

Stage 3:

Initiate

**Project Initiation
Document**

Project Initiation Document

Project Name	My City Centre		
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Context and Rationale

Britain's high streets and town and city centres are going through an unprecedented period of challenge. The rise in digital technology is resulting in a fundamental change in how and where we shop, bank and spend. The ease, speed and choice offered by internet shopping, often at prices that undercut the brick and mortar shops of the high street, is having a huge impact on retail. In the last couple of years major high street institutions have disappeared from the high street, either ceasing to exist or consolidating to out of town locations or fewer stores serving larger regional areas. There is a growing acceptance that there is too much retail space in our town centres for the future level of demand.

As the way in which City Centre's are used evolves and changes, a series of wider issues are presenting themselves. These issues have been captured through early conversations with stakeholders and the community and can be summarised at this stage as:

- Conflicts between users of bars/ restaurants and the traditional family shopping centre
- Balancing needs of visitors and residents (types of facilities, peak visitor numbers)
- Servicing of commercial units (deliveries waste and refuse)
- Parking, accessibility and sustainable travel
- Condition of public realm and pedestrian areas
- Underuse of existing floorspace and migration of employment and residential uses away from the City Centre
- Empty or underused upper floors of buildings
- Suitability of existing stock for future uses
- Counter terrorism measures
- Heritage and planning issues
- Climate resilience, carbon and sustainability

Within York, the role of the City Centre will also be affected by strategic regeneration at York Central and to a lesser degree by Castle Gateway. The York Central site will deliver a significant quantum of office-led commercial floorspace over the next 15 years, alongside cultural growth at the Railway Museum. An occupier strategy for the site is currently being prepared to optimise the benefits of this growth to the City. The development will broaden and expand the City's economic base, but will need to complement how the traditional City Centre functions (both now and in the future), and the role that the expanded urban area has, needs to be coordinated.

A range of previous visioning exercises have been undertaken previously for York City Centre, ranging from the 1969 Esher Report to 2010's 'New City Beautiful'. A review of the findings, outcomes and lessons learnt from these will be undertaken as part of the project. Whilst important messages can be drawn from these studies, the context of the

City Centre has changed radically since even the most recent, and there is a pressing need for a current, responsive and deliverable vision to shape future action.

The pace and impact of technological change is difficult to comprehend and predict. Cashless payment, self-checkouts, automated vehicles – coupled with social and environmental changes driving demand for locally grown produce – will affect jobs, property and how and when people use the high street. Online banking and cashless payments has led some commentators to predict that high street banks will disappear within a decade, leaving behind difficult to convert buildings. Traditional service providers are trying to remain viable, with, for example, Post Offices co-locating within existing retail stores, hopefully securing their long term future but again leaving behind often complicated purpose-built buildings.

Although York's unique heritage environment and cultural attractions have protected it from the scale of decline and market failure that has affected other areas in the UK, it is not immune to this change. The pressures of internet shopping, economic change and business rates on bricks and mortar retail are leading to persistent city centre vacancies. Many of these issues relate to medium to large floor plate retail which are not attractive to a changing marketplace which has greater focus on boutique and independent retailers with smaller footprint requirements. The prevalence of distant institutional investors amongst freeholders of the larger floorplate units particularly, and with over-inflated value expectations combine with difficult to convert historic listed buildings; significant empty spaces above shops; and high property values to make local authority intervention challenging.

To an extent the challenges in York have been masked since retail vacancies have remained comparatively low as the city's successful evening and leisure economy drives many conversions to bars and restaurants, and 'meanwhile' tenancies are put in place. These have helped maintain the vibrancy of the high street, although the former presents its own problems with the conflict between those leisure visitors to the city and traditional family shoppers. York is also not dominated by traditional large-scale retail to the extent other Cities and already attracts 'experience-led' visits. Whilst vacancy rates in the City as a whole appear fairly static (averaging around 7%), there are pockets of sustained and concentrated vacancy, with, for example, Coney Street at 19%, and Coppergate 18%.

