

Regenerating Town Centres in Wales

Self Evaluation Tool



Intention

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We have a long-term vision for all our town centres.</p>		<p>The Council has set out an ambitious long-term strategy for town centre regeneration. This is included in the Council Plan. However, this has not yet been translated into action plans for each of the towns in Flintshire. Development of an action plan for Shotton is underway. The Council has committed extra resources to the regeneration team to facilitate this work.</p>
<p>We have committed, highly visible political leaders for town centre regeneration.</p>		<p>The Council has set out a clear public leadership position on town centre regeneration, including within the Council Plan. However, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the Council's approach and to engage stakeholders locally in each town centre.</p>
<p>Our approach to town centre regeneration is integrated with our key strategies and plan – eg Wellbeing Plan, corporate priorities and other community, council and regional strategies.</p>	<p>The Council approach to regeneration is highlighted within the Council Plan alongside other strategic priorities.</p>	
<p>We have set SMART objectives for town centre regeneration.</p>		<p>Further work is needed to develop and articulate objectives with stakeholders in each town.</p>

We are clear on the benefits and risks of town centre regeneration for citizens, the local economy and local communities.

Further work is needed to develop and articulate objectives with stakeholders in each town.

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
We have a clear accountability framework to govern and scrutinise our decisions in regenerating town centres.	Progress on town centre regeneration is reported at both Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committees.	
We have agile and effective decision-making processes when approving our work on town centres.	Internal decision making processes have been able to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of the towns both during the pandemic and as the recovery process begins. The Council has established both a multiagency Economic Recovery Group and an internal co-ordinating Places group to help with this.	
We act in a transparent way and everyone is clear on how decisions on town centre regeneration activities are made and by whom.	The work of the groups above and internal decision making processes are transparent and open to scrutiny.	
Those who make decisions on town centre regeneration are accountable for their choices and are held to account through clear governance arrangements.	The work of the groups above and internal decision making processes are transparent and open to scrutiny.	

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
We have enough staff and resources to undertake town centre regeneration work.		The team has been too small for some years to meet the regeneration aspirations of the Council. However, the Council has invested in extra staff resources to support the programme. Capital resources are scarce and WG funding is too limited to make a transformative impact. The Council bids for external resources wherever viable opportunities occur.
We have staff in the right services and with the required seniority to undertake town centre regeneration work.		Further recruitment is currently underway which will fill the remaining gap needed.
We have a can-do culture and entrepreneurial mindset within the council for town centre regeneration.	The culture and mindset within the Council facilitates innovation and experimentation in regeneration. Capacity (as above) has traditionally limited the ability to try new approaches rather than culture.	
We can recruit the right people with the right skills to deliver our town centre regeneration work.		This is extremely challenging. Regeneration posts can be very difficult to fill.

<p>We have embedded regeneration with programmes of long-term transformation and/or recovery from COVID-19.</p>	<p>Regeneration and wider economic and community recovery are fully integrated through the structures highlighted above.</p>	
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Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We are able to secure the resources we need to undertake town centre regeneration.</p>		<p>Limited staff resources have impacted on the ability of the Council to develop shovel-ready projects but this work is now underway. Capital and revenue resources are limited which reduces potential impact. External resources are bid for wherever viable opportunities arise. WG funding can often be short term, offered late in the financial year and with restrictive criteria which reduces availability of resources.</p>

