



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Scrutiny Review of Station Street Project	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Scrutiny (Community Regeneration) Committee	x
	Corporate Management Team	x
	Pre-Cabinet	x
	Cabinet	



Scrutiny Committee Review Final Report

Title: Scrutiny Review of Station Street Project

Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny (Community Regeneration) Committee

Committee Chair: Cllr S McGarry

Is the Report Confidential? No

If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972: N/a

SECTION 1: COMMITTEE'S REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1. Background / Context

- 1.1.1. In 2020, works to improve the public realm of the pedestrianised section of Station Street in Burton upon Trent began
- 1.1.2. Plans were first presented to the public in August 2018 and in March 2020 works began.
- 1.1.3. East Staffordshire Borough Council approved capital investment to be made on the project at an extraordinary Full Council meeting that was held on Monday 16th September 2019.
- 1.1.4. The development of plans for the regeneration of the pedestrianised area of Station Street were developed in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Amey Plc and Fira Landscape Architecture and Urban Design. The implementation of the work was carried out by Amey Plc under the management of Staffordshire County Council.
- 1.1.5. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Amey Highways were able to work throughout the lockdown to try and limit disruption to the local businesses and to ensure the works programme was able to be completed on time.

1.2. What was the purpose of the Review?

- 1.2.1. The purpose of the review is to determine whether the project delivered on its objectives, examine if there any lessons for future regeneration works, consider whether it was value for money and gather the views of our stakeholders.

1.3. What were the core questions the review is seeking to answer?

- Did the project provide value for money with a design that will look good in 10 years and is good enough to carry through to future regeneration projects?
- Did the project deliver on its objectives? Have the business frontages improved? Can we compare shop occupancy levels? Were there any shortcomings or any lessons that can be learned for future regeneration works?
- What do our residents and business owners think of the project? Is there anything Councillors would like to have seen in the project?

1.4. What was the Scrutiny Approach

1.4.1. Desktop research, a survey of residents and businesses on station street and discussion with a discussion with the relevant officer and portfolio holder

1.5. What was Within the Scope of the Review?

1.5.1. The Station Street project.

1.6. What was Outside the Scope of the Review?

1.6.1. Any scrutiny of regeneration works outside of the Station Street project.

2. Review of the Station Project

- 2.1. At the Scrutiny (Community Regeneration) Committee meeting in June 2022, the Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Station Street refurbishment project.
- 2.2. The review aimed to determine whether the project delivered on its objectives, examine if there any lessons for future regeneration works, consider whether it was value for money and gather the views of Council stakeholders.
- 2.3. To assist the committee in this analysis, it was agreed a survey would be conducted with residents and those businesses situated on the refurbished area of Station Street.
- 2.4. The final report on Station Street showed that the project was 6.17% under budget, or £81,548.53.

2.5. Residents Survey

- 2.5.1. A residents survey was opened on 16th November 2022 and closed on 14th December 2022. The survey was promoted online through the website and social media channels and through the Council's monthly e-newsletter. A total of 235 responses were received.
- 2.5.2. An overview of the responses is presented below however the detailed responses can be found in **Appendix 1 – Residents Survey Results**.
- 2.5.3. The first two questions attempted to establish how many of the responders lived in East Staffordshire and were aware of the Station Street project.

Do you live in East Staffordshire?

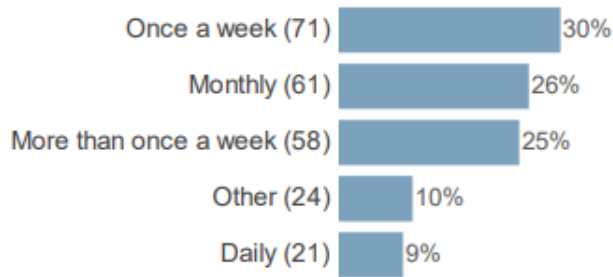


Before completing this survey, were you aware of the Station Street project?

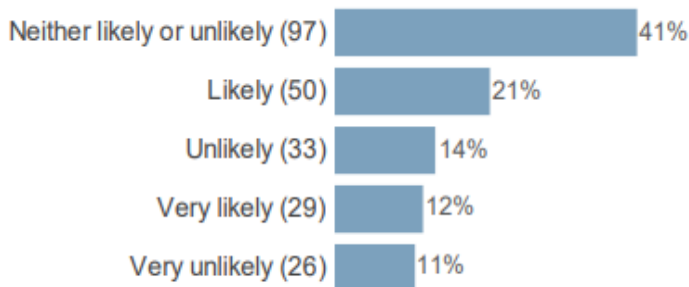


- 2.5.4. The next two questions asked how frequently shoppers used Station Street before the works took place and how likely they were to use it following the works.

Before the Station Street works took place, how often did you use Station Street?



Following the completion of the works, how likely are you to use Station Street?