The scale of the national challenges has been recognised by central government who commissioned the Timpson review in 2018 and released *Our Plan for the High Street* as part of the October 2018 budget which set out the following response:

- cut business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years, to provide upfront support for high streets
- create a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help local areas make high streets and town centres fit for the future
- consult on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres, and will trial a register of empty shops

- A High Streets Task Force to support local leadership with expert advice on helping local high streets to adapt and thrive
- strengthen community assets, including the restoration of historic buildings, support for community groups to use empty properties, and provide business rates relief for public toilets and local newspapers.

These present welcome opportunities for York, and engagement with the programmes has catalysed activity in the City, with stakeholder groups and networks being formed and analysis of the challenges being undertaken. A York Expression of Interest (Eoi) submission to the Future High Street Fund was unfortunately unsuccessful, though a second bid to the Heritage High Streets Fund has been submitted and will be determined later this year. Work on the first Eoi was also not abortive, being developed with a range of stakeholders and articulating a bold ambition to restore the historic connection between Coney Street and the Ouse, which may still be delivered through alternative means. The proposal would create new riverside walkways and frontages to encourage private sector landowners to remodel their property to rejuvenate the street, create residential and office space above shops and create new waterside leisure uses..

The opportunities offered by the government intervention, and a growing local awareness of the emerging challenge facing the high street has led a wide range of stakeholders - including York Retail Forum, York BiD, Make It York, Indie York and media outlets – to call for strong local leadership, joined up thinking and collaborative solutions to ensure the city centre’s long term survival. To ensure the council is leading and driving the response and is best placed to capitalise on central government funding opportunities the Executive have allocated a budget of £100k to the Major Projects and Regeneration Team to develop through public and stakeholder engagement a long term strategic vision for the future of the city centre under the ‘My City Centre’ banner. This will seek to draw on the consultation and engagement approach established under My Castle Gateway and continued in My York Central, as set out in more detail in the ‘approach’ section below.

Aim & Objectives

Aim

“To engage the public and stakeholders to develop a long term social, environmental and economic strategic vision for a sustainable future for York City Centre”

Objectives

The objectives required to deliver the aim are:

- *to establish an evidence based understanding of the existing City Centre in terms of physical, perceptual and activity based measures, in order to form a baseline;*
- *to engage the public and all stakeholder in an open conversation on how they currently interact with York city centre and how this will evolve, and how they want to use it in the future. To facilitate the conversation through a range of online, social media and face to face public engagement;*
- *lead an informed public debate on the current and future challenges facing the city centre;*
- *Use the debate to explore and define the challenges facing the city centre, and formulate a set of shared, prioritised responses to these;*
- *develop a long term strategic vision for the city centre that meets the needs and aspirations of a broad range of users and stakeholders;*
- *For the vision to be used to guide and inform future investment decisions, public realm improvements, events strategies and spatial masterplanning, building flexibility into the City Centre to respond to changing circumstances;*
- *assess the opportunities for the support of the High Street Task Force to support the My City Centre project, and;*
- *establish networks of individuals and organisations, and facilitate establishment of communities of interest, to allow for effective working and coordinated action moving forward.*

Project Scope

Due to the ‘open conversation’ nature of the project, its scope will retain some fluidity throughout, since the approach is predicated on the public and stakeholders identifying the challenges to which the vision will need to respond. The scope is currently defined as:

- Principally identified geographically by the BiD redline boundary (though with scope to vary this in response to the consultation feedback and analysis of the functionality of CC if necessary);
- a budget of £100k has been identified for delivery;
- the project will be led by the Major Projects and Regeneration Team, drawing on support from relevant officers from across the council;

- the project will provide a long term strategic vision for the city;
- this will provide the framework and scope for future masterplanning and investment and shape future local plan policies for the city centre;
- the initial baselining and evidence base work will define the scope as to the focus of the strategy
- the project will seek the involvement and participation of all communities of interest in relation to the City Centre (including representatives of resident, business, visitor, cultural, heritage and statutory bodies)
- The vision will not offer defined physical interventions for buildings and public spaces; it will establish objectives for development, a direction for travel, a framework to guide future activity, and establish the broad scope for specific physical interventions to be developed further as future specific projects. Any specific capital or delivery projects that emerge from My City Centre will need additional resource and/or funding.

Baselining work described above will help to further refine and develop the parameters for project scope.

