepped access into a lot of shops due to being built on a hill - e.g. even chains such as Cafe Nero have a step. The thin damaged pavements are challenging for those with mobility issues or small children. Attractions are poorly signposted, and you would only think to look for them if you knew they were there.
Total Score		38/65	59% Adequate/Good with potential to improve

Longridge has a long linear high street, which is rural in character, with predominantly residential roads leading off it. It currently lacks a focal point. Parking in particular was a challenge with the signpost to the main car park facing the wrong way and a cash only payment system.

It offers the essential amenities required by residents, with a few antique shops, boutiques and coffee shops amongst them to appeal to visitors. The area appears to have survived the pandemic well, with few vacant/empty units. The local supermarket is Booths, and the overall offer serves local residents well but offers little to those from further afield at present.

The drive into Longridge is spectacular, but there is no sense of arrival as you reach the centre. Signage within the area needs some improvements and made it quite difficult to navigate the centre particularly when trying to find parking. There was evidence of events and programming, for example the Christmas Market at the Civic Hall.

Key Observations:

Culture and Governance:

- Love Longridge: recently established and developing a visible programme of events and activity

Markets and Trading:

- Shortage of Space: with few vacant units

Meeting Places and Public Spaces:

- Focal Point: currently lacking a focal point for activity but the Old Station Café and Heritage Centre was busy but the neighbouring Towneley Gardens had no activity advertised

Movement and Connectivity:

- Parking: signage damaged and cash only payments
- Wayfinding: poor signage throughout – although the painted wall signage reading “Blackpool” is a quirky and interesting feature

Vision Identity and Purpose:

- Multifunctional Town: a long linear high street, all of the essentials are available to residents but lacks an offer to attract those from further afield

Vision: Longridge has been identified as a service centre for the local area, a role it is equipped to perform well. Work has been undertaken in partnership with local interest groups to develop a range of actions to drive forward the potential of Longridge as a key service centre.

Case studies: comparison places for Longridge

Treorchy: is a former mining town in Rhondda South Wales. The now bustling town was named Champion of The Great British High Street Awards 2019. The town has the same population size as Longridge and over 80% of its businesses are also independent stores. The resurgence of the high street has been driven by businesses working together and the chamber of trade expanded its membership from 30 to 120 in the 2 years before winning the award. Together they host a year round programme of events including at Christmas and receive support from the wider community e.g. the local fire brigade put up the Christmas lights.

Treorchy was a struggling town long before Covid-19 and that drove businesses to work together to lead its revival. A further learning from our discussions with the team was that older established traders have been sharing their experience with newer businesses. The energy and drive from the younger independents helped the established business look at the town in a new light and deliver change. The town also introduced a loyalty card during the Christmas period that could be used in businesses. Also Treorchy (like many former South Wales mining towns) has a strong community identity which was harnessed in supporting the High Street. Almost, “if we don’t do anything, no one else will!”

Further details are provided on pages 8 - 11 of the image deck.

These observations are summarised in Longridge’s scorecard overleaf.

Scorecard: Longridge	Criteria	Rating (Out of 5)	Comments
Before Visit	Info finding/fact finding	1	There is very little available in terms of social media presence and no dedicated website. The Love Longridge group page is well maintained but visible to members only. The only information available to the public is that on the Visit Ribble Valley and Visit Lancashire Website
Inbound/Return Travel	Inbound/Outbound Travel	4	The drive/ride from Clitheroe is stunning
	Car parking - availability, signage, condition, cost etc.	2	Parking was initially hard to find, particularly because some of the signage was pointing the wrong way. In the end we parked behind the Co-Op in the centre. We also had to help a visitor who had got her car stuck in one of the streets after making a wrong turn. At this car park there was no card payment facility.
	Bus & Rail routes and frequency	3	There is no station within Longridge. The bus service seemed to be well used, as all of the bus stops were busy. The bus stops are well located and central.
	Active travel and cycling infrastructure	2	There seemed to be little provision for cyclists despite the potential of the location as a stop off on cycle routes
	Points of arrival/departure and the 'welcome'	2	There is no sense of arrival at all. There are hand painted signs to Blackpool and Preston which we really liked and were a bit quirky, this technique could be used to show you have arrived in Longridge.
Experience:	Public realm and the associated infrastructure	3	There are a couple of notice boards offering a decent programme of events run by Love Longridge.
	Landscape features (including trees)	3	Towneley Gardens is centrally located green space, pleasant and well maintained
	Overall cleanliness	4	The area is generally well maintained and kept clean
	Perceptions of safety	4	There was no vandalism to be seen and with residential areas in close proximity to the high street this made the area feel safe. We observed more than one person speeding along the hughstreet road, there could be an opportunity to vary the speed limit - as well as making the road safer, it would also break up the length of the street
	Offer	4	There is everything you need to live here, within the one long linear street hosting everything from a pet shop to coffee shops, medical centre, etc. The civic hall had just hosted the Christmas market and is located in a 1960's building hidden down a residential street and also houses a gym. Booths is the main supermarket and the Old Station Buildings are home to a Heritage Centre and Café
	Wider streetscape	3	There are very few shops left vacant, the majority of store fronts are well maintained. The shops on offer are relatively high end e.g. boutiques and a Booths supermarket
	Accessibility and wayfinding	2	Everything is within walking distance making it very easily accessible. The signage is quite poor within the area and we were unable to find out about any of the stores located on the street, an issue especially for Longridge as you can see just how far it is to walk to the other end!
Total Score:		37/65	57% Adequate potential to improve

Whalley is a picturesque and affluent village, with an offer that reflects this. The drive to Whalley is a pleasant one, but as there are many routes that go around and avoid Whalley, you have to know that it is there to visit which adds to its appeal as somewhere you discover.

In recent years the offer has become increasingly food and beverage led with the village becoming a vibrant evening destination that attracts visitors from areas such as Manchester, Bolton and Burnley. As a result, the character of the village has changed and anecdotal feedback suggests that the evening offer is displacing the high-quality shops, boutiques and salons which the village had become known for and which serve both affluent customers from across the region and local people. There is a challenge in whether the offer will appeal to people moving to the new housing on the outskirts of the village.

The public realm is very well maintained, with pathways and gardens, well-kept and clean. This was also reflected in the shop fronts, of which many had colourful and innovative displays, which spilled out into the street helping to animate the area.

