

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 09 March 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	High Streets Task Force Support for Bury	
<b>Report of</b>	Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth	

## Summary

This report highlights that Bury, as one of 68 local authorities, has been selected for the newly announced support from the High Streets Task Force. The Task Force will provide a package of direct expert advice and support to local authorities, communities and businesses to deliver long-term transformation to towns and cities in England.

The Task Force has already been informed that the Council would like to accept their offer of support and they are now asking the Council to select an area that would benefit from support to overcome its specific challenges and unlock its potential.

It is proposed that Whitefield centre should be selected as the focus for this support.

## Recommendation(s)

That Members agree to the selection of Whitefield centre as the focus for the receipt of support and to inform the High Streets Task Force accordingly.

## Reasons for recommendation(s)

The reasons for this recommendation are set out in the report below.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

The Borough's other key centres of Bury, Radcliffe, Prestwich, Ramsbottom and Tottington were also considered and rejected.

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## Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Crispian Logue

Position: Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning and Regulation)

Department: Business, Growth and Infrastructure

E-mail: c.logue@bury.gov.uk

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The High Streets Task Force was commissioned by government in 2019 as part of its Plan for the High Street. Run by the Institute of Place Management on behalf of government, the Task Force brings together a range of organisations that specialise in repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring places.

- 1.2 In selecting local authorities that would benefit from support, the Task Force has used research on the likely impact of COVID-19 alongside national indicators of deprivation and inequality to produce this shortlist of areas that would most benefit from support for their local place making decisions. Bury is one of 68 local authorities that has been selected for the newly announced support from the High Streets Task Force.
- 1.3 The Task Force will provide a package of direct expert advice and support to local authorities, communities and businesses to deliver long-term transformation to towns and cities in England. As part of this support, the Task Force will work directly with local authority staff, providing advice, resources and training, and includes local community and business organisations in its consultation about future transformation plans for nominated locations.
- 1.4 The Task Force has designed its direct support programme to deliver a range of benefits that will be valuable to local transformation work, including:
- Expert advice on local plans, enabling the creation of the best strategies for transformation and investment;
  - Facilitation of a local leadership and stakeholder session to help build consensus, good will, and momentum behind the plans;
  - Training for place leaders and development staff, as well as local stakeholders, based on the latest research on high streets, which can help build capacity for longer-term impact;
  - Resources and inspiration for local stakeholders to inform actions and involvement in place making; and
  - Boosting trust and confidence in local plans and bids by evidencing collaboration with Task Force support and consideration of good practice.

## **2. PROPOSED SELECTION FOR BURY**

- 2.1 The Task Force has already been informed that the Council would like to accept their offer of support and they are now asking the Council to select a high street, town or city centre area to receive direct Task Force support aimed at overcoming specific challenges and unlocking potential.
- 2.2 It is proposed that Whitefield centre should be Bury's selection as the focus for the receipt of support from the High Streets Task Force.
- 2.3 Significant work and expertise has already been focused on the planning and regeneration of other key centres on the Borough. In particular, work has recently been undertaken on:
- A new Masterplan for Bury Town Centre;
  - a Strategic Regeneration Framework for Radcliffe;
  - a Town Centre Plan for Ramsbottom; and

- progressing a major town centre regeneration project for Prestwich town centre.
- 2.4 Whilst this work is much needed, it is important that other centres receive the support necessary to enable them to fulfil their own potential. Tottington and Whitefield are the other key centres within the Borough.
- 2.5 Whitefield is in relatively close proximity and is well connected to the larger town centres of Prestwich and Radcliffe – including connectivity via Metrolink. As such, Radcliffe and Prestwich represent reasonable alternatives for Whitefield residents wishing to access town centre shops, services and other facilities and the attractiveness of these centres will be likely to increase once regeneration plans are implemented.
- 2.6 Tottington, on the other hand, tends to function on a more self-contained basis, serving the day-to-day needs of local residents. It is a more isolated centre and it doesn't have the level of connectivity to larger, alternative centres, as is the case with Whitefield.
- 2.7 In addition, unlike Tottington, Whitefield includes significant areas of deprivation in the Besses area of the town. As mentioned above, deprivation and inequality were key factors in the Task Force's local authority shortlisting and selection process and it would be useful for the support to explore whether there are opportunities to help to address deprivation issues in Besses through activity within Whitefield centre.
- 2.8 On balance, therefore, it is considered that Whitefield represents a better fit with the Task Force's selection criteria and that it will present more complex challenges for the Task Force in their consideration of opportunities to unlock the potential of the centre.

### **3. TIMELINE**

- 3.1 Once informed of Bury's selected location, the next step in receiving further direct support will be a visit to this selected location from one of the Task Force's appointed experts. The Task Force has scheduled this 'Unlocking your Place Potential' visit to take place from January 2023 and further support services will be provided based on analysis generated from this visit.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 3.2 The recommendations are contained at the front of this report.

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#### **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

The selection of Whitefield centre as the focus for support from the High Streets Task Force will assist the centre in overcoming its specific challenges and unlocking its potential.

The outcomes that can be achieved will help towards delivering key priorities within the 'Let's Do It' Strategy, particularly those around the economic recovery and regeneration of our key centres, including Whitefield.

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### **Equality Impact and Considerations:**

An Equality Analysis has been undertaken in respect of this proposal and the outcomes of this analysis are available upon request.

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### **Environmental Impact and Considerations:**

Support from the High Streets Task Force should provide advice on strengthening the role, function and attractiveness of Whitefield centre and, as a result, reduce the need for residents to travel to other locations to access shops, services and other town centre facilities.

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### **Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:**

<b>Risk / opportunity</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
None identified.	

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### **Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications at this stage, supporting legal advice will be provided and further consideration given to governance arrangements following the task force's visit to Bury.

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### **Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications at this stage associated with taking up the offer of support from the High Streets Task Force and the additional capacity and expertise is to be welcomed. Following their advice and support there will be recommendations that may require additional funding but a report will be brought to Cabinet at this time outlining any future resource requirements

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### **Background papers:**

Further information is available from the High Streets Task Force web site at <https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/>

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>