Approach

The project will be led by the Major Projects & Regeneration Team, and will seek to follow the principles of the successful 'My Castle Gateway' programme, which established a new and bold approach to public and stakeholder engagement to develop a masterplan for the regeneration of the Castle Gateway area. My City Centre will be an open conversation with a range of stakeholders including residents, communities, businesses, visitors and stakeholders to shape a preferred strategic vision which will be taken to the council's Executive for approval. This will be achieved by applying the following principles:

Build a brief: Use a variety of engagement tools to gain an understanding of a diverse range of people's needs and ideas. Make these ideas and differing perspectives visible.

Explore Challenges: Cultivate an open, grown-up public debate about complex issues. Share and explain challenges, decisions and compromises throughout.

Make change together: Builds ongoing networks to retain involvement, as well as long term community influence in decision-making, design and delivery.

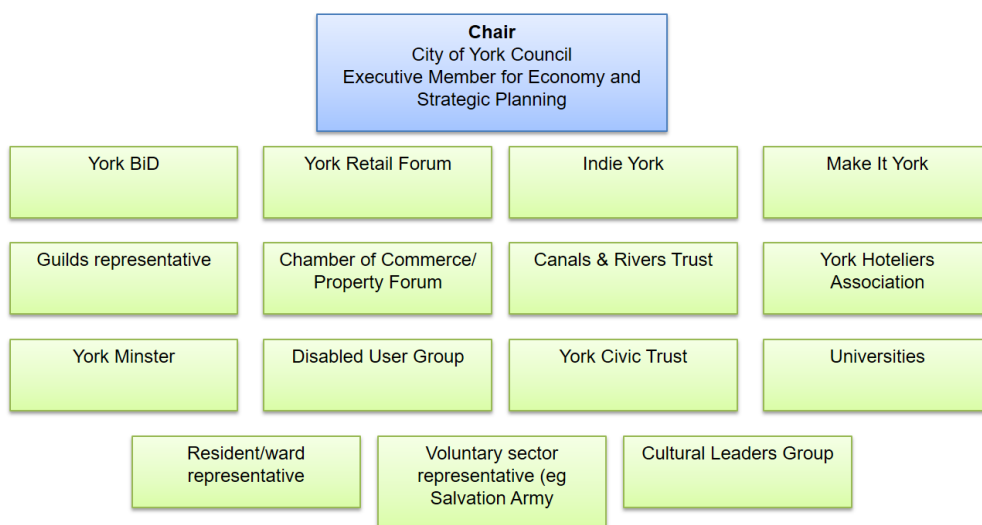
The vision won't offer definitive physical interventions for buildings and public spaces, rather it will establish a framework to guide future activity, and may establish the broad scope for specific physical interventions to be worked up further in the future as specific projects.

There will be two main strands to the approach. The first will be to engage the public, from residents and communities to the visitors to our city. This will be an extensive consultation exercise, overtaken under a number of months, and with a particular emphasis on broadening engagement and deepening understanding of the issues at play. A wide range of engagement opportunities will be established, to facilitate participation from a diverse range of voices across the City's communities. It is essential that the work captures the complex and evolving challenges, relationships and dependencies which shape the City Centre in a clear, transparent and digestible engagement programme.

To support this work external resource support will be procured to run the engagement based on the council's brief of an open conversation. The detail of the approach will be shaped with the successful consultants but it is envisaged to include a multi-platform format utilising digital and social media channels and face to face engagement.

The second key strand is to involve key stakeholders through the establishment of a Stakeholder Group. This will be chaired by the council and will meet on a monthly basis to help shape and sense check the vision throughout the process. The Stakeholder Group will be on an invite only basis with one representative from each of the identified organisations. The initial proposed Stakeholder Group is set out below, additional members may be identified by the Council as the project evolves:

My City Centre – Stakeholder Group



Outcomes Expected

The principal project outcome will be for the city to have a long-term shared strategic vision in place that has been fully developed through public and stakeholder engagement. This vision will help to ensure the economic, social and environmental performance of the City Centre is maintained and improved, by allowing us to:

- Respond to the current challenges facing the high street and be prepared to respond to future and emerging trends
- Make informed and targeted investment decisions to maintain a successful city centre
- Be best placed to access regional and central government funding by having an approved, community owned, strategy and vision
- Encourage inward private investment and lend confidence to existing investors and occupiers
- Ensure the city centre meets the needs of both residents and visitors
- Create a supportive environment for local businesses to thrive
- Maintain and enhance York's reputation and role as a driver of regional growth
- Maintain a robust historic city centre that thrives and compliments York Central and other regeneration projects
- Balance the need for counter-terrorism measures with good accessibility to the city centre
- Promote resident and public use of the city centre

Outputs

Output	Description
Stage 1a Output: Literature Review Paper	A Precedents Review will be undertaken to set out the key findings and lessons learnt from previous City Centre vision documents including New City Beautiful and the Esher Report.
Stage 1b Output: City Centre Stakeholder Mapping Report.	The Stakeholder Mapping Report will document the communities of interest and stakeholders who we will seek to engage through the project, and the preferred/ most effective form of engagement for each. This

will include identification of hard to reach and disadvantaged/ sensitive groups and communities.

Stage 2 Output: Communication & Engagement Plan

Building on the stakeholder mapping, a **Communication and Engagement Plan** will be produced defining who, how, when and where the consultation will take place. This will also set out the key issues to be consulted on and define detailed strategies for engagement across the range of stakeholders, including hard to reach and disadvantaged/ sensitive groups. The events will take place over multiple platforms, utilising digital and social media channels and face to face engagement. The events will likely be structured with specific activity by week focussing on key individual themes, structuring the conversation and deepening understanding.

Stage 3 Outputs: Consultation & Engagement events 'Findings Log'

As defined in the C&E Plan, a professional, inclusive, engaging and in-depth community conversation will take place. This will be undertaken over a period of not less than 6 weeks, and include separate components tailored to best engage specific stakeholders identified at stage 1. The findings of the event will be recorded in a high quality and accessible manner as it progresses and on it's conclusion, in order to inform the development of the vision, and signpost participants and future users of the vision. Outputs of this stage are articulated as a **'Findings Log'**

Stage 4 Output: Defined City Centre Vision.

Worked up from the outcomes of stage 3, a shared vision document for the City Centre will be produced, identifying strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats, and providing an in-depth narrative of the findings of work to date. The vision will then be used to define and prioritise specific actions, interventions and areas of change which the Council and partners will use to shape their investment approaches and activities. **The Vision** may be shared as it emerges or in a draft final state with stakeholders, and will be made widely available on it's finalisation through electronic and other means.

Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors	Broad Description
Vision representative of collective stakeholder views and ambitions	<p>How well the Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates shared (and reconciles conflicting) views and opinions • Demonstrates that a wide and representative range of individuals and organisations have been involved • Builds and develops networks and communities of interest amongst stakeholders, and enables collaboration
Strength of vision	<p>How well the vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses the unique challenges and issues facing York • Proposes creative, deliverable and positive solutions to these over a range of timescales and geographies/ scales • Presents solutions that have a strong business case • Forecasts near to medium-term change and proposes responses and anticipatory measures in this respect •
Utility of Vision	<p>How well the vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates deliverability of its component parts and actions • Supports positive investment and funding decisions • Complements wider work such as the current City Branding piece. • Is used by partners and stakeholders to support wider activity. • Catalyses debate and discussion.
Outcomes of Vision	<p>To a large extent the specific outcomes desired will be determined through the consultation process, but broadly will relate to the economic, social and environmental strength and resilience of the City Centre area. The outcomes will be achieved by delivery of the subsequent projects identified. Specific CSF's may include improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GVA and productivity performance • Numbers of homes and jobs in City Centre • Environmental attractiveness of City spaces • Flood resilience

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of community/ resident facilities • Amount of open space • Sustainable accessibility • Greenhouse Gas emissions •
Delivery within defined tolerance	In terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programme, and • budget

Assumptions

Assumption	Impact
Dedicated project staff will be made available for the lifetime of the project	Slower programme for delivery and/ or less thorough, professional or useful project outputs. Reputational damage.
Stakeholders and the public will readily engage with the programme of consultation	Less meaningful outcomes and reduced impact on City Centre improvements.
Conflicting stakeholder views or objectives can be satisfactorily reconciled to arrive at a shared vision	The efficacy of the vision is reduced and the City Centre outcomes ameliorated.
Approvals will be forthcoming, and procurement undertaken in line with programme assumptions.	Project not deliverable to programme.
Sufficient finances will be made available to cover all project costs. Project costs have been estimated accurately	The project scope or quality is reduced, impacting negatively on the vision produced and the City Centre outcomes produced
Meaningful and impactful mitigations, projects and actions can be devised to counter negative city centre trends	The efficacy of the vision is reduced and the City Centre outcomes ameliorated.