Key Observations:

Activation:

- Co-ordinated Programming: throughout the village there are multiple notice boards competing for your attention

Markets And Trading:

- Retail Offer: high end boutiques, jewellers and florists. Cosgroves Men's Outfitters has been based in the village for 32 years and the Co-op supermarket and a variety of butchers and delis complete the offer
- Evening offer: large range of cafes and wine bars including one nightclub. This offer has grown in recent years and our consultations suggest this is leading to increasing friction between, daytime and residential uses

Meeting Places and Public Spaces:

- Well-maintained green and public spaces but the town lacks an obvious central event space. The Swan pub courtyard hosts a monthly Craft Vintage market, and Abbey Park had no signs of programming or activities
- Abbey: located directly in the centre of the village, home to the oldest medieval crosses in the country and delivers a programme of events

Movement and Connectivity:

- People: very friendly, people we saw actively stopped to speak to us, even as far as going out of their way to do so without us approaching them to show us around
- Arrival: currently little sense of arrival either by road or rail

Vision Identity and Purpose:

- Service Town: a long linear High Street with all of the essentials residents require but lacks an offer to attract those from further afield

Vision: Originally a destination retail centre, serving customers attracted by the range of high-end boutiques, Whalley has been increasingly food and drink led with the evening offer becoming extremely popular in recent years. The village has also expanded significantly with the development of large residential areas on its outskirts. Work has been undertaken in partnership with relevant groups in Whalley to develop an action plan, endorsed by the Chamber of Trade and Parish Council.

Case studies: comparison places for Whalley

Knutsford: is an example of a village with a distinctive character and identity that has embraced its evening offer. We have selected Knutsford due to its close proximity to Manchester and Liverpool with good signage from the M6/A556 and serving a similar market to Whalley.

Like Whalley, Knutsford has a high number of independent businesses and with over 200 retail units it also serves as an important regional shopping centre. The town has embraced its transition to a leisure-led offer and demonstrated that longer term a balance can be struck between retail and leisure uses. There is also a market hall (open four days a week), owned and operated by Knutsford Town Council and a monthly markets market ensuring the town's offer continues to serve a wide range of people.

Frome: has also embraced its nighttime economy with the addition of events such as Light the Night and a regular Night Market. The town even hosted a secret gig by the Foo Fighters in 2017 and it is this focus on embracing the evening offer and ensuring that it is supported by events and cultural activity that attracts both locals and visitors from further afield. The Town was voted the best place to live in the South West which highlights how an evening offer can be developed to enhance the experience of both those who live and visit. An alternative approach was taken by the **Lark Lane area in south Liverpool**. As the evening offer developed within the 'Village' Residents were effected negatively and the daytime retail offer displaced. As a result a cumulative impact strategy was put in place to control the number and type of alcohol service premises in the area which has restored the balance of retail to leisure uses.

Please see appendix/image deck pages 12 - 17

These observations are summarised in Whalley's scorecard overleaf.

Scorecard: Whalley	Criteria	Score (1 -5)	Comments
Before Visit	Info finding/fact finding	1	There is very little available in terms of social media presence and doesn't have its own website. The only information available to visitors is that on the Visit Ribble Valley and Visit Lancashire website
Inbound/Return Travel	Inbound/Outbound Travel	3	Nice approach - lovely to drive through. There are Lots of ways to drive around Whalley and the sense of arrival is lacking Signage to station not clear when walking - direct link to Manchester 60 mins
	Car parking - availability, signage, condition, cost etc.	3	2-hour parking on most streets including multiple e-charging points. Co-op has the main car park, but it had a confusing payment mechanism that has 3 large signs attempting to explain. Lack of 30 min spaces to serve pop in visits
	Bus & Rail routes and frequency	3	Signage to station not clear when walking. There is a direct link to Manchester, which only takes 60 mins. Bus station with well-maintained toilets in the centre but usage doesn't appear to support its size?
	Active travel and cycling infrastructure	3	No cycling signs in multiple locations e.g. park
	Points of arrival/departure and the 'welcome'	2	Little or no sense of arrival - you just arrive
Experience:	Public realm and the associated infrastructure (e.g. benches, litter bins)	4	A lot of bins (17 in the park alone) throughout, which had all been emptied and were well maintained but definitely an oversupply
	Landscape features (including trees)	4	Well-kept green spaces including small public space
	Overall cleanliness	4	Clean and well maintained
	Perceptions of safety	4	Felt very safe. Everyone we saw actively stopped to speak to us, even as far as going out of their way to do so without us approaching them - very friendly e.g. a family took us to show us the Abbey.
	Offer	4	Offer is F&B led including 1 club and wine bars. The remainder of the retail offer was clothing boutiques, health and beauty + a large, long standing Cosgroves men's outfitters. Co-op supermarket (the only chain store), butchers, etc. What the offer lacked is the practical things e.g. Longridge had a pets shop, computer shop, etc - these appear to have been displaced by F&B so you would have to go elsewhere - also no banks. Tastebuds cafe was busy and acts as a hub, events, workshops, etc
	Wider streetscape (e.g. condition of buildings / shop frontages etc)	4	Well maintained and creative shop window displays. Enlivenment/animation was good e.g. plastic cow outside butchers, florists display, etc. It was nice to see shops coming out into the street
	Accessibility and wayfinding	3	Accessibility good - ramps, etc - Some of the older pavements and cobbles harder to navigate e.g. steps to Abbey, Wide pavements
Total score	Total Score:	42/65	65% - Good

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder Engagement

During this process we engaged a range of people from the Ribble Valley community including shoppers, businesses (and associated groups) Ribble Valley Borough Council and Town Councils at a local level. The engagement was split as follows:

- Shoppers: 58 surveys with consumers, which involved stopping passers-by in Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge, and asking them a series of questions on how Covid-19 had impacted their relationship with the centres, and their ideas for changes they would like to see (if any).
- Business: 51 business, a combination of chains and independents, and collected their views on the pre and post Covid, and what improvements they would like to see to in their town.
- Stakeholder: 10 consultations with Town Councils, business groups and key stakeholders

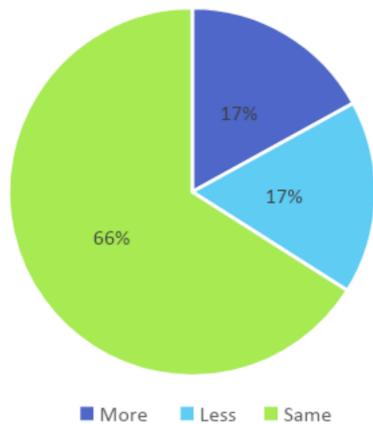
Shoppers

To assess the impact of the pandemic on consumer behaviours we asked shoppers the following three questions in the form of a street survey through random selection:

1. Do you come into the centre more or less since the pandemic?
2. Are you shopping online more or less as a result of Covid-19?
3. What would make you come into the centre more?
4. Anything else you would like to add? Open question.