Involvement

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We effectively communicate internally and externally about what the council and its partners are trying to achieve through our town centre regeneration work.</p>		<p>Further work is needed to articulate the Council's strategic approach to town centre regeneration. Development of action plans with stakeholders in each town is required. Internally, a Places Group facilitates effective communication about town centre regeneration across the relevant Council departments. The Council has appointed an officer to focus on communication with stakeholders, especially the town centre business communities.</p>
<p>We draw on the expertise and knowledge of partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders when identifying and agreeing our priorities for town centre regeneration.</p>		<p>Development of action plans with stakeholders in each town is required. The Council has appointed an officer to focus on communication with stakeholders, especially the town centre business communities.</p>
<p>Our priorities for town centre regeneration reflect the feedback we receive from partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders.</p>		<p>As above.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We enable all our stakeholders to be fully involved in identifying and agreeing town centre regeneration priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members • Welsh Government • Local Health Board • Fire and Rescue Authority • National Park Authority • Police • Police and Crime Commissioner • Town and Community Councils • Business Improvement Districts • Chamber of Commerce • Social Enterprises • Local community groups • Individual citizens 		<p>Development of action plans with stakeholders in each town is required. The Council has appointed an officer to focus on communication with stakeholders, especially the town centre business communities.</p>
<p>We encourage partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders to develop solutions that help regenerate our town centres.</p>		<p>Development of action plans with stakeholders in each town is required. The Council has appointed an officer to focus on communication with stakeholders, especially the town centre business communities.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We support community-led regeneration and actively encourage our partners, businesses, citizens and stakeholders to lead on town centre regeneration by encouraging and working through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Improvement Districts • Town and Community Councils • Place Plans 		<p>Development of action plans with stakeholders in each town is required.</p>
<p>We draw on and utilise the skills and knowledge of our local partners, businesses and stakeholders to help us develop our regeneration programme.</p>		<p>As above.</p>
<p>We actively seek feedback from the community on an ongoing basis about our planned, ongoing and future town centre regeneration work.</p>		<p>As above.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We use a wide range of data to understand our town centres and identify the priorities for action.</p>		<p>The Council has a number of areas of work underway to improve availability of data for its decision making and to share with partners and businesses. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of towns across North Wales including a wide range of data sets (including many of those suggested by Audit Wales). • Business mix and vacancy data for Flintshire towns 2010-21 commissioned. • Participating in WG Smart Towns programme to which will include footfall counters in all town centres. • Hoping to purchase mobile phone data as part of regional project to map demographics of town centre users, catchment areas and movement patterns.
<p>Our data covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall • Digital – Wi-Fi usage, social media interactions, travel movements, etc • Property – rent, profit margins and empty units • Catchment demographics • Interdependency of towns 		
<p>We make transparent decisions based on good quality information when deciding on town centre regeneration.</p>		<p>This will be the case once the above is in place.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We receive good quality information to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • judge whether we should approve a town centre regeneration project; and • monitor and fully evaluate performance of our delivery of town centre regeneration 		<p>This will be the case once the above is in place.</p>
<p>We have a confident decision-making culture and elected members are not afraid of challenging officers and holding people to account.</p>	<p>The Council committee structure enables this to take place.</p>	
<p>We regularly review our town centre regeneration work to ensure our actions and decisions are the right ones.</p>		<p>Although this is reviewed at the County level further work is needed at the town level.</p>
<p>We amend our town centre regeneration programmes to reflect changing needs and demands.</p>	<p>The current strategic approach is reviewed and amended annually.</p>	

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We set targets and measures of success for town centre regeneration to judge improvement over time, and monitor these when they have been agreed.</p>		<p>Individual projects are monitored but, in the absence of the data sets above, assessment of overall improvement has not been possible. This will be easier in the future.</p>
<p>We jointly take corrective action as a result of our ongoing evaluation of town centre regeneration programmes.</p>		<p>Individual projects are monitored but, in the absence of the data sets above, assessment of overall improvement has not been possible. This will be easier in the future.</p>
<p>We share learning and draw on evidence from other councils in Wales and elsewhere to learn what does/does not work, the challenges we face and the potential rewards.</p>	<p>There is a strong regional partnership for town centre regeneration with active shared learning and joint working.</p>	
<p>We have robust performance management arrangements in place to monitor evaluation of past regeneration programmes.</p>		<p>There have been very few past regeneration programmes due to a historic lack of funding in the region. Where there have been programmes they have been for capital investment in public realm and building improvements which remain in place.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We review the effectiveness of our past decisions on town centre regeneration to understand what worked and what did not.</p>		<p>In the absence of the data sets above, assessment of overall improvement has not been possible. This will be easier in the future.</p>
<p>We undertake post-implementation evaluation of individual town centre regeneration schemes to check that the objectives we set were delivered.</p>		<p>There have been very few past regeneration programmes due to a historic lack of funding in the region. Where there have been programmes they have been for capital investment in public realm and building improvements which remain in place.</p>
<p>We can draw on robust information that shows how our regeneration work is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving local people’s social and health wellbeing; • improving the quality of buildings and homes in our town centres; and • delivering carbon reduction targets and improving green infrastructure. 		<p>The Council, as it develops current projects, is able to articulate the benefits to these areas. Direct impacts cannot always be easily attributed though so further work is needed.</p>