2.5.5. The analysis shows that a majority of responders (64%) used Station Street at least once a week prior to the works. The majority of responders (41%) said they are neither likely nor unlikely to use Station Street following the works, 33% said they were likely or very likely and 25% said they unlikely or very unlikely.

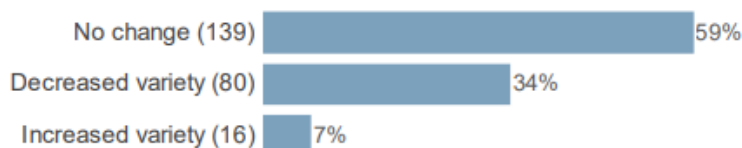
2.5.6. When asked as to whether the works had improved the attractiveness of Station Street, 60% said no and 40% said yes.

2.5.7. The next question was open, giving responders the opportunity to describe what they liked and didn't like about the Station Street Project. In total 99 people responded to this questions and the responses have been themed as follows:

Like	Dislike
Planters	Planters
Visual appearance	Planting within the planters
	Shop front appearance
	Rubbish and Pigeons
	Lack of and suitability of seating
	Cost

2.5.8. The majority of responders felt there had been no change in the variety of businesses on Station Street following the completion of the works.

Following its completion, how do you feel the works to Station Street has influenced the variety of businesses in the area?

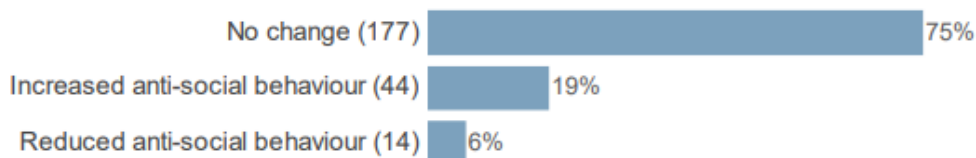


2.5.9. The questionnaire gave residents the opportunity to explain why they selected the above option. All responses are included in Appendix 1, however the responses can be themed as follows:

- There are more bars and restaurants
- Fewer shops and businesses have left
- Paving and planters will not encourage shops and businesses
- Small, independent and pop up shops have lessened desirability of the area
- Good to see independent shops
- Nothing has changed
- No new shops have opened
- Observation. Sadly it's the times we live in and affects all town centres.

2.5.10. The next set of questions examined perceived levels of anti-social behaviour on Station Street.

Following its completion, how do you feel the works to Station Street has impacted the incidences of anti-social behaviour in the area?



Following the completion of the works, have you witnessed any anti-social behaviour on Station Street?



2.5.11. The types of anti-social behaviour witnessed were described as:

- Groups outside McDonalds littering, shouting, throwing food
- Skateboarders and cyclists
- Dropping litter and feeding pigeons
- Drinking
- Urination in flower beds

2.5.12. 98 people responded when asked what their overall thoughts were on the Station Street project. The responses can be themed into the following:

- Indifferent
- Waste of money
- Good improvement
- Money could have been invested elsewhere (road maintenance for example)
- Needs better maintenance

2.5.13. Finally, when asked whether the Council should be investing in improving the public realm, like it did with Station Street, 61% of people said it should.

2.6. Business Survey

2.6.1. A business survey was conducted with those businesses located within the refurbished area of Station Street. Each business was offered a letter in person, with a link to the survey, however only one response was received.

2.6.2. The response is included in Appendix 2 – Business Survey.

2.7. Discussions following surveys

2.7.1. Following the conclusion of the residents survey, the Interim Head of Regeneration and the Leader of the Council attended a committee meeting to answer any questions from the Committee.

2.7.2. The Committee also had questions of other areas of the Council (such as litter picking) which were raised and answered via e-mail.

2.7.3. Littering

2.7.3.1. Some of the concerns raised in the residents survey related to littering and rubbish on Station Street.

2.7.3.2. Litter on the surface of Station Street is cleaned every day of the week by East Staffordshire Borough Council. This type of cleaning includes a litter pick, mechanical foot sweep and a carriage sweep. The bins on Station Street are also emptied on a daily basis by the Council.

2.7.3.3. Community and Civil Enforcement Officers patrol the Burton ward (which includes Station Street) on a weekly basis and as such will likely visit the street a minimum of three times a week. No Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for littering on Station Street recently.

2.7.4. Planters

2.7.4.1. Some of the feedback on Station Street focused on the planters. The Open Spaces team provided feedback on how the planters (plants and planters themselves) are maintained.

2.7.4.2. As a result of vandalism to the plants, the planters have been replanted three times, McDonalds have also planted beds near their restaurant. They appear to be ideal height for people to walk across them.

2.7.4.3. The soil, which was used to fill the planters initially, is of poor quality and is easily compacted. This is further compounded by people walk on them.