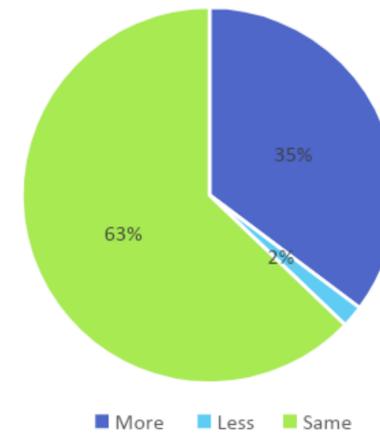
In total we spoke to 58 shoppers across the three centres. The results are shown below:

Q1: Do you come into the centre more or less since the pandemic?



From the responses received it can be seen that part of the reason the three retail areas have weathered the pandemic well is the 17% of shoppers visiting more who have supported their local centres. Reasons cited included people appreciating the High Street they have on their doorstep and a desire to use them so they survive. In addition there is a further opportunity to return to footfall levels higher than that of the pandemic if this trend is supported by a return of the 17% visiting less.

Q2: Do you shop online more or less?



35% of shoppers confirmed that they are shopping more online as a result of the pandemic. This is a hard figure to benchmark against as the figures have fluctuated during the pandemic from a peak of 70% down to 40% nationally. Figures from January 2022 however show the highest year on year drop in online sales recorded – in part due to the country being in lockdown during the previous year. This does highlight that people are returning to stores from online shopping, The centres and businesses therefore need to make sure the experience people get is a good one and one that cannot be replicated online. An example given of the Sowerbutts furniture store delivering a bed through a 2nd floor window – a level of service that cannot be matched by a chain or online retailer.

Q3: What would make you come into the centre more? The following responses were the key responses received with regards to what would make people visit more:

- Better range of independent shops
- Parking – a variety of points raised but centred on parking being cheaper/free and closer to the shops/directly outside and more flexible than the current two hour offer
- Repair pavements and consider pedestrianisation of Castle Street (Clitheroe only)
- Update market – increase opening hours, diversify what is sold, add specialises markets e.g. craft and night street food, improve appearance
- More events

An important note to make is that 25% of respondents commented in the open question section without prompting that they were happy with how things were now and didn't have any additional comments for changes.

Q4: Other comments - open question: The final question was an open one to allow shoppers to add anything they wanted to their feedback. Comments included:

Clitheroe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Shops close after 5/6 - streets dead afterwards' • 'Always friendly faces' • Pavements too narrow
Longridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Happy how it is' • 'No more charity shops'
Whalley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'All of the little shops have gone' • 'No more bars'

The responses to this question were in line with the previous question. This indicates that the issues and points raised therefore are more consistent with what shoppers would like from their centres regardless of the pandemic.

The following table summarises the key points raised by businesses during the consultation stage:

Theme	Challenge	Comments
Aesthetics	Public Realm	All look untidy/tatty'
Culture and Governance	Better Partnership Working	Partnerships: Better cross sector working required between Chambers, centres, Council (Town, Borough and County). Better cross sector representation e.g. make sure hotels involved
Activation	Opening Hours	No late-night buy-in (xmas) or consistent opening hours across centres, especially Sundays
	Coordinating Programming	Clitheroe Food Festival and other events should extend across the centres to encourage people to discover shops, bars and cafes
Markets and Trading	Increasing Sales	Encouraging that a few businesses mentioned (unprompted) that they have invested in their website and social media (sales) to keep them going and boost in-shop sale Longridge Food Boxes - a great example prompted by the pandemic of businesses pulling together to offer a new service to customers by creating food boxes containing a range of products from different retailers
	Enterprise Space	Lack of space for new businesses, costs too high
Meeting Places and Public Spaces	Public Realm	All look untidy/tatty'
Movement and Connectivity	Parking	Complaints about parking but the issue is people wanting to park outside shops and not use carparks due to location or cost
	Signage and Wayfinding	Support for pedestrianisation of Castle Street, Clitheroe Signage and Wayfinding needs improving
Vision, Identity and Purpose	Better Promotion	Sell the areas independent and food offers more Develop a unique identity for the area and each centre Ribble Valley has more than wedding venues (although an important market to some businesses)

Findings revealed the impact of Covid-19 on shoppers and businesses includes:

- **Delayed Effect:** Owners have subsidised businesses - this may delay the effect of Covid-19 e.g. store closures, Some would have just closed if they knew it would be going on for this long
- **Inconsistent Responses:** some businesses have adapted/pivoted well others have done little to change their offer
- **Good Starting Position:** the borough's Retail centres have traded well during pandemic and have few vacant units therefore not the usual challenges seen in centres hit harder by Covid-19. Independent offer has grown during pandemic with new start ups
- **Independent Offer:** independent led centres have traded well (markets especially) during pandemic until Christmas 2022
- **Covid-19 Related Measures:** road closures and social distancing measures very unpopular e.g. Closure of Castle Street in Clitheroe but businesses recognise benefits if consulted and plans changed
- **Consumer Behaviour:** further analysis required as pandemic subsides to identify which changes will stay e.g. less commuting, less frequent shopping, less eating out, Will people continue to work from home? Have previous trading patterns become obsolete?
- **Welcoming People Back:** customer experience needs to be right when people do return for the first time 'we will only get one chance at this'
- **Online Sales:** will online sales remain high, and can we do anything to move back offline?
- **Hesitancy to Return:** how do we get the 17% visiting less post-Covid-19 to return

Stakeholder

During the consultation stage meetings were held with representatives of the three representatives from Whalley and Clitheroe town councils and Longridge Parish. A summary of the key points identified through these meetings is contained in the table below and further detail provided in the Appendix section of this report:

