

Appendix 1

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

PLACEMAKING + GROWTH

WESTON PLACEMAKING PROGRAMME

CONSULTANCY SUPPORT BRIEF

1. Summary

The council and its partners are seeking a multi-disciplinary place consultancy or consortium to help create an authentic place identity and a Weston Placemaking Strategy.

Weston-super-Mare is a large and growing seaside town and a major visitor destination. It also faces several socio economic and demographic challenges.

The council has brought together the disciplines of placemaking, and Weston is a major priority for the organisation. The Placemaking Strategy will help us deliver better outcomes, attract investment and funding and improve the quality of our own contribution to Weston.

2. About Weston

With a population of just over 83,000, Weston-super-Mare is the largest place in North Somerset and on course to overtake Bath as the second largest place in the West of England area.

Weston is a major tourist destination with over 5m visitors a year generating £240m for the local economy. It is rich with architectural and natural beauty and is the only Heritage Action Zone in the South West.

Weston also faces challenges in respect of health and wellbeing outcomes, household income, skills and employment, town centre performance and development viability.

3. About us

A new division of Placemaking and Growth has been created to bring together our Planning, Economy, Development and Transport & Infrastructure teams to lead, shape and deliver growth.

This includes strategic planning for 25,000 new homes across North Somerset, improving skills and employment prospects for residents, delivering workspace for business, driving inclusive and clean growth, encouraging new industries to locate here, directly delivering our own mixed-use development and connecting it all up together with the right transport and infrastructure.

The council also has a commercial investment portfolio and last year worked with Legal and General to acquire the Sovereign Centre a 1990s town centre shopping mall that connects to the main high street.

There is a rich but fragile and largely invisible arts and culture footprint in the town comprising of the institutional (Tropicana and Playhouse Theatre) to the grassroots (Old Town Quarry and Terrestrial).

The council is working with investment partners at the LEP, Historic England, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Homes England among others to develop a raft of projects.

In May 2019, there were significant changes to the political makeup of the council. After 12 years of a Conservative administration, the electorate returned a verdict of no overall control. There is now an alliance of Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour and Green Party members on the Executive. Councillors are passionate about Weston and brimming with ideas around the town centre, parking, development and the seafront.

Regionally, we are part of the West of England. Whilst not formally part of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) we continue to work closely with it, including to position Weston as a strategic opportunity site for the wider region.

4. What is a Placemaking Strategy and why are we making one?

The Weston Placemaking Strategy will comprise of two substantive components.

The first will be the foundation of a vision, objectives and a set of outline business case documents for a programme of projects. Having this in place means that we will have a set of deliverable projects that can be used to seek investment and then converted into full business case documents, or to funding bids when the chance to bid for the right opportunity comes forward.

This section will quantify outputs across new homes, community facilities, commercial space, business start-up and expansion initiatives, events, footfall, jobs and training opportunities. These will enable the council to achieve outcomes across living conditions, improved health and wellbeing, business investment, improved employability and household income.

The second section will be the public facing prospectus. It will communicate place data, opportunities, outputs, outcomes and authentic narratives about Weston in an accessible publication. Unlike most other 'regeneration visions' (and indeed the existing Weston vision), it will not be targeted just at the so called 'investment community', it will instead be targeted at everyday people. Those people that live, work and visit Weston, and those people that don't yet, but could if only they knew more about the place. This document needs to communicate the identity of Weston through the development of its brand.

Everyday people make their own investment decisions of all sorts of scale all the time. They decide to visit a place, they decide to buy homes, they decide to start-up businesses, they decide to go out for dinner. The purpose of the public facing prospectus will be to encourage and increase the amount and value of investment decisions everyday people make.

Weston is a place where a lot of our activities comes together. The council sees that addressing the town's challenges is critical to unlocking North Somerset's potential. Policy, investment and project initiatives need to be developed strategically to maximise their impact. This will help to align our priorities with those of our partners who invest in Weston.

The preparation of the Placemaking Strategy will also help us to start addressing Weston's 'brand problem'. Most people have heard of Weston-super-Mare and the connotations are often negative. The seafront offer is a bit tired, development projects have stalled, there are

few visible creative and cultural businesses and progress has been slow on addressing social, economic and wellbeing challenges.

We interpret our brand problem as a product problem. If a set of strategically aligned projects can adjust and improve the Weston 'product', the brand will start to change because peoples' experience of Weston will change. The Placemaking Strategy will build the place identity that can become a brand for Weston, that is reflective of an emerging and real product for Weston.

So, the Placemaking Strategy needs to be clever, but it needn't be ground breaking. It's just about coming up with some priorities that are evidence led, listening and engaging with people, devising some projects to address those priorities and delivering them in a way that is good and impactful. Where it gets sophisticated is how we can use the content of the strategy as new product for Weston to broadcast through a brand.