Dependencies

The project and its outcomes will have functional relationships with a range of ongoing Council projects and agendas, including:

- City branding work being undertaken by FTLOP
- Major regeneration schemes including Castle Gateway & York Central

- City Centre transport Initiatives, including those flowing from LTP3, the West Yorkshire Transport Fund and other programmes.
- Economic and Planning policy making
- Housing and Older Persons Accommodation Programmes
- Counter terrorism safeguarding programme
- Commercial asset management and investment
- City car parking strategies and reviews
- Heritage High Street Fund, if the outstanding bid is successful
- Adult Social care, Health and Education to varying degrees

The project may also relate to the new administration's climate and sustainability agenda and specific proposals flowing from this.

Additionally, the project will also have relationships to the work of external agencies including those of the BID and Make it York. An 'above the shop living' stakeholder group has been established who are keen to promote the use of empty spaces above retail for housing and offices. As specific development proposals emerge from commercial investors and third parties it will also be important to exploit synergies and influence approaches.

The governance structures outlined in previous sections establish an appropriate architecture for these relationships to be recognised and exploited.

Given the scale and pace of change in our City Centres, whilst there are not formal timing dependencies between these projects and the My City Centre scheme, there is an urgency to establishing the vision in advance of as much wider activity as possible, in order that its findings can be used to shape wider agendas..

Constraints

Given the dynamic and rapidly declining and changing status of the City Centre, the principle constraints to the project are time based, with an outline programme of 12 months to complete the work from inception to optimise the ability to implement recommendations in a time appropriate manner.

The project clearly must operate within its approved budget tolerances also.

Given the scale and complexity of the City Centre, and the limited scope of potential funding available to implement change, there will be a constraint on the number of interventions and projects which can be supported following establishment of the vision. A prioritisation of these interventions and projects will therefore be essential to allow the maximum impact and business case benefits to be derived from the project and its outcomes.

Those interventions and projects proposed through the vision must also be deliverable and achievable in order for the vision to be effective. This is likely to be

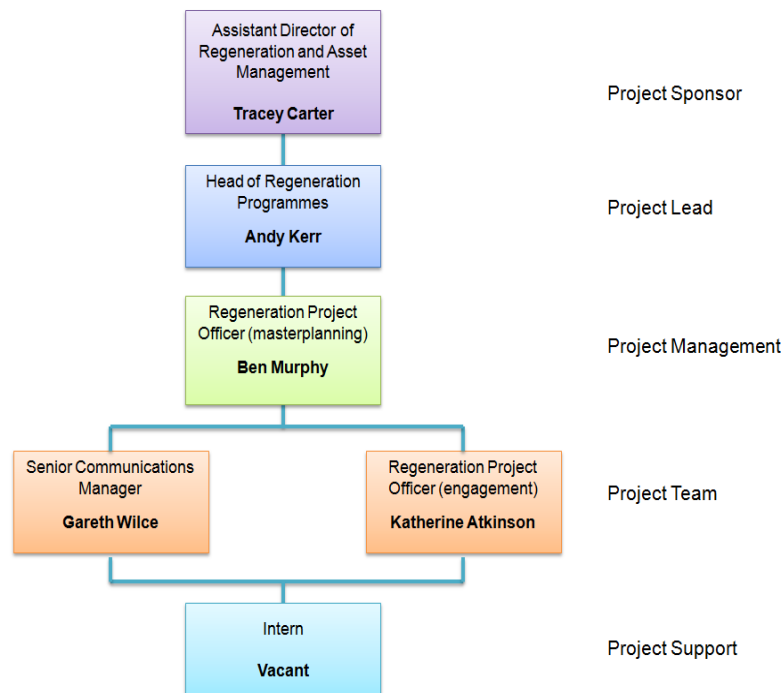
principally in a financial sense, but may also relate to the impact on heritage assets, engineering and wider feasibility or other criteria. The vision will be sense checked through the project management, governance and Stakeholder Group functions outlined elsewhere in this PID,

Deliverability and achievability must be considered over the short medium and long terms, having regard to issues such as ongoing maintenance, sustainability and adaptability for the vision to have a meaningful legacy.