Theme	Challenge	Comments
Aesthetics	Public Realm	An appreciation that standards have dropped during the pandemic in terms of the offer and presentation in all three areas
Culture and Governance	Better Partnership Working Across centres and Sectors	Varying degrees of support and partnership working between the Councils and business groups
		Councillors also business groups and business groups representatives on Councils can blur the lines between political and business objectives at times. In addition members elected to more than one Council, this however represents an opportunity to build on cross-sector and cross-council
		The opportunity to also build links with Preston Council due to the proximity of Longridge in particular
		Aware that residents and businesses are not always sure which Council is responsible for what e.g highways and signage. Also the elements Councils have less control over such as building maintenance by landlords
Activation	Community Events	A need to make Key assets and spaces such as the Parks, Clitheroe Castle and Market used more by communities for events and activities
Markets and Trading	Shortage of space	There is an increased demand for enterprise and co-working space driven by residential developments in the borough and a current shortage of space
Meeting Places and Public Spaces	Assets Underutilised	Opportunities to create better public spaces across all three retail areas using current assets
Movement and Connectivity	Parking	Parking requires a full review across the borough, in terms of provision, location and pricing structure
	Signage and Wayfinding	Signage and Wayfinding needs improving across the borough
Vision, Identity and Purpose	Better Promotion	All three retail areas feel that their retail offer is under promoted, particularly online
	Changing Needs of Residents	The centres are changing and there is a feeling that they are not keeping up with the needs of new residents and increasing populations

Recommendations from Council consultations:

- Improve links between businesses and the Councils:** although all the Councils identified specific problems and challenges with their High Street, there were no major concerns about the general state of the high street, its offer and its future prospects. This view was not shared by the majority of businesses within the borough
- Cross-town Working:** there are evidently crossovers or connections with the Councillors at a Town, Borough and indeed County level. However, there did not seem to be the engagement, exchange of ideas and discussions on what could be shared issues for the 3 locations. It was mentioned that the Ribble Valley Parish Liaison Committee meet every 6 weeks. Could this forum be used more effectively in exploring opportunities for the individual High Streets? The benefits could include, sharing best practice and ideas; possibly resources and creating and owning a Ribble Valley events calendar along with other public sector bodies e.g. Visit Lancashire.
- A clear vision required for each town:** the centres are changing due to population growth, particularly Longridge and Whalley. All three councils raised how this is affecting their centres and how the current offer and infrastructure may no longer serve the local population as well as it should. Longridge expressed the need for more space to cater for the increasingly wider range of residents. In Clitheroe, there is hope that more can be done (activities and events) with the park, bandstand and the castle. Whalley mentioned that they would like more events (e.g. family, market events),
- Co-ordinated Programming and Promotion:** the “Love Longridge” brand was raised as a success and comments made about how this could be extended to develop a Love Ribble brand, with Love Longridge, for example sitting under the borough wide brand.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Ribble Valley and its three main retail areas have weathered the pandemic well. Vacancy rates are low and customer loyalty is high. The open nature of the centres as opposed to being shopping centre-led has helped people feel safer when shopping. These factors combined with the strong independent offer place the centres in a strong position to recover from Covid-19.

The challenges the centres and borough face largely pre-date the pandemic. The areas have a rich collection of assets that remain underutilised such as Clitheroe Castle and the market and a wide range of events taking place pre-pandemic. The challenges and opportunities we list below share the common theme of how do we join the dots and achieve a consensus on how we programme and promote the regions businesses, cultural and heritage assets, events and strengths consistently. The retail areas also have challenges such as a lack of entry level trading spaces and public realm issues that are also addressed within the Action Plan section of this document which also noted the following key challenges and opportunities.

The overarching issue across the Borough and its Centres is the lack of co-ordination of activity and communications. In partnership the County, Borough and Town Councils and the various business groups have access to the resources required to deliver the strategic direction set out in this report. The challenge is achieving the consensus required to enable delivery and targeted funding applications. For example the closure of Castle Street in Clitheroe was not widely supported due to a lack of consultation as a result of the Council being required to deliver the activity at pace. There is however support for looking at this in partnership to identify the best solution. The key to the future of the Borough and its Centres lies in their ability to form effective working partnerships between all parties both within each centre but also across the wider Borough.

Opportunities

- Passionate attachment to place, culture and potential
- Lots of good initiatives – e.g. Markets, Festivals, In Bloom
- Good bedrock of assets – e.g. Castle, Holmes Mill, Booths, Linkages with the Forest of Bowland
- The offer in all centres is Independent led
- Friendly and Welcoming - essential to get people used to coming back into centres

Potential of small interventions e.g. festoon lights on Castle Street Clitheroe was given as an example by a business

Challenges

- Lack of partnership working, particularly around programming and promotion and reaching a consensus
- Low level of business and marketing skills amongst some retailers e.g. digital promotion and e-commerce
- Demographics – an ageing population which is increasing while young people and families are not that well served by the offer
- Cautiousness about returning to town centres - 17% of customers still visiting less post Covid-19
- Lack of a distinct identity for the region and in turn the three centres
- The political landscape- there are overly high expectations of RVBC and responsibilities shared between county, Borough and Town Councils and some local confusion around who should be leading initiatives
- How to integrate new residential populations
- Stakeholder groups across the three centres compete with each other through their programming and promotion as opposed to creating a borough wide offer

Case Study: Conwy County Council

Conwy Council are in the process of establishing a new model for the future governance of their five main town centres: Abergele, Colwyn Bay, Conwy Llandudno and Llanrwst. As part of their Culture Strategy which seeks to use their cultural offer and sector as the driver for economic growth and wellbeing the Council are establishing 'Launchpads' for each of the centres. The key elements of this strategy are a sustainable funding model, overarching governance structure and 'Launchpad' roles for each of the centres.

These Launchpads are a 'plan on a page' strategy for the centres that have been co-designed to build on a particular strength of each, for example its food offer and set out the vision for how the centres can work together to support a wider County offer. To govern this process each town is in the process of establishing a Town Team following an initial Pilot in Colwyn Bay. The Town Team focuses on co-ordinating the day-to-day management of elements such as activation and promotion while a linked Economic Growth Board develop shovel ready capital projects and seek the required investment.

Recommendations and Action Plan

The recommended actions for RVBC and its stakeholders are contained within the action plans overleaf. Actions have been divided into borough wide and centre specific actions split into short and medium term solutions.

