



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 5 December 2024

Pride in Our High Street

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers - Cabinet Member: Economy
Lead Director:	James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Group Manager - Strategic Planning, Inward Investment & Business Support
Report Author:	Gavin Ashford – Group Manager Strategic Planning, Inward Investment & Business Support
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Wards Affected:	Ironbridge Gorge, Madeley & Sutton Hill, Dawley & Aqueduct, Malinslee & Dawley Bank, Oakengates & Ketley Bank, Haygate & Park, Arleston & College, Newport West, Newport South and Newport North
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Wednesday 17 April 2024
Report considered by:	SMT – 5 November 2024 Business Briefing – 21 November 2024 Cabinet – 5 December 2024

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the work of the Pride in Our High Streets (PIOHS) programme in supporting resilient local high streets, local businesses and communities of the borough,
- 1.2 Approve continuation of the PIOHS programme.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To highlight the positive impact of the PIOHS programme to support the regeneration and revitalisation of the boroughs high streets.
- 2.2 The programme has formed part of a key long term funding commitment to protect, care and invest in local high streets since 2015. The current phase of PIOHS has helped improve the resilience of high streets and support the boroughs local communities. This report provides a series of case studies that demonstrate the impact of Council led investment and how it has leveraged private sector funding into the boroughs high streets.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Mirroring the national picture, our high streets are threatened by changes in household spending patterns, shopping culture and recreational trends. Whilst there have been national programmes such as the Portas Pilot that have tried (with mixed success) to address these challenges, many of the most successful schemes are the result of investment into local projects and initiatives that aim to increase footfall and the attractiveness of high streets.
- 3.2 Since the original programme launched in 2015 we have invested £7.6m into directly supporting businesses in the Borough's high streets recognising their value to local communities and economies. A further £1.5m into public realm and highway infrastructure improvements all of which has leveraged a further £2.4m of private sector funding.



The phases of the council funded PIOHS programme are summarised below:

- **Phase One** 2015 to 2018. Council’s investment of over £800,000 matched with £400,000 of in-kind and financial contributions from local organisations and community groups. Nearly 30 projects were supported under this phase.
- **Phase Two** 2018 to 2019. Council invested a further £700,000 directly into our borough town High Streets, providing grant funding to bring empty properties back into use and improving shop fronts and facades.
- **Phase Three** commenced in 2019 and is still being delivered. £6.1m to support high street regeneration initiatives informed by 5 new ‘Place Plans’ informed by local ward members and businesses. Investment was targeted at transforming the look and feel of our high streets though improved shop frontages, new signage, eco grants to enable high street businesses to be more sustainable and greener, diversification grants to support high street businesses to adapt their business model to the changing markets, new street furnishings creating an improved public realm area across our borough towns.

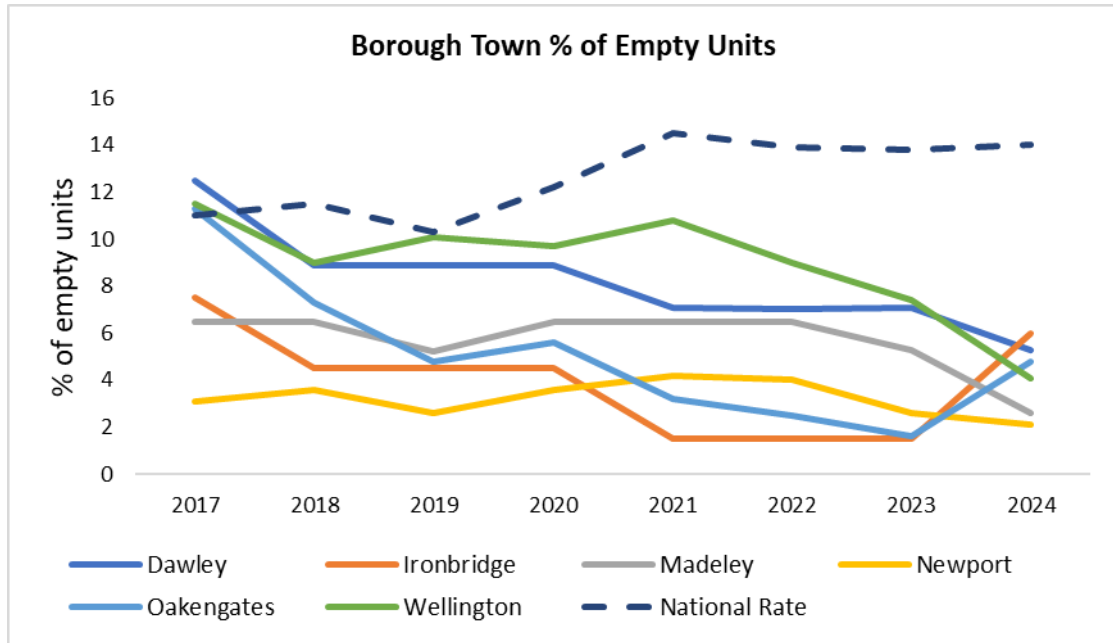
3.3 Tailoring investment through Place Plans with a variety of transformational schemes PIOHS continues to support new business start-ups and help develop business resilience, raising aspirations and encouraging young entrepreneurs to become business focussed.

4.0 Summary of activity to date

4.1 Empty Units

PIOHS programme has had a direct impact on reducing the number of empty premises across the boroughs high streets from an average of 9% to 3.8% over the last 5 years. The Councils intervention and commitment to high streets has seen the borough buck the national trend as the national empty unit rate is 14% (Source: Local Data Company)

Borough Town	Number of Retail Units	Number of Empty Units	% of Empty
Dawley	56	3	5.3%
Ironbridge	66	4	6%
Madeley	76	2	2.6%
Newport	190	4	2.1%
Oakengates	123	6	4.8%
Wellington	216	9	4.1%
Total Units	727	28	3.8%



4.2 Number of Start Ups and Years Trading

Nationally over half of new businesses fail within the first 3 years of trading (Source: Experian). Our grant programme is supporting businesses effectively as we have had only seven close due to poor trading. The Invest Telford business support programme has been invaluable supporting businesses with advice, guidance and growth consultancy. This has helped to provide a comprehensive package of support for local businesses that has helped ensure businesses remain resilient and the borough outperforms the national rate of business closures.

Business Time Trading	Number of Businesses start up's
0-6 Months	3
6 Months +	2
1 Year	21
2 Years	13
3 Years	11
4 Years	11
5 Years	3
6 Years	1
TOTAL START UPS	65

4.3 Series of Case Studies

The little Christmas Shop & Mrs Claus Kitchen - Ironbridge



- 4.4 The Little Christmas Shop and Tearoom is a Christmas Souvenir Shop, selling festive decorations and gifts all year round. Kimberley the owner started The Little Christmas Shop from a small shop on Tontine Hill in Ironbridge in November 2020. The business has grown and in October 2023 they relocated to a new larger premises with the addition of Mrs Klaus's Kitchen.
- 4.5 *"Soon to be our fourth anniversary, since we opened. The business has featured on TV the last two years which is great publicity for my business and Ironbridge. Most recently I was filmed for the 100 days till Christmas message on 16th September on a live show with This Morning"*
- 4.6 Kimberley said *"The Little Christmas Shop was successful in applying for a start-up business grant. The £10,000 grant enabled us to fit out the shop and create a festive atmosphere and without the grant we would have struggled to have been able to start up, so we are very grateful to Telford & Wrekin Council for providing the grant. We were well supported from the Pride in our High Street Team and have since been successful with other grants to help strengthen and support our business. One of the most recent grants enabled us to have a unique Ironbridge Snow Globe made with a miniature Ironbridge inside. These sell so well online and have been given as gifts in Australia, USA, New Zealand as well as widely throughout the United Kingdom.."*



Amandas' Ow Bist'Ro – Dawley

Video for [Amanda's Ow Bis'Ro-Dawley](#)

4.7 Amanda's Ow Bist'Ro is a family run friendly café in the centre of Dawley High Street offering beautiful home cooked food, delicious cakes and a nice warm space to enjoy a friendly smile and conversation. Opening in a smaller shop in October 2021 and since November 2023 occupying a large shop central to the high street.

4.8 Amanda the owner hasn't looked back since opening three years ago with the help of a £10,000 grant from Telford & Wrekin Council. Amanda said *"If I hadn't had the grant I would not have been able to open,"* she added. *"It enabled me to buy a range of catering equipment for the coffee shop and new tables and chairs - which I couldn't have done without the grant."*

4.9 *"The original coffee shop was a great starting point, but we soon realised we needed larger premises. The new café by the bandstand, offers us great space for our café and enables us to host parties, has bigger catering facilities so we offer banquet buffet food."*

4.10



The Little Green Pantry - Wellington

Link to Facebook page - [The Little Green Pantry](#)

- 4.11 The Little Green Pantry is an award-winning first zero waste shop for a greener lifestyle in Wellington wins awards. In 2024 Keli has won Green Start Up of the Year Award for the Midlands.
- 4.12 Keli was successful in her application for a start-up grant of £10,000 and opened The Little Green Pantry in Crown Street in July 2021.
- 4.13 Keli actively promotes sustainable living and works positively to improve lifestyles and habits. Keli said *“The borough council has been very helpful and supportive of businesses in the town, particularly a lot of smaller businesses in association with the High Street and market - it’s promoting Wellington to a high level. The pride in our community has re-emerged and there has been a lot of investment into the town - I see a lot of new people coming in and people are working hard to encourage more people to use Wellington and keep it great.”*
- 4.14 *“Accessing the grant programme has been vital to my business and I was able to access a diversification grant post covid which enabled me to purchase a nut butter machine which is used every day in the shop and taken to Food Festivals, it’s extremely popular.”*

5.0 Communications Activity

- 5.1 There is an ongoing programme of marketing and communications supporting our PIOHS programme. Social Media is frequently used to engage with our high streets and residents of the Borough along with Totally Telford the councils magazine delivered to outlets and households. Our branding ‘*TW High Streets Love Local*’ . has been a very successful tool to engage with local businesses, community groups and residents. Over 534 posts on social channels reaching over 2.5m active users.

6.0 High Street Heroes Awards

- 6.1 In the run up to Small Business Saturday (an annual event – 7 December 2024) we will be announcing our latest *High Street Heroes*, to date we have awarded over 100 High Street Hero Awards.



6.2 The awards are voted for by the public – voting for the best shops/services on our borough town high streets. We have already received over 920 votes for our next High Street Hero's 2024 awards.

7.0 Broader Impact of PIOHS programme

Façade Improvement Programme

The façade improvement programme saw almost 100 properties transformed across the borough high streets. Making our high streets more attractive and inviting for visitors and residents. Heritage colours and period features were reintroduced into Ironbridge and Wellington and we were able to transform the conservation area to attract new visitors and footfall to our high streets.



Shops in the Square, Ironbridge Before & After Façade Improvements

7.1 Place Plan Projects

There have been several improvements schemes delivered as part of the Place Plan activity across the Borough. Many of the projects for this most recent phase concentrated on Madeley and Dawley high streets although investment did go to Newport and Ironbridge. Improvements included:-

- Nightclub exterior refurbishment in Newport – supported by match funding from owners
- Improvements in and around the bandstand on Dawley High Street
- War memorial improvements in Madeley & Ironbridge
- Planting schemes in Ironbridge & Madeley to improve the look and feel of the high street
- Creation of a catering facility in Dawley Town Park to help attract new visitors and to encourage existing visitors to stay longer
- Car Park Improvements in Ironbridge
- Support for the creation of a permanent Post Office in Dawley
- Supporting specialist housing provision across out towns.

7.2 Oakengates & Wellington towns secured funding from both Towns Fund and Levelling Up Funding all of which helps to further enhance provision in our High

Pride in Our High Streets

Streets. The grant programme will help businesses start-up's in some of the new units that will be created as part of these works. The images below show some of the wider improvement works now underway on the high street within Wellington Market, Limes Walk in Oakengates, The Orbit, 2 Walker Street and vacant buildings in the wider Wellington town centre.