Project Team and Structure

The proposed project team working directly on the project is set out below. It should be noted that none of the resources are dedicated solely to the project and their involvement will form part of the delivery of the wider Major Project and Regeneration Team programmes:

My City Centre – project team structure



The core project team will procure and manage consultancy support to undertake the consultation activity on the Council’s behalf, to ensure impartiality, transparency and efficacy of approach.

The project team may also procure and manage an external ‘critical friend’ consultancy support, to advise on the general approach and the drafting of vision which will follow the consultation, should it be required.

The project team will report to, and be guided by, the corporate and project superstructure described below.

Governance

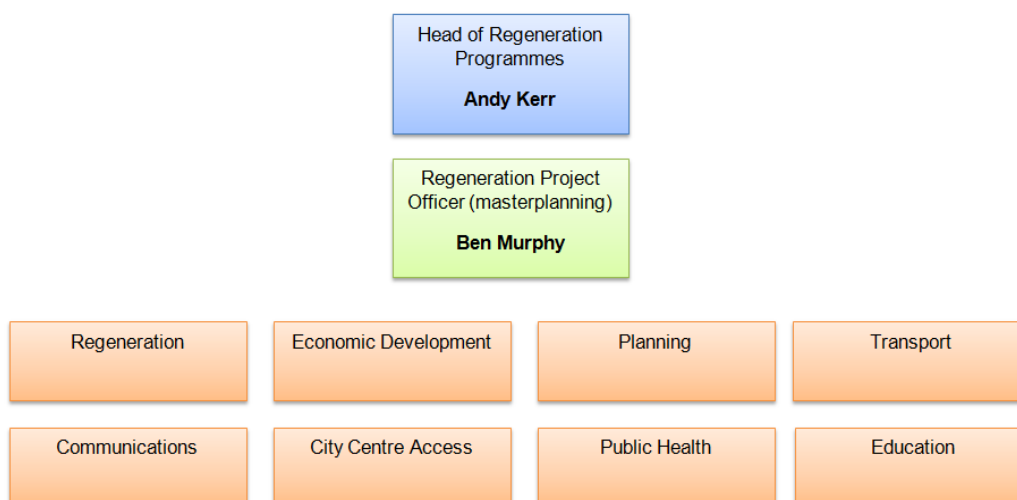
The project will be run on a day to day basis by the project team set out above. The team will brief and engage with the Stakeholder Group (previously defined) on a monthly basis, and will draw resource support from this group in the undertaking of consultation activity as appropriate and available. The team may also involve 'critical friend' consultancy resource as set out above.

Given the short duration and focussed nature of the project, it is not proposed to establish a bespoke project board. Instead, the project team will brief senior management on a regular basis envisaged to be not less than monthly. This will be through formal meeting sessions. Decisions made at these sessions will be recorded in a log, and made in accordance with delegated authorities. The project team may prepare reports to the Castle Gateway, City Centre Access and other boards as necessary, and subsequent to the establishment of the vision, formal boards may be constituted for individual projects or programmes of projects which flow from the vision.

The project will sit within the portfolio of the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning, Briefing sessions with this member are proposed to be held regularly, responding to the scale and pace of activity (though not less than quarterly). Formal approval for the approach set out in this PID will be sought from the council's Executive, and approval of the final vision. The consultation itself will include a bespoke event for all Members of the Council to air their views and opinions. It is not proposed at this stage that the vision be adopted in a formal planning context.

The ability to draw ad-hoc advice and support from all of these groups and individuals will also be established. An internal advisory working group will also be established as set out below, to steer the project and optimise it's ability to deliver corporate objectives.

My City Centre – working group structure



Business Case

Resources

The project has an approved budget of £100k. This will cover the costs of core staff, external consultants and incidental costs (such as room hire, printing and web hosting).