RHSS Recommendations:

The recommendations for the remaining RHSS budget have been highlighted in the action plans. In summary we recommend the creation of a compact Love Ribble Valley group consisting of up to 5 members and sub-groups for each area e.g. Love Longridge. The group would initially operate under a simple Memorandum of Association to co-ordinate and join dots between places, spaces and activity by:

- Group to consist of a representative from each area, County and Borough Councils
- Co-ordinating programming (Including Seasonal Activity) to welcome visitors back to the Centres
- Delivering small Interventions e.g. a Post Pandemic Spruce-Ups
- Creating a simple Love Ribble Logo, Website and Socials to celebrate and promote Ribble Valleys Independent offer
- Co-ordinating communications between business and councils
- Improving signage and Wayfinding
- Developing enterprise spaces e.g. - Love Ribble Pop-ups, Markets and Shop in Shops
- Shaping each Centres longer term role and purpose by developing a Launchpad 'plan on a page' for each
- Identifying 3-4 key projects for each area

ACTION PLAN

Theme	Challenge	Approach	Imagedeck Ref	Short Term Actions 2022	Medium Term Actions 2022-25	Key Partners
				Quick Wins/RHSS Actions	Strategic Direction	
1. Aesthetics: Refreshing Centres Post-Pandemic to Welcome Visitors Back						
a	Visual appearance of centres post Covid-19	Co-ordinate a plan of short term actions and interventions to improve and map current infrastructure. Develop a longer term plan and partnership approach to address this.	Page 19	Map issues and plan a one off spruce up in partnership with residents and businesses	Carry out a declutter of any unnecessary items, e.g. bins and multiple noticeboards	Community, Business Groups, Landlords, Borough and Town Councils
					Arrival signage - Welcome to Whalley, Love Ribble, love Whalley etc.	
					Implement infrastructure, etc required for long term solutions e.g. Paintable walls, street ranger team - cross sector clean up team	
					Street Furniture and Public Realm Review	Repair remaining infrastructure
	Identify small; interventions e.g. festoon lights on Castle Street Clitheroe, Additional outdoor seating in Clitheroe and bringing cafes into the road in Longridge	Develop a programme for longer term public realm improvements and funding	RVBC and Business Groups			
2. Culture & Governance: Creating Effective Partnerships Across the Borough						
a	Multiple groups that lack consensus	Develop a partnership approach between businesses, communities and Councils across each Centre and extend to cover wider borough to co-ordinate programming, promotion, future development and 3-4 key projects at a time. The proposed method would be to create an initial vehicle operating under a simple Memorandum of Association to and rotate the Chair annually across towns. Max 5 members (Cross sector sub-groups for each Town e.g. Love Longridge).	Page 21	Engage groups within all three centres and establish a Love Ribble Valley organisation to co-ordinate increased programme and promotion. Initially acting as a cultural consortium style model to develop quick win events, an identity and join up organisations (and link to tourism via existing groups). Centres to chair on a rotating annual basis starting with Love Longridge in Year 1 to share their effective model of community led activation	Consider creating 'Launchpads' (See Conwy Case study) to create a plan for each centre and defined role within the wider borough	RVBC and Business Groups
b	Responsibilities shared across three tiers of Councils			Consider implementing a pilot partnership group to bring all civic bodies, businesses and residents together	Assess demand for a Borough Wide Business Improvement District (BID) or alternative structure across the three areas	RVBC and Business Groups
c	Sharing and accessing information			Create a B2B portal to share footfall, data and encourage sharing of activity and comms to drive activity and performance. Suggestion that Love Longridge lead on the activity promotion and Clitheroe Town Team on the data and comms and work together to develop a solution that works across the three centres	Deliver required elements	RVBC, LEP and Business Groups
3. Activation: Animating and Enlivening Ribble Valley's Centres to Attract Visitors						
a	Spaces Underutilised	Co-ordinating a plan to make events spaces more usable and promote increased activation. Support with co-ordinated trading hours, promotion and programming	Page 22-23	Assess public and event spaces in each area to develop a proposal for the creation of more effective event spaces	Plan and source funding for longer term interventions such as the steps set out in the Levelling Up bid for Longridge to improve access and usage of Townely Gardens	RVBC Event Organisers and Business Groups
b	Co-ordinated Programming			Carry out a review of the current events programme and collate existing activity to promote as a consistent offer through Love Ribble. Rebranding the Clitheroe Food and Drink Festival 2023 as part of Love Ribble Valley	Develop and resource an events strategy and calendar to link across the borough Engage with businesses and event organisers to develop a partnership approach for a longer-term events plan	RVBC Event Organisers and Business Groups
c	Core Trading Hours			Trial extended opening hours and monitor, consider business support available to help traders establish the offer and cover staffing	Embed, establish and promote a consistent offer	RVBC Event Organisers and Business Groups

Theme	Challenge	Approach	Imagedeck Ref	Short Term Actions 2022	Medium Term Actions 2022-25	Key Partners
				Quick Wins/RHSS Actions	Strategic Direction	

4. Markets and Trading: Creating the Conditions to Support Ribble Valleys Independent Businesses

a	Market	Co-ordinating a plan to create more space for small businesses and enterprises to set up within the region and support with co-ordinated trading hours, promotion and programming	Page 24	Carry out a market review in Clitheroe and consider the potential for markets and pop-ups and other events in Whalley and Longridge	Post market review, agree an action plan to deliver change in line with funding and resources Promote all markets through Love Ribble Valley	RVBC, Markets Operators/Traders and Town Councils
b	Shortage of space for enterprise			Assess demand and map out potential locations to introduce entry level spaces for new business and start-ups e.g. Pop-up stores, shop in shops and shared retail spaces	Create new enterprise spaces and a programme of support	RVBC, LEP and Businesses
c	Maximise the Ribble Pound			Love local campaign - what would happen if everyone spent an extra £5 locally?	Develop Love Ribble loyalty scheme and gift card Councils to increase local procurement	RVBC and Business Groups
d	Skill Gaps			Survey skills gaps and promote a peer-to-peer learning network between businesses	Develop skills programme	RVBC, Businesses and LEP

5. Meeting Places and Public Spaces: Bringing to Life the Boroughs Cultural, Green and Heritage Assets

a	Underutilised Assets	Identify all assets within the centres and develop a plan to use them more to support activity that attracts visitors and improves the liveability of each centre	Page 25	Drive activity in the short term through Love Ribble Valley	Tie into longer term Love Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland ANOB destination management and promotion.	RVBC, Tourism Bodies and Business Groups
		Map events, heritage, green and heritage assess across the borough				
				Make quick win improvements to/purchase infrastructure and actively promote/support use	Implement infrastructure improvements	All Councils

6. Movement and Connectivity: Connection People and Places

a	Signage	Develop a plan of shorts and longer term actions to connect the Ribble Valleys assets to each other and create a consistent visitor offer. Improve visitor experience and flows between assets by improving signage.	Page 26-27	End to end review of signage and wayfinding across the borough	Install and updated wayfinding and signage scheme including heritage interpretation	All Councils
				Clean and fix current signage, remove obsolete and address key gaps		
b	Parking			Map out carparks within the centres and assess demand and suitability	Develop plans to increase/repurpose capacity	All Councils
			Review current quiet periods and Introduce incentive programme e.g. free after 3pm to promote usage outside of peak times	Install contactless/pay by phone machines	RVBC and Busyness Groups	