Intervention

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
We have defined and clarified roles, responsibilities and our legal powers to support our town centre regeneration work.	The Council has established a cross-department panel to co-ordinate and combine use of legal powers in respect of town centre property intervention.	
We can draw on and utilise the skills and knowledge of our partners, the Welsh Government and stakeholders to help us take legal action to regenerate town centres.	The Council has fully engaged the WG support for enforcement.	

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We provide landlords, businesses, partners and stakeholders with good quality advice and guidance including:</p> <p>Advice to landlords on options for sale, rent and ownership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of agents to help sell/rent • Discounted fees through Auctioneer Scheme • Identify and list potential Investors/Developers • List of approved Builders/Architects • Free composite Schedule of Works 		<p>The Council has established a cross-department panel to co-ordinate and combine use of legal powers in respect of town centre property intervention. This will also help to co-ordinate support to property owners. This is newly established.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We support landlords to tackle empty premises by offering a wide range of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use LA website to promote/ advertise land/buildings for owners • Home Improvement Agency • Council run Private Sector Leasing scheme • Social lettings scheme to match applicants to private rented homes • Public Request Ordering Proposals • Direct purchase by LA or RSL • LOTS and HARPS to create homes above shops 		<p>The Council has used incentives for many years to support property owners, when resources have been available to do so. These resources have fluctuated over time. Further work is required to structure these approaches as part of the overall approach to enforcement and town level action plans.</p>

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We provide landlords, businesses, partners and stakeholders with financial support to help regenerate town centres including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement grants linked to nominations to properties • Loans for improvement work (interest free or interest bearing) • Commercial lending advice • Discount VAT and/or Capital Allowance schemes 	<p>The Council, wherever resources allow, provides incentives to property owners for regeneration including grants and loans. Resources tend, though, to fluctuate over time.</p>	

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We proactively take enforcement action to regenerate town centres fully using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.215 of the Town and Country planning Act 1990 – CPO • S.77-79 of the Building Act 1984 – dangerous structures, ruinous and dilapidated • Housing Acts 1985 and 2004 – improvement notices, EDMOs, demolition, clearance and CPO • S.79-80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 – statutory nuisance • S.4 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 – treat pests • S.29 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – boarding up • Listed Buildings/Urgent Works notice • Public Health Acts 1936 and 1961 – filthy and verminous • Naming and shaming landlords (publicity) 		<p>The Council already uses a range of regulatory powers to tackle empty and problem properties. However, use of these powers can be extremely time consuming and can ultimately place considerable financial burdens on the Council which cannot always be recouped.</p> <p>Following the training provided by Welsh Government earlier in the year the Council has develop a panel of officers from the different regulatory and regeneration services to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a shared list of vacant or problem properties is maintained and reviewed regularly; • action by the Council is co-ordinated effectively across the different teams; • owners of properties are offered effective support and encouragement before enforcement action is commenced; and • limited resources are managed through the careful prioritisation of enforcement action based on the length of time properties have been vacant and the scale of problems they are causing to neighbours and communities.

Action needed	Yes, we are good at this and no further work is required	No, there is more for us to do
<p>We use our powers to encourage empty buildings to be brought back into use in town centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax, Statutory Debts or Business Rates debt recovery (Bankruptcy, charging orders or Bailiffs) • County Court or Enforced Sales Procedure • Empty Homes and Holiday Homes Premium • Prosecution • Compulsory Purchase Order • Empty Management Dwellings Order • Enforced Sales Procedure • Direct Purchase 		As above.



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