



Andover Town Council

Item No.

To **note** a report on work done with TVBC to improve the Town Centre and make it safer and more welcoming.

16

Produced for: Full Council

By: Acting Town Clerk

Date of Report: 12 June 2025

Background:

CLRs Neate, Bird, Horsnell and the Acting Town Clerk met with Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) and the BID to discuss a potential solution to the issue of the dangerous and degrading and overall appearance of buildings in Andover Town Centre. This was prompted after pieces of a building fell in the town in January. Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) courteously initiated contact with both organisations to arrange a meeting and discuss the situation in a constructive manner.

[Andover's breaking buildings: Owners and council in the spotlight | Andover Advertiser](#)

Timeline: High Street Regeneration Discussions and Actions

Date	Summary of Event
25 February 2025	Initial exploratory meeting held. Cllr Andrew Horsnell had previously shared information on the regeneration of Barnstaple Town Centre, an area he was familiar with. The meeting aimed to bring together all organisations involved in Town Centre oversight, including those who had raised concerns (via social media and emails to TVBC), to discuss solutions for the dangerous condition of buildings in the High Street. TVBC Officers provided updates on ongoing works (e.g., the Ladbrokes building) and introduced the idea of a central improvement fund for the High Street, seeking initial feedback.
31 March 2025	TVBC confirmed it had secured central government funding and would present it to Cabinet on 9 April . TVBC asked for in-principle support for the fund. ATC Officers clarified that any financial commitment would require Full Council approval . TVBC noted that a contribution from ATC would be welcomed but was not a prerequisite . The BID and ATC agreed to consult with relevant bodies.
Early April 2025	The Acting Town Clerk contacted the CEO of Barnstaple Town Council for further insight into their High Street improvement scheme. It was confirmed that the scheme was led by North Devon Borough Council and had successfully supported 66 properties, 28 of which were in Barnstaple. A report was submitted to Andover Town Council's (ATC's) Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee to update members and gather opinions. The intention was to take the matter to Full Council on 23 April , following TVBC's Cabinet decision and P&R's review.
9 April 2025	ATC's P&R Committee reviewed the matter. However, no concrete information had been received from TVBC or, at this stage Barnstable, regarding grant administration or associated costs. Discussions indicated that a financial contribution from ATC would not be supported. The Acting Town Clerk later confirmed that ATC lacked specific powers to contribute financially, but emphasized the importance of continuing dialogue with TVBC in support of making the High Street safer.

23 April 2025	TVBC Cabinet approved the grant. ATC received a report at Full Council. Due to the continued lack of detailed information, no resolution was made, and the matter was deferred until further information became available.
May 2025	TVBC Officers contacted the Acting Town Clerk to ask about the outcome of the Full Council meeting. Upon learning the item had been deferred, TVBC expressed a desire to proceed with communications and launch of the scheme. They asked if ATC could be included in the messaging as having worked with TVBC on the solution. As the next Full Council meeting was scheduled after the scheme's launch, the Acting Town Clerk consulted all Councillors via email. The majority responded positively , supporting ATC's inclusion in the communications.
June 2025	TVBC shared proposed wording for the communications around the scheme's launch. This was immediately circulated to Councillors, in line with the previous consultation and to ensure all members were informed.
2 June 2025	Cllrs Neate, Hardstaff meet with the Acting Town Clerk to discuss implication of the TVBC post. Agreed to add Andover Town Council (ATC) to the publication as there was no financial risk involved.
4 June 2025	The scheme was officially launched , with communications stating it was delivered "in collaboration with ATC and the BID."

Commitment to the Business Plan

Discussions with TVBC were undertaken to understand what was being asked of the Council and were completed in line with the adopted Business Plan that was agreed at the Full Council meeting on the 19 March 2025::

C409/03/25 Members returned to the substantive motion. RESOLVED: FOR – 8, AGAINST – 0, ABSTENTIONS – 3, that with effect from 1st April 2025, the revised Business Plan for 2025/2027 be adopted.