7. Vision, Identity and Purpose: Promoting all the Ribble Valley has to Offer

a	Lack of Place Identity	Agree a consistent and shared message to promote each Centre and the wider Borough online and offline	Page 28-29	Develop a place identity and co-ordinated promotion for Love Ribble Valley and the individual centres to promote strengths including food and independent offer	Establish place branding and expand	Community, Business Groups, County, Borough and Town Councils
b	Lack of sense of arrival			Map gateways and engage community to make short term interventions at key gateways	Implement mid term Improvements e.g. art installations and link to Love Ribble	Community, Business Groups, Borough and Town Councils
c	Communicating Offer (Online/Offline)			Revamp Borough and town websites to promote independent and centre offers	Update/develop destination management plan – tourism strategy	RVBC, Town Councils and Tourism Bodies
				Co-ordinate existing community comms e.g. Noticeboards (explore digital community owned infrastructure e.g. Bangor)	Produce marketing and communications plan	RVBC, Town Councils and Business Groups
d	Attracting visitors back		Welcome back campaign and bring Love Ribble to life in partnership with individual centres through events and activation	Promote new local products e.g. local food and drink, etc	RVBC, Town Councils and Business Groups	

Theme	Challenge	Short Term Actions 2022	Medium Term Actions 2022-25	Key Partners
		Quick Wins/RHSS Actions	Strategic Direction	

Clitheroe				
Aesthetics	Pavements and Public Realm	Map issues and plan and make short term repairs/improvements	Develop plan to improve public realm and seek investment/funding	All Councils
Culture & Governance:	Town Team	Monitor and support the team's development	Establish longer term set up and assess demand for BID structure	RVBC and Town Team
Activation	Castle, park and market	Develop an event programme to utilise Castle, green spaces and market.	Develop food and drink festival and expand event/duration in partnership with business	RVBC, Town Team and Event Organisers
Meeting Places and Public Spaces:	Castle Park	Support newly opened café in Castle Park to increase park usage	Launch new offers e.g. a Pendle witches event to tie in with local connection at Halloween	RVBC, Town Team and Event Organisers
	Cultural Consortium	Set up a 'cultural consortium' to join up offer, assets and promotion as part of the Town Team		RVBC, Town Team and Event Organisers
	Food and drink Festival	Relaunch Food and Drink Festival and deliver in partnership with businesses	Establish cross-sector operation for 2023 and beyond	RVBC, Town Team and Event Organisers
Markets and Trading	Market Underutilised	Full review of market, trading hours, commodities, infrastructure and offer	Develop recommendations from review	RVBC, Market Traders/Operators and Business Groups
		Trial new markets e.g. farmers' markets and a Teenage Market to test demand and explore new options	Expand market offering to cater for more visitors on more days/times	RVBC, Market Traders/Operators and Business Groups
	Enterprise	Explore options with regions pop-up operators e.g. Crafty Vintage	Explore longer term options with operators and landlords	RVBC, Town Team, Businesses and Landlords
Movement and Connectivity	Parking	Assess current provision	Develop evidence based solutions, is there really a shortage of parking or is this perceived and a campaign needed to change usage?	All Councils, Visitors and Business Groups
	Pedestrianisation	Carry out consultation on pedestrianised Castle Street / review consultation findings		All Councils, Visitors and Business Groups
	Signage	Wayfinding improvements to promote routes between the market, castle and Holmes Mill and the wide range of stores within the centre		All Councils, Visitors and Business Groups
Vision, identity & Purpose	Food	Shape vision and purpose	Refresh place branding in line with launch of Love Ribble Valley/Love Clitheroe to capitalise the region's food offer – position Clitheroe as the region's food centre	RVBC, Town Council, Tourism Bodies and Business Groups

Longridge				
Culture & Governance:	Love Longridge	Develop Love Longridge partnership working	Integrate into Love Ribble Valley Network	Love Longridge and Wider Borough Business Groups
Markets and Trading	Lack of Space for Enterprise	Identify pop-up and permanent spaces, for example in the Old Station hub and vacant council owned buildings	Develop longer term facility	RVBC, Town Council, Love Longridge and Building Owners/Operators
Meeting Places and Public Spaces:	Lack of Central Point	Support development of a plan for Townley Gardens	Make required infrastructure improvements	All Councils, Community and Love Longridge
Movement and Connectivity	Parking	Improve signage to car park. Improve the facilities so that there is the option to pay by card	Link into cycling and walking routes	All Councils, Community and Love Longridge
Vision, identity & Purpose	Play to Strengths	Enter the UK's best high street award to create focus that brings stakeholder together	Aim for shortlisting within 3 years	RVBC, Town Council and Love Longridge

Whalley				
Culture & Governance:	Love Whalley	Work with Chamber, Town Council and Stakeholders to create a Love Whalley Organisation with support from Love Whalley		Chamber, Town Council, RVBC and Love Whalley
Markets and Trading	Lack of Space for Enterprise	Map out potential locations to introduce entry level spaces for new business and start-ups e.g. Pop-up stores	Assess possibility of longer-term development of Back King Street to create more small business space	RVBC, Building Owners/Occupiers
Meeting Places and Public Spaces:	The Abbey and Abbey Park	Enhance and develop programme of events for the Abbey	Tie into larger Love Ribble Valley programme	RVBC, Building Owners/Occupiers
		Improve signage and promotion of Abbey Park	Develop funding model to maintain activity	Chamber, Town Council, and RVBC
Movement and Connectivity	Short Stay Parking	Replace short term 30 min parking facility recently removed		RVBC and Town Council
Vision, identity & Purpose	Night-time Economy	Carry out a Night-time Economy Study	Implement Recommendations and consider CCTV	RVBC, Licencing, Police and Business Groups
		Promote co-working in venues during daytime		RVBC and Business Groups
		Purple Flag Assessment	Work towards Purple Flag Accreditation	RVBC, Licencing, Police and Business Groups

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Image Deck

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CLITHEROE SUMMARY

Clitheroe is a picturesque market town and the largest retail centre in the borough. The centre is steeped in history and offers attractions such as a 12th Century Castle, which is now home to a museum and 16 acres of landscaped gardens, housing a bandstand, amphitheatre, children's playground, skate-park and Lancashire's first Labyrinth. The Grammar School is also located within the centre and students using the high street were clearly visible.