- 2.7.4.4. The team have noticed that some plants don't grow well on the poor soil. Grasses do very well so they are going to look at planting a mix of ornamental grasses to create a prairie style planting to see if that works. This also requires minimal watering.
- 2.7.4.5. There is a real problem with pigeons. People throw scraps onto the beds and pigeons eat these and attack the plants.
- 2.7.4.6. The hanging basket poles proved successful so the team are going to put more planters up each pole to create floral columns and increase impact.
- 2.7.4.7. The weeding schedule is for 13 occasions per year.
- 2.7.4.8. In addition, the first twelve months of maintenance formed part of the original regeneration contract, however the organisation who were subcontracted to do the work stopped trading, but this was not communicated to the Council. This resulted in sub-standard maintenance over a period in the summer of 2021. The responsibility to maintain the planters was transferred to East Staffordshire Borough Council in October 2021.

2.7.5. Occupancy rates and footfall

- 2.7.5.1. The Committee asked to compare occupation rates of the retail premises on Station Street before and post regeneration works.
- 2.7.5.2. Prior to the works, the vacancy rates were 12%. After the works, the rate is 9.3% against a national average of 14%.
- 2.7.5.3. Business variety and occupancy has increased, despite the resident survey suggesting otherwise, with:
- Four new bars and restaurants, two of which are in units that were previously a hair dresser and an electrical goods hire purchase shop;
 - The hideaway café has moved into Station Street with a unit that is roughly three times larger than they were in before;
 - Good news moved into a unit opposite their existing location, which is about twice as large
- 2.7.5.4. Footfall estimates show an increase in Quarters 1, 2 and 3 for 2022 compared to 2021, with Quarter 4 not yet complete. This is directly against the national trend, where the retail insight network reports year on year declines on the national average.

2.7.6. Seating

- 2.7.6.1. Feedback from the residents survey suggested there is inadequate seating on the street. This issue was also raised as an issue at the committee meeting and specifically that seating is at one end of the street.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1. It is unfortunate that the survey both from residents and businesses wasn't as well returned as anticipated. The biggest take from the responses was that there was mixture of views and

opinions on the works, with some people the works had improved the attractiveness of Station Street and variety of businesses whereas others felt the works had not improved the visual attractiveness of the street nor diversified the businesses trading.

- 3.2. In retrospect it would appear that one of the main contentions to the area are the planters especially in terms of the design, height and lack of planting. This has inevitably caused anti-social behaviour in terms of people standing in the planters and damaging plants, which has also been exacerbated with the poor choice of soil used to fill the planters. Therefore one of the recommendations is to increase planting in the planters using a mix of ornamental grasses to create a prairie style planting which requires minimal watering, these will also grow far better with the existing soil in the planters. Additionally the grasses will give height which in turn will reduce the anti-social behaviour of individuals trampling on the plants.
- 3.3. Increasingly, due to the height of the planters, this has caused littering and food waste to appear on a more regular basis which then has had the knock on effect of offerings to local bird life which then increases the bird faeces in the area.
- 3.4. In terms of occupancy rates and footfall overall and taking into account the pandemic issues, it would appear that our average footfall has increased against which goes against the national average. We can see an increase year on year in footfall in the area.
- 3.5. We can see a variety of new business coming into Station Street and in some cases existing businesses taking over units much larger than previously owned, although the residents survey suggests there is a perception amongst a number of respondents that there has been no change.
- 3.6. Seating was mentioned by some residents in the survey in terms of this provision now only being in one area and not spread more evenly over the project.

4. Recommendation(s) of the Committee

- 4.1. To increase planting in the planters using a mix of ornamental grasses to create a prairie style planting.
- 4.2. To increase planters on the hanging basket poles to give a more enhanced and aesthetically pleasing floral display along Station Street.
- 4.3. To continue with the schedule of works in terms of litter picking, weeding and CCEO patrols.
- 4.4. In terms of seating, consider the feasibility of increasing this provision in other areas of Station Street.
- 4.5. To increase maintenance and repair any damage caused to the planters in order to retain their visual enhancement.
- 4.6. To revisit the project's success during 2024 in terms of occupancy rates and footfall to continue to report on our standing with the national average.

5. Appendices

- 5.1. Appendix 1. Residents Survey Results
- 5.2. Appendix 2. Business Survey Results

SECTION 2: OFFICER CONSIDERATIONS

6. Financial Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit:
Lisa Turner in consultation with the Head of Service*

6.1. The main financial issues arising from this Report are as follows:

6.1.1. The majority of the recommendations can be met within existing budgets, however the additional seating and a potential longer term solution to planting in the planters could be further investigated and considered as a future growth item to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. Legal Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: **John Teasdale***

7.1. The main legal issues arising from this Report are as follows:

7.1.1. There are no significant legal issues arising from the recommendations of the Committee.

8. Risk Assessment and Management

8.1. The main risks arising from this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

8.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

8.2.1. n.a

8.3. **Negative** (Threats):

8.3.1. n.a

8.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register.

8.5. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

9. Equalities and Health

9.1. **Equality Impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this time.

9.2. **Health Impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

10. Human Rights

10.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

11. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **Not applicable**