From the adopted [Business Plan](#) :

1. Help make Andover a welcoming, safe, and well cared for town.
- 1.7 Businesses engagement and reviewing how we engage with businesses in the Business Improvement District and beyond the town area

Legislation giving power to work with other authorities to deliver services that benefit the community:

Local Government Act 1972 s136 ¹, Open Spaces Act 1906 s16 ²

Issues Encountered

- **Lack of Concrete Information:**
The absence of detailed and timely information from TVBC and Barnstable significantly delayed constructive discussion at ATC Full Council. This hindered the Council's ability to make informed decisions regarding the project. ATC acknowledge that TVBC has the benefit of processes that are more nimble than ATC and as a consequence were able to move and commit with more speed.
- **Compressed Timeframe:**
The tight schedule did not allow for delays in decision-making. As a result, only factual information could be shared by TVBC regarding ATC's involvement. No formal decision could be made at Full Council regarding the further contribution of member or officer time to the project.

¹ [Local Government Act 1972](#)

² [Open Spaces Act 1906](#)

Benefits to Andover Town Council

- **Collaborative Engagement:**
ATC was invited to work alongside Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) on a project directly benefiting residents of the parish, reinforcing its role as a proactive stakeholder in local development.
- **Strengthened Inter-Council Relationships:**
The process helped build and strengthen working relationships between ATC and TVBC, laying the groundwork for future collaboration on shared priorities.
- **Positive Public Perception:**
ATC's involvement positioned the Council as actively engaged in efforts to improve public safety and the condition of the High Street, enhancing its reputation among residents and local stakeholders.

Financial Implications

- **No Financial Commitment or Risk:**
There were no financial implications or associated risks for Andover Town Council (ATC) in engaging with this project.
- **Early Clarity on Funding Position:**
It was established early in the process that there was neither appetite nor support within ATC for making a financial contribution to the scheme.
- **Legal and Governance Considerations:**
It was confirmed that ATC did not have the statutory powers to contribute financially to the scheme. However, there was broad support for the Council's continued involvement in discussions aimed at improving and making the town centre safer.

Lessons Learned

- **Timing Limited Formal Engagement:**
Due to the accelerated timeline of the project—further intensified by press and social media coverage of the falling masonry—Andover Town Council (ATC) was unable to hold constructive, formal discussions at Full Council. Consequently, no direct instruction could be issued regarding the Council's involvement in the project.
- **Good Faith Participation:**
ATC entered discussions with TVBC in good faith, to understand the potential solutions, viewing them as exploratory and aimed at strengthening inter-council collaboration. Had the discussions evolved into a concrete proposal, they would have been brought back to Full Council for formal approval and direction. However, the speed of developments did not allow for this process.
- **Reporting and Communication Challenges:**
Reports outlining the basis and content of the discussions were submitted to both Full Council and the Policy & Resources Committee. Unfortunately, these reports were not considered suitable for discussion or resolution at the time, limiting ATC's ability to respond formally.
- **Delegated Authority Used Appropriately:**
Given the absence of financial risk and the potential reputational risk of **not** supporting the scheme, a decision was made under delegated authority to approve the inclusion of ATC in the scheme's launch communications.

This action was taken in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation 4.1:

"In the event of any matter arising which requires an urgent decision notwithstanding delegated powers granted by paragraph 2.1 above, the Town Clerk, or Deputy Clerk in the Town Clerk's absence, shall forthwith consult with the Mayor and Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, and those Members so consulted together with the Town Clerk, or Deputy Clerk in the Town Clerk's absence, shall have delegated power to act on behalf of the Council in respect of the particular matter then under consideration."

Recommendations and Acknowledgements

- To **note** the report and its contents, including the timeline, issues, benefits, financial implications, and lessons learned.
- To **acknowledge** the timeline and constraints placed upon both staff and members, which limited the ability to engage in formal decision-making within the usual governance framework.
- To **acknowledge** that ATC was under no financial risk, and therefore the use of Scheme of Delegation 4.1 was entirely appropriate in the circumstances, ensuring timely and proportionate action in the best interests of the Council and the community.