In terms of core staff, the resources are identified in the table below:

POST	TERM	DURATION	TOTAL COST
Head of Regeneration Programmes	0.2 FTE	12 months	£14,000
Regeneration Project Officer (mplan)	0.5 FTE	12 Months	£26,500
Regeneration Project Officer (engagement)	0.2 FTE	12 Months	£9,000

This internal team has the collective experience across the regeneration, engagement, communications and associated fields which is required to run the project effectively and deliver the desired outputs (including drafting the vision on completion of consultation events). Staff resources are dedicated to the project on a part time basis and will need to flex broader workloads to respond to peaks and troughs in demand over the lifetime of the project. The project will be steered and sponsored by senior management as part of broader programmes,. It is not anticipated that the project will require specific support from other parts of the Council (though the further budget allowances below would allow for activity such as printing and web/ ICT activity to be procured).

Of the residual £50k, c£40k is envisaged to be expended on consultancy support for the core consultation events (but also including the critical friend function described

above), and £8k on incidental costs. £2k will be retained for ongoing monitoring and benefit realisation activity.

Given the relatively short duration of the project and the currently undetermined nature of the programme of consultation activity, a profile of expenditure has not been produced, Staff resources will be ‘consumed’ in financial terms evenly over the lifetime of the project but wider activity will expand and contract on a monthly basis.

Benefits

Benefits relate principally to the health of the City Centre as a hub for commercial and social activity. Benefits are therefore varied and sometimes subjective. Whilst change can happen quickly in the City Centre, the impacts of the vision and benefits that flow from it may take a significant time to be realised, requiring long term monitoring that transcends immediate indicators to look at medium to long-term trends.

Benefit indicators will be developed in the first phases of the project to serve as measurable proxies for the wide-ranging issues which the project is seeking to influence. Additional benefits and indicators may be identified as the vision crystallises.

Risks

A series of risks internal to the project are identified below.

Risk (consequence)	Likelihood	Severity	Impact	Mitigation
Budget overrun (project cannot be delivered in its entirety)	1	3	6	Effective project management
Time overrun (findings are not available in a timely manner to inform wider workstreams in the context of a rapidly changing City Centre)	2	2	4	Effective project management
Engagement is not effective (findings are inconclusive/ incomplete/ unrepresentative, undermining the vision’s strength and ability to drive change)	2	3	6	Specialist input and appropriate resourcing and programming
Conflicting and irreconcilable views from different stakeholders (ability of vision to drive change is undermined)	1	3	3	Effective engagement and senior officer/ political involvement if necessary
Consultation fatigue (low levels of engagement)	2	2	4	Programme engagement activity around other programmes and design it to be engaging and accessible.
Scale of negative socio-economic change is so severe that vision and associated activity/ projects have insignificant impact.	1	5	5	Monitor situation and mothball project if events overtake it.

Legal compliance – GDPR (council is found to be operating illegally and fined – financial cost and reputational damage)	1	3	3	Resource project appropriately
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The overriding risk is that the vision is not delivered in a manner which enables significant change in the City Centre. The City Centre is a dynamic, varied and fast moving area, which has seen significant change and decline over a short period of time, it is of paramount importance in this context that the vision is generated at speed and proposes meaningful actions and projects. Individual projects which flow from the vision will have their own intrinsic set of risks which are not possible to determine at this stage.

Contingency Plan

Provisions in relation to staffing, data and resource issues will be managed by the regeneration team, with impacts capable of being mitigated by virtue of the scale of the project within a broader programme of activity and resource.

In the unlikely eventuality of effective engagement to generate a meaningful vision not being possible, the project could be abandoned in favour of directing budgets towards individual schemes and projects, this would be unlikely to achieve overarching and strategic objectives however.

The vision should be sufficiently sophisticated to allow for it to deal with alternative futures, future-proofing the City Centre against change which is unexpected. In this sense, contingency planning will be an essential core component of the vision itself. It may also be necessary to refresh the vision in future years to reflect change.

Key Milestones

An indicative gantt chart of activity is set out below. This will flex as the project approach and detailed methodologies emerge, though the overall programme duration is broadly fixed.