The High Street has a good mix of independent shops and chain stores including Boots, Fat Face and WH Smiths. Independent stores range from new additions such as Green Theory, a packaging free store to well established local businesses including Cowmans famous sausages and H M Sowerbutts & Co Furniture who have traded in the town for over 130 years. The centre is also home to a Booths supermarket and the Holmes Mill mixed use development which includes a food hall, hotel, Everyman Cinema and the Bowland Brewery Beerhall. The combined offer serves a wide catchment area attracting visitors wishing to explore Pendle Hill and the Forest of Bowland which are both nearby.

Clitheroe



Points of Arrival

- Arrival into the centre by car is easy and attractive
- Market car park tucked away and easy to miss.
- Pot holes in station car park
- Signage is poor
- The parking prices are reasonable

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Clitheroe



Public realm and the associated infrastructure

- Market infrastructure is tired and signage poor
- Multiple bins that do not match and are duplicated in locations

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Clitheroe



F&B Offer

- High standard of independent food and beverage offer
- Heritage buildings make nice setting for restaurants/cafes



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Assets

- Holmes Mill is a popular feature within the town
- Good Market Offer but need to expand opening hours
- Castle and Park are a great feature but currently under utilised



Clitheroe



Overall Cleanliness

- Generally, the area was kept clean
- Over supply of bins
- Things in disrepair make areas seem unclean



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Accessibility

- Stepped access into a lot of shops
- The narrow, damaged pavements are challenging for those with mobility issues or small children
- Attractions are poorly signposted



Clitheroe

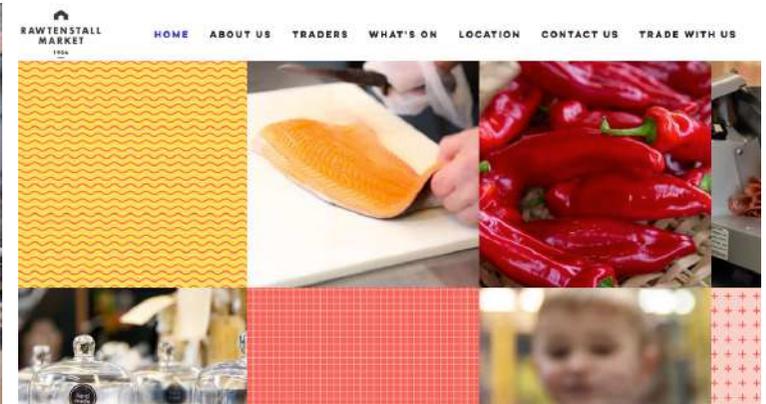
Case Study

Skipton

Rawtenstall Market

Oswestry

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LONGRIDGE SUMMARY

Longridge serves as a shopping and social centre for the surrounding rural district including a number of villages within North Preston. The centre consists of a linear high street offering a mix of independent shops, services, antique galleries, a pet shop, IT store, coffee shops, a local supermarket medical centre and a prominent YMCA charity shop.

As well as serving the local population, Longridge's setting in attractive countryside makes it a popular starting point for country walks and cycle rides. The village has Townley Gardens at its centre, a public park that represents the only events space except for the Civic Centre car park. The 'Old Market' cinema is currently closed and available to let.

Longridge



Points of Arrival

- The drive/ride from Clitheroe is stunning
- Parking was initially hard to find
- No card payment facility
- There is no sense of arrival at all
- There is no station
- The bus service seemed to be well used

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Public realm and the associated infrastructure

- Towneley Gardens is centrally located green space, pleasant and well maintained





Overall Cleanliness

- General very clean with no litter
- Adequate bins provided
- Gardens well maintained



OFFER

Offer

- Everything you need to live here, within the one long linear street
- Shop fronts well presented



Longridge

Case Study

Treorchy: is a former mining town in Rhondda South Wales. The now bustling town was named Champion of The Great British High Street Awards 2019.

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WHALLEY SUMMARY

Whalley is located on the banks of the River Calder. It is an affluent and attractive village, filled with historic buildings, independent boutiques and a large selection of cafes, restaurants, and bars. Again, the village serves local residents well with amenities including a library, supermarket, pharmacy, medical centre, and village hall all within a 10-minute walking distance. The village no longer has any banking facilities and is becoming increasingly popular as an evening food and drink destination, attracting customers from Manchester and beyond served by its direct rail link.



Points of Arrival

- Nice approach - lovely to drive through
- Signage to station not clear when walking
- Little to no sense of arrival
- 2-hour parking on most streets including multiple e-charging points
Confusing payment mechanism

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Whalley



Public realm and the associated infrastructure

- Generally the gardens and public spaces are very well maintained
- There were bags of building supplies left in gardens

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Landscape Features

- Gardens are well maintained
- A nice touch having plants in containers dotted around, makeS the area very pleasant



Overall Cleanliness

- General very clean with no litter
- Lots of bins, both general and recycling



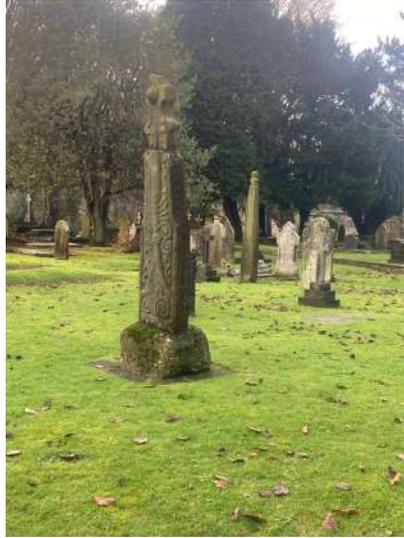
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Historic Assets

- Beautiful and historic features that should be celebrated and promoted more - including the Abbey



F&B + Nighttime Offer

- Large range of cafes and wine bars including one nightclub
- This offer has grown in recent years and this is leading to increasing friction between, daytime and residential uses



Whalley

Case Study

Comparable to the affluent rural small town of Knutsford, as well as From and Lark Lane area in south Liverpool

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS & ACTIONS

Aesthetics



Aesthetics

- An appreciation that standards have dropped during the pandemic
- All three areas could do with a general tidy up

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Young People

- Not a great deal for young people to do within the three areas
- There is a Young Peoples Centre
- Certain areas are under-utilised and so become a place for young people to hang out in the evenings

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Residential

- Lots of new homes have been built in the areas, which could bring a new demographic, the areas need to cater for this
- Is the infrastructure sufficient enough to support this



Activation



Vibrancy

- The are areas across the borough that could be used to support and host a greater programme of events
- Shop front, particularly with in Whalley, are animated and add colour and vibrancy to the area

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Activation

Night Time Economy

- Large array of places to eat and drink during the evening
- Opportunity to extend opening hours of the market and shops

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Markets and Trading



Enterprise

- There is an increased demand for enterprise and co-working space driven by residential developments in the borough and a current shortage of space
- Currently a lack of space for new businesses, and costs are too expensive

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Signage and Wayfinding

- Generally signage is very poor
- There is little to no promotion of the assets within the areas
- Lots of signs that discourage cycling
- Branding, particularly for the market, could do with an update



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Meeting Places and Public Space



Meeting Places and Public Spaces

- Opportunities to create better public spaces across all Three areas using current assets
- In need of a tidy up post Covid



Movement and Connectivity



Connectivity

- Improve signage across the three areas
- Unaware of certain assets due to lack of signage
- Develop a place identity and co-ordinated promotion for Love Ribbles Valley to connect the three areas



Movement and Connectivity



Active Travel

Introducing the infrastructure required to promote active travel. For example creating multimodal mobility hubs around Ribble



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Vision, Identity and Purpose



Promotion

- There is an opportunity to develop the branding and create an identity, to promote the areas
- Good use of noticeboards. Could this be continued in promoting events, activities and other key council and community messages

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Vision, Identity and Purpose

IBJ

Independents

- Great selection of independents
- Sell the area's independents and food offers more
- Develop a unique identity for the area and each centre

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RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: 24 MARCH 2022
 title: REVENUE MONITORING 2021/22
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: HELEN SEEDALL

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To let you know the position for the period April 2021 to February 2022 of this year's revenue budget as far as this committee is concerned.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

Community Objectives – none identified

Corporate Priorities - to continue to be a well managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer need. To meet the objective within this priority, of maintaining critical financial management controls, ensuring the authority provides council tax payers with value for money.

Other Considerations – none identified.

2 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2.1 Shown below, by cost centre, is a comparison between actual expenditure and the revised estimate for the period to the end of February. You will see an overall underspend of £4,456 on the net cost of services. Please note that underspends are denoted by figures with a minus symbol. After allowing for transfers to/from earmarked reserves the underspend is £4,454.

Cost Centre	Cost Centre Name	Net Budget for the full year	Net Budget to the end of the period	Actual including commitments to the end of the period	Variance	
ALBNM	Albion Mill	-520	8,622	8,129	-493	G
INDDV	Economic Development	175,200	5,246	952	-4,294	A
TURSM	Tourism and Events	119,040	36,033	36,364	331	G
	Sum:	293,720	49,901	45,445	-4,456	

Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves				
Restoring Your Railways Reserve	-7,490	-7,490	-7,485	5
Promotions Activities Reserve	-5,330	-5,330	-5,333	-3
Total after Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	280,900	37,081	32,627	-4,454

2.2 The variations between budget and actuals have been split into groups of red, amber and green variance. The red variances highlight specific areas of high concern, for which budget holders are required to have an action plan. Amber variances are potential areas of high concern and green variances are areas, which currently do not present any significant concern.

Key to Variance shading	
Variance of more than £5,000 (Red)	R
Variance between £2,000 and £4,999 (Amber)	A
Variance less than £2,000 (Green)	G

2.3 For this committee there are no variations which fall within the red variance category in the period April 2021 to February 2022.

2.4 There is one variation in the amber variance category which is shown with the budget holder’s comment at Annex 1.

3 CONCLUSION

3.1 The comparison between actual and budgeted expenditure shows an underspend of £4,456 for the period April 2021 to February 2022. After allowing for transfers to/ from earmarked reserves the underspend is £4,454.

3.2 The current variations do not present any significant concern. However, this situation can fluctuate depending on activities that take place.

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

ED1-22/HS/AC
11 March 2021

Economic Development Committee Budget Monitoring – Amber Variances

Ledger Code	Ledger Code Name	Budget for the Full Year	Budget to the end of the period	Actual including commitments to the end of the period	Variance	Reason for Variance
INDDV/3277	Economic Development/Promotional Activities	4,440	2,960	470	-2,490	There has been a lower than estimated requirement for expenditure on promotional activities year to date.

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RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL INFORMATION
REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: 24 MARCH 2022
 title: CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: ANDREW COOK

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform members of the schemes approved for inclusion in this Committee’s 2022/23 capital programme.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 All committees were asked to put forward proposals for any new capital schemes for inclusion in a five-year capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27. At its meeting on 20 January 2022, members considered the scheme that had been put forward for this Committee.

2.2 In light of the uncertainty regarding local government funding beyond 2022/23 and the impending fair funding review, all new bids, across all committees were set aside until later in the 2022/23 financial year for consideration once there is more certainty around local government funding. As a result, a three-year capital programme for 2022/23 to 2024/25 is now in place.

2.3 The Council’s overall capital programme for the three-year period 2022/23 to 2024/25 totals £5,563,970 for all committees. The total for this Committee is £51,750 over the three-year life of the programme. All the £51,750 relates to the 2022/23 financial year.

3 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 – APPROVED SCHEMES

3.1 For this Committee there is one scheme approved in the 2022/23 capital programme, totalling £51,750. This is shown in the table below and the detailed information for the scheme is shown in **Annex 1**.

Cost Centre	Scheme	Budget for 2022/23 £
ECDVI	Economic Development Initiatives <i>(Budget moved from 2021/22)</i>	51,750
	Total – Economic Development Committee	51,750

3.2 Responsible officers will complete and update capital monitoring sheets for the scheme, which will be reported regularly to members to give an indication of progress.

3.3 During the closure of our capital accounts there may be some slippage on the schemes in the 2021/22 current year capital programme. If there is any slippage on those schemes, the details will be reported to a future meeting of this Committee and to the Budget Working Group.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This Committee has an approved 2022/23 capital programme of £51,750 for one scheme.
- 4.2 Any slippage on the schemes in the 2021/22 capital programme will be reported to this Committee.

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

ED2-22/AC/AC
14 March 2022

For further background information please ask for Andrew Cook
BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Schemes Approved for the 2022/23 Capital Programme

Economic Development Initiatives

Service Area: Regeneration and Housing

Submitted by: Colin Hirst

Budget moved from 2021/22:

The Economic Development Initiatives scheme original estimate budget for 2021/22 was £81,750. When the revised estimate budget was set in January 2022, £30,000 of this budget had previously been set aside for land appraisal work on a piece of land along the A59 and there were no other development opportunities being considered that were likely to lead to further spend on this capital scheme budget in 2021/22.

Given the above, in January 2022 this Committee approved that the 2021/22 revised estimate budget for this scheme be reduced to £30,000 and that £51,750 of the scheme budget be transferred to 2022/23.

Capital Cost:

2022/23 £
51,750

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