5. *Why we're interested in brand*

We don't just want to embark on a branding exercise - we want to improve our contribution to Weston's product, and encourage our partners to do the same. We believe that people's experience of a place *is* the product. The product *is* the brand and the brand is worth something – i.e. has value. So, if people's experience of a place poor, its product is poor, the brand is poor and it doesn't create much value – Weston needs to start addressing this.

We need to create more value in Weston. To us, value is people being healthier, living longer, earning more money, being more resilient and spending money locally. It means our shopping centre performing financially so we can pay for social care. It means over five million visitors spending more money right across the town. It means development values rising so we can build new homes and workspaces for people to live and work in, and drive demand for a town centre that has adjusted to an experience economy.

We also need to break out of the echo chamber where the positive stories we are trying to tell about Weston and its potential are confined to the people and organisations that are already living and based here. To achieve the increased value that we need, we need to be speaking to a wider audience and an audience that can come and invest in Weston either as place to live, to visit, to study or to run a business.

6. *What we've done so far*

First, we've accepted that this is what we need to do. This project has support from across the organisation from the Corporate Management Team and the Political Leadership. We've talked it through with our investment partners and stakeholders and they get it and want to be involved. We aren't starting from scratch. In the past few years we have developed several initiatives that feed into the placemaking approach:

- Weston being a Housing Zone means that it has priority status and significant funding from Homes England,
- The Weston Heritage Action Zone, promotes the quality of the town's architecture and heritage,
- The Supplementary Planning Document and a Public Realm enhancement plan for the town centre helps to remove barriers and positively encourages investment.

We've identified and analysed data and identified some priorities. These priorities are informing some ideas about possible projects that can help us achieve good outcomes and adjust the product of Weston.

7. *What we want you to do for us*

This is a multidisciplinary commission across data analysis, engagement and facilitation, strategy, graphical communication and developing a place brand and we recognise this could lead to a consortium approach. We welcome responses of this nature.

The commission will require you to do the following. However, we want you to propose your methodology.

- A. Reflect on the data, offer additional indicators and draw conclusions. We want this to be a rapid analysis with a fresh look at the figures and your interpretation of the challenges
- B. Gather and analyse missing economic data
- C. Design and deliver an engagement programme (see section 8 below)
- D. Provide observations and recommendations on realistic but strategic moves that the council could lead to address some of the challenges identified. These could include:
 - Urban structure and movement
 - Programmatic curation
 - Use of assets
 - Policy changes
 - Perception
- E. Support us to prepare, test and refine objectives and vision for the Placemaking Strategy
- F. Support us to test and develop a programme of deliverable project ideas that will constitute the Placemaking Strategy
- G. Support the shaping of the Strategy and the linkages and dependencies between projects to optimise outcomes over time
- H. Provide recommendations around wider support, ownership and governance of the Strategy to ensure it is collectively owned by the partners invested in Weston
- I. Design and develop an identity for Weston that:
 - is derived from and supported by a process of engagement across a range of stakeholders
 - is an authentic set of values for Weston as a place
 - could be used across media including hard copy documentation, development site hoardings, presentations, online and social media by a range of stakeholders
 - is supported by a simple set of guidelines for its application
 - can be shared with partners in their activities
- J. Draft the Placemaking Strategy prospectus that:
 - communicates values, vision, priorities, programmes and projects
 - communicates opportunities, outputs, outcomes and authentic narratives
 - uses every-day language
 - graphically communicates place data
 - can be used as collateral to support investment decisions however large or small
- K. Design and publish the Placemaking Strategy prospectus using the agreed architecture of the place identity
- L. Arrange for printing of documents and promotional material related to the launch
- M. Propose how best to integrate the identity and associated products into the existing or a new online resource being used to promote Weston, either as a place to live, visit or invest in
- N. Propose the scope, focus and methodology of a sustained communications campaign to bring Weston to the attention of potential residents, visitors, students, business relocators and investors

8. Engagement

We have already undertaken some initial engagement with the Town Council, Weston Civic Society and some local business organisations. We've also engaged with investment partners at Homes England, Historic England, Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

There is more to do and we think the engagement process probably needs to do the following but you are invited to propose your ideas.

A. Outcomes

- That people feel listened to and willing to share and explore ideas
- That people can understand the implications of growth and change are energised and enthused about Weston and its future
- That people, agencies and stakeholders support and co-produce a place identity for Weston and can understand and sign up to decision making/governance processes around generating, editing and producing content
- That people support the emerging ambitions of the Placemaking Strategy
- Data is collected to support the Placemaking Strategy

B. Design an engagement programme which engages with:

Individuals including

- Interested residents
- Visitors
- Shoppers
- Students
- Relocators from elsewhere
- Ