



# **Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan - Consultation 2022**

## **Change in our town centres**

Town centres across the UK are facing unprecedented challenges. Changes in how we shop, in particular the growth in internet shopping, has increased competition for town centre businesses and many multiple retailers and service providers have closed town centre outlets. These are trends that have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Applying for funding to improve town centres**

Cheshire East Council (CEC) is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all town centres within the borough. When opportunities to apply for funding for town centre improvements arise, such as from central government, it is beneficial to have clear town centre plans already in place to support bids for funding.

## **Creating Town Centre Vitality Plans**

With future funding opportunities in mind, Cheshire East Council has commissioned an expert team to produce bespoke Town Centre Vitality Plans (TCVP) for each of the borough's nine Key Service Centres (KSC).

These draft plans are about establishing an agreed set of priorities and are not a commitment to finance the delivery of proposals - funding would need to be sought once plans are agreed as and when opportunities for funding arise and resources allow. Having an agreed set of priority projects is however generally an important step in being able to bid for funding. It is also important to ensure that any resources which can be identified are used on actions that will have the greatest impact and that all parties with an interest in supporting town centres can work towards a common set of ambitions.

## **Aims and objectives**

The aim is that the Town Centre Vitality Plans will provide a clear sense of direction for each Service Centre. They will also identify initiatives to support each Service Centre, as well as reflect the unique opportunities, specific challenges and local groups/stakeholders of each.

They will be:

- Bespoke in nature, based on the individual circumstances of each town

- Cross functional and seek to recommend a practical, realistic set of priority actions for supporting the vitality and viability of each town centre
- Informed and tested by relevant policy and strategy, local stakeholder views, relevant research, commercial markets and spatial considerations

## Consultation on the Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan

We would now like your feedback on the Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan.

You can submit your comments either by:

- Completing this short survey and return it to us using the freepost envelope to Freepost Plus RSJJ-YTHC-CHZK, Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ
- Emailing [macclesfieldregenerationteam@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:macclesfieldregenerationteam@cheshireeast.gov.uk)
- Writing to Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ

Please give your feedback by **Tuesday 8 November 2022**.

Once the consultation is complete, results will be analysed and used to finalise the Town Centre Vitality Plans, before they are considered for approval by local Town and Parish Councils, and Cheshire East Council.

If you have any queries about the consultation, or if you would like to receive this questionnaire in an alternative format or submit your response in a different way, please contact the Research and Consultation team at Cheshire East Council.

### Your confidentiality is assured

Any personal information you supply will remain strictly confidential and will be used in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. To find out more about how we use your information see our Privacy Policy enclosed in this survey pack.

### Poynton Priority Areas for Intervention

The Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan sets out the Priority Areas for Intervention in Poynton, and the Potential Actions that will be taken to achieve these.

The remainder of this survey lists each of the suggested areas for focused intervention and asks how they might be improved.

**Please note the numbers do not denote any priority order but are for ease of reference.**

# 1. Making more of community assets

## What

There are a number of community assets in the Centre including buildings and open space - some of which are clustered around a large car park. Consideration should be given as to how these assets could be better utilised to attract footfall into the Centre and serve the needs of the local community, giving more reasons for visitors to stay longer.

## How

- The Civic Hall is already a vibrant centre offering a wider range of activities but consideration should be given as to how this and other public buildings and land in the area could be used to host an enhanced programme of events including larger events utilising the car parking and open space in the area.
- A number of other Town Councils are taking responsibility for community assets and using any income generated from this to invest in the centre. CEC is willing to engage with Town Council and community interest groups to discuss whether there is an opportunity to transfer assets to be run locally
- Actions could include:
  - Enhancing the public realm around the civic hall to allow for temporary market and event space and dwell space in-between events.
  - Improvement of pedestrian links that provide stronger corridors from Park Lane, through the civic hall and into Poynton Sports Club to reconnect the spaces.
  - Flexibility of existing parking bays could allow for expansion of events space without obstructing access to facilities in the area

**How important do you think making more of community assets is for the vitality of Poynton?** *Please circle one answer only*

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

*We do not believe it is possible to make "more of community assets" as they do not exist.*

**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Making more of community assets?** *Please write in below*

*The only community assets in the Centre are the Civic Hall, library and a small section of the car park.*

The remainder of the car park, all other buildings and Poynton Sports Club are owned privately and are not community assets. The Town Council would ask Cheshire East to clarify what community assets it believes are available for the Town Council to request to be transferred.

The Civic Hall is already owned by the Town Council and is a vibrant centre offering facilities and rooms to the community.

The Town Council is not aware of any assets which would be capable of being transferred to either the Town Council or community interest groups.

The Town Council is unclear how assets which are privately owned can be used by the Town Council to attract footfall. Any events would have to be permission of the land and building owners.

Poynton Sports Club is a privately owned facility and has been earmarked for housing development. The Sports Club do run some events. The Town Council would encourage better pedestrian links to all areas of the Town

Car parking is extremely limited in the Town. Waitrose have a licence agreement for the short stay parking using the parking bays flexibly to host events would create a parking deficit that could not be addressed with alternative parking.

## 2. Connecting Green Assets and Encouraging cycling and walking

### What

Poynton has a number of good quality green spaces within its centre catchment - Poynton Park, Deva Park, and Brecon Park. There is an opportunity to better promote sustainable movement between these & better connect them with the town centre.

Whilst Poynton is in an envious position with regard to the look, feel and quality of its town centre streets, on the main roads outside the town core, conditions for people on foot can be challenging. An example of this is the connection between the town centre and railway station.

Poynton Round is a well-used asset, but could be improved. It has the potential to be an exemplar connection - stitching together residential areas with high-quality green active travel infrastructure.

### How

- Events such as markets, festivals, carnivals and other cultural performances could be held in the various parks. A programme of events would help coordinate events across the spaces
- Enhanced public realm along Chester Road would provide safer cycling/pedestrian routes between the station and the centre
- A wayfinding strategy that better connects the green assets
- Change of materials on routes to allow accessibility by all.
- Explore options for improving links along Chester Road, London Road (North & South) and Dickens Lane
- Develop a detailed strategy for the phased improvement of Poynton Round.
- Introduce new pedestrian crossings on Chester Rd.
- Review of on-street parking on key routes through the town centre to ensure balance of street space for pedestrians
- If redevelopment proposals come forward for Poynton Sports Club ensure strong direct walking and cycling links with town centre services such as the library and to any re-provided sports/leisure facilities

### How important do you think Connecting Green Assets and Encouraging cycling and walking is for the vitality of Poynton?

*Please circle one answer only*

- **Very important ✓**
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Connecting Green Assets and Encouraging cycling and walking? *Please write in below***

The Town Council is keen to encourage cycling and walking. We have contributed to the possible schemes put forward in the Cheshire East Transport Plan which would encourage cycling and walking. These include schemes on Chester Road and London Road North and South. The Town Council would welcome any improvements to existing paths including those which make up the Poynton Round. We currently work with the Poynton Footpaths Group and the Cheshire East Public Rights of Way Officer to make improvements to individual footpaths which are in a poor condition.

Improvements to the public realm in the shared space are urgently required. The lack of maintenance has meant a significant deterioration in the surfaces in the shared space area which impacts on pedestrians and cyclists. The Town's infrastructure also needs attention, for example surface water flooding after heavy rain in a number of areas in the Town due to poor and ineffective drainage.

It is extremely disappointing that Cheshire East have currently embarked upon a proposal to improve the flood resilience of Poynton Pool with a scheme which could lead to the loss of up to 88 trees. Poynton Pool is an important historical, green and amenity asset. The community derives substantial benefit from this Poynton Pool and the Town Council believes that everything should be done to preserve this important landscape historically and ecologically to secure Poynton Pool as an amenity asset for future generations.

### 3. Mobilising Poynton's Community

#### What

Poynton already has an impressive network of local community groups who support the town and its amenities. The Town Council is also supporting businesses to network through the establishment of the Poynton for Business website which has a directory of over 320 businesses. Having created a platform to engage with local businesses the key now is to harness this into encouraging them to collaborate to generate new revenue opportunities and to determine how businesses could give back more to the Centre and its community.

#### How

- Wilmslow Town Council and Groundwork are testing the appetite to establish a Business Improvement District (BID). However a lighter approach could be pursued in Poynton to identify potential actions which different sectors could support the Council with. As part of their commitment to supporting their local communities businesses may be willing to offer
  - Sponsorship
  - Materials
  - Technical support
  - Volunteers
- Businesses networking could also identify "themes" where businesses can drive opportunities forward e.g. retailers and F&B hosting a fashion show or beauty events.
- Businesses could also establish loyalty schemes to support shoppers to stay local.
- Poynton also has active community groups and these important resources should be utilised to support the delivery of the Action Plan

**How important do you think mobilising Poynton's Community is for the vitality of Poynton?** *Please circle one answer only*

- **Very important ✓**
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Mobilising Poynton's Community?** *Please write in below*

The Town Council has set up a business directory and is currently looking at how it works with businesses in the Town.

## 4. Raising Poynton's Profile

### What

Poynton has a number of websites – Town Council, Business and Community - showcasing the town and whilst this is a great start there are ways in which the town's offer could be better promoted to attract more local residents, workers, visitors and tourists.

### How

- Consideration should be given as to whether existing websites could be combined into a single platform providing information for local residential, businesses and visitors. Content could be added to really showcase the town including profiles of local businesses (including individuals to make it more personal), local walks, cycle routes etc
- To support increased footfall on the website it would be worth considering which other websites it could be linked up with such as other centres in the area or with centres that are linked by cycling or walking and local visitor attractions. The website could also be linked to other partner websites including CEC and Visit Chester and Marketing Cheshire.
- Reviewing the newly revamped website for Wilmslow ([www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk](http://www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk)) may provide inspiration for energising Poynton's website.
- Consideration should also be given to how to make more of social media. For example tapping into cycling and walking groups discussions to encourage them to visit Poynton as part of their journeys. Encouraging local groups to actively promote what's on in Poynton.
- Other mechanisms to raise the profile of the centre could include:
  - Improved signage (physical and virtual via app/ QR code) to stop people just passing through
  - Establish Town Ambassadors
  - Turn the heritage leaflet into an interactive trail around the town showcasing buildings of historic value or interesting people or historic events. This can be real or virtual embracing technology (Apps or QR codes)
  - Ensure that key messages from the Vitality Plan is fed into the Visitor Economy Strategy that is being prepared for Cheshire East

**How important do you think raising Poynton's Profile is for the vitality of Poynton? Please circle one answer only**

- **Very important ✓**
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know



**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Raising Poynton's Profile? *Please write in below***

The Town Council is already working on a Welcome to Poynton leaflet with information for new residents. The Town Council will consider the other suggestions.

The Poynton Arts Festival will take place in Summer 2023 and will provide an important opportunity to raise Poynton's profile.

## 5. Expanding the Events Programme

### What

Pre COVID-19 there was a good number of events taking place in Poynton - Christmas Fest, Summer Fest, folk nights, food and drinks events, the Poynton Show and Party in the Park. In addition the Civic Hall a range of classes and events bringing people into the town in the evenings or at weekends. Following the ending of COVID restrictions the events programme should be reinvigorated.

### How / Where

- Re-establish and revamp the pre COVID event programme to support increased footfall in the town.
- Linked to revamping the Centre's website, the events should be promoted through the website and social media and those of partner organisations.
- Scope exists to work with other centres to develop an integrated programme of themed events which could target audiences that are currently not coming to Poynton
- Participation of walking and cycling has been strong during COVID and the extensive networks that are close to the Centre should be targeted to encourage more visitors to use the Centre's amenities as part of their cycles or walks

**How important do you think expanding the Events Programme is for the vitality of Poynton?** *Please circle one answer only*

- Very important
- **Fairly important** ✓
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Expanding the Events Programme?** *Please write in below*

The majority of pre covid events have already been re-established in 2022 or there are plans to bring them back in 2023. Events are already advertised on the Town Council's website. The Town Council has a newsletter which also advertises local events. Preparation is currently underway for the Poynton Arts Festival which will take place in summer 2023.

## 6. Tackling voids

### What

The attractiveness of parts of Poynton is undermined by vacancies.

### How

- The ability to identify new retail occupiers has been made even harder by the impact of Covid as well as change in the retail sector. Instead of focusing on new retail occupiers the focus should be on encouraging leisure and F&B operators to open in the Centre.
- Repurposing vacant units to offer flexible/managed workspace - for those that want to work closer to home could support the take up of vacant units.
- Repurposing smaller units on the edges of the Centre back into residential. Given the town's amenities and its status as a dementia friendly town where buildings or sites become available consideration should be given to the potential for older persons accommodation.
- Meanwhile uses (until development can happen) and pop up stores or activities can support footfall and allow potential occupiers to test the area.
- Other short term solutions which brighten up vacant shop fronts include "wrappers" promoting the town and its businesses or using vacant shop windows to showcase their products.

**How important do you think tackling voids is for the vitality of Poynton? Please circle one answer only**

- **Very important ✓**
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

**Do you have any comments to make about the Priority Area for Intervention - Tackling voids? Please write in below**

It is noted that the image of empty shops used isn't in Poynton.

There are a small number of voids in Poynton. Generally, occupancy is good. However, some properties have been empty long term despite approaches being made to the property holders by other businesses. The Town Council would like to see Cheshire East undertake action to bring empty properties back into use, especially where it is known that demand exists. The Town already has a vibrant F&B offering.

## **Cross centre recommendations**

### **1. Appointment of CEC Centre Champion**

The identification of a nominated officer (go to person/champion) within CEC management team for each of the Centres who would understand local priorities for the Centre and would support them to access appropriate officers within key departments and also would seek to unblock issues

### **2. Creation of a Centres Forum**

Establishment of forum where key representatives from each of the centres could come together on a regular basis, sometimes with input from CEC, to collaborate, share progress and best practice and discuss issues with scope to drive economies of scale/value for money.

### **3. Centre Focused Meetings in CEC**

The process of preparing the Vitality Plans has involved internal workshops with relevant department leads within CEC to ensure that all departments are considering challenges and opportunities in the round rather than just in terms of their individual responsibility. It would be beneficial to continue to hold more regular Centre focused workshops.

### **4. Streamlining maintenance of public realm and greenspace**

Whilst there is a recognition that CEC budgets are under severe pressure, there is a desire to see improved maintenance of public spaces in town centres. It is recommended that further engagement should take place to agree how the resources of CEC, the Town Council and wider stakeholders could be targeted to support maintenance in town centres. Work to establish a more comprehensive schedule of local assets in each centre and who is responsible for their maintenance should be the starting point.

### **5. Increasing importance of sustainability**

Sustainability must be a concept that is considered in every aspect of proposed actions to minimise their carbon footprint and maximise their positive benefits for the local area and its community.

### **6. Improved platform for communicating activities**

The preparation of Vitality Plans has demonstrated that whilst much effort goes in to proactively trying to support all town centres many stakeholders will not be aware of all these efforts. Consideration should be given to how to amplify to more local residents, shoppers, visitors and businesses what is going on through a variety of channels and to ensure that these are also linked to other key partners for example CEC and the other centres (so collectively they reinforcing each other's profiles)

### **7. Enhanced engagement with local businesses**

There is a significant benefit to the centres and their businesses to collaborating. There is an increasing recognition by businesses, especially corporates, for the need to

support their local communities (Corporate Social Responsibility). This can be in the form of grants, offering expertise or encouraging their employees to volunteer. Even smaller businesses often want to give back to the communities in which they operate. This can be in the form of materials and/or specialist expertise (e.g. marketing) .

### **8. Greater ownership of community assets**

A couple of Town Councils have taken responsibility for their community assets (both in terms of ownership and/or management). CEC is willing to engage with each of the Town and Parish Councils to discuss whether there could be benefits from greater local ownership of local assets. A process is in place to support this to happen. There is also scope for centres who are already doing this to share pro and cons with other centres (via the proposed Centres Forum).

**How important do you think the cross centre recommendations are for the vitality of Poynton? *Please circle one answer only***

- Very important
- Fairly important
- **Not very important ✓**
- Not at all important
- Not sure / Don't know

**Do you have any comments to make about the cross centre recommendations? *Please write in below***

As communication with Cheshire East officers can be difficult a nominated officer within the management team would be beneficial if that person was able to access appropriate officer.

The Town Council would support the creation of a Centres Forum and Centre Focused meetings within CE.

We have made repeated requests for a list of Cheshire East assets in the Town but have received no update on progress towards the preparation of the list. The Town's infrastructure also needs attention, for example surface water flooding after heavy rain outside Panache and the entrance to Willow Close.

See previous comments in relation to community assets.

## Final comments on the Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the **Alsager** Town Centre Vitality Plan covers appropriate areas of focus? *Please circle one answer only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- **Tend to disagree** ✓
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / Not sure

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the **Alsager** Town Centre Vitality Plan is clear? *Please circle one answer only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- **Tend to disagree** ✓
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / Not sure

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the **Alsager** Town Centre Vitality Plan will be successful? *Please circle one answer only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- **Tend to disagree** ✓
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / Not sure

**If you feel anything is missing from the plan, or have any other comments, please explain these below:** *Please write in below*

The Town Council would welcome and support officers visiting Poynton in order to understand the issues that need to be addressed and how the Vitality Plan priorities will only have limited impact on the Town.

In particular the Town Council is concerned that the Poynton Neighbourhood Plan should have underpinned the Vitality Plan and this does not appear to be the case.

Commented [HB1]: This should be Poynton and not Alsager

## About you

It would help us to check that we are providing services fairly if you could answer the questions below. Information you give will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people. You do not need to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

**Which of the following best describes how you are you responding to this survey:** *Please circle one answer only*

- On behalf of a group, organisation or club
- On behalf of a local business
- As an individual (e.g. local resident)
- As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor
- As a council employee / A professional
- Other (please specify):

**If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation, club, Ward or Parish / Town Council area please state the name and postcode in the box below (you do not need to complete the rest of the 'About you' section).** *Please write in below*

Name of group, organisation, club, Ward or Parish / Town Council:

Postcode:

**What is your gender identity?** *Please circle one answer only*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below):

**What age group do you belong to?** *Please circle one answer only*

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 and over
- Prefer not to say

**What is your ethnic origin?** *Please circle one answer only*

- White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish
- Any other White background
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian

- Asian / Asian British
- Black African / Caribbean / Black British
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below):

**Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age. *Please circle one answer only***

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to us using the freepost envelope to Freepost Plus RSJJ-YTHC-CHZK, Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ.**