Limes Walk, Oakengates



Wellington Market



2 Walker street, Wellington



1 Walker Street, Wellington

8.0 Future of PIOHS Programme

8.1 The priority is to continue to drive footfall to the high street to boost local spend. To support we are providing a further £1m to develop an ongoing package of measures that we believe will continue to be beneficial to every borough town including:

- A further business / start-up grant funding programmes.
- Façade improvements in borough towns as well as wider areas
- Grants for town and parish councils
- A Treasure Hunt – Popular on many high streets throughout the United Kingdom. Enjoyed by the whole family and it combines technology with outdoor adventure which will involve walking the whole of every high street, so this in turn will increase footfall and encourage local spend on our high streets
- High street initiatives – a programme of initiatives to get people into high streets and encourage footfall. This will include initiatives such as ‘selfie station’s’ and working in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to develop.
- Facebook High Street – Further developing the Telford & Wrekin Virtual High Street page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/telfordandwrekinvirtualhighstreet> using it as a platform to promote products, events, national days, services and business and retail offers. Businesses will be encouraged to use this page as the go-to place to promote their latest offers and activity. It will be re-branded under *‘TW High Streets- Love Local’*

9.0 Alternative Options

9.1 In the absence of the PIOHS programme the boroughs high streets would have experienced continued economic decline compounded by the changes in retail habits and the impact of the pandemic which has accelerated the move to online

activity. The likely alternative to council intervention through PIOHS would have been:

- Increased levels of empty shop units
- An increase in uses such as hot food takeaways, vape shops and betting shops
- Increased ASB issues due to declining footfall in centres
- Declining quality of infrastructure and public realm
- Lack of investment in buildings by private landlords and tenants

10.0 Key Risks

10.1 The key risks to the programme include:

- Potential for business failures – this has been very low to date.
- Footfall continues to decline – evidence shows that footfall and economic activity is increasing
- Future economic shocks (recessions / further pandemics) impact high streets necessitating large scale intervention – the programme has helped demonstrate the resilience of the high street and residents desire to have good quality locations to meet and socialise that they can be proud of.

11.0 Council Priorities

11.1 PIOHS contributes toward the following Council priorities:

- every child, young person and adult lives well in their community
- everyone benefits from a thriving economy
- all neighbourhoods are a great place to live

12.0 Financial Implications

12.2 Capital funding for Phase 4 of PIOHS an additional £1m is available within the Capital Investment Fund of the approved Capital programme. Finance will support allocations of this budget through the Financial Monitoring process to ensure expenditure is of a capital nature.

13.0 Legal and HR Implications

13.1 The UK subsidy control regime enables UK public authorities, including local authorities, to give subsidies that are tailored to their local needs, and that drive economic growth. This will need to be considered when providing support which may give a financial advantage. Legal advice will be provided as and when requested in this regard and Legal Services have developed a standard form of grant agreement that will be used in each award of funding. The Subsidy Control Act provides the framework for the regime

13.2 Any decision made by the Authority can be subject to challenge in respect of its reasonableness or lawfulness. Therefore, a robust and transparent assessment procedure is required so as to avoid challenge of either the process followed or recommendations made by Officers and the Decision Makers.

13.3 The proposals contained in this report can be delivered using existing resources.

14.0 Ward Implications

14.1 The PIOHS programme impacts wards borough wide as residents can apply for grants for works in borough towns but may live in adjoining wards.

15.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

15.1 The programme has helped to create vibrant and economically active high streets. This has helped to:

- Improve health outcomes by ensuring that high streets remain centres for shopping and commercial activity as opposed to areas seeing an increase in unhealthy uses such as hot food takeaways, vape shops and betting shops.
- Better quality high streets help create places that people wish to visit, especially more vulnerable residents, leading to opportunities to socialise, create communities, breakdown barriers and reduce isolation and loneliness.
- The programme has helped to create 388 new jobs, these are residents that may have otherwise been out of work and economically inactive. New, local employment opportunities help to raise aspirations and provide people an opportunity to improve their economic wellbeing.

16.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

16.1 The programme has helped create safer, stronger communities and has helped improve high streets that serve a range of communities across the borough.

17.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

17.1 The programme has helped invest in new businesses that occupy premises that would have otherwise been vacant. This helps bring properties back into economic use. Further investment in properties by landlords and business owners help to improve the energy efficiency of buildings supported by our Eco Grants.

18.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	29/10/2024	29/10/2024	RP
Finance	29/10/2024	29/10/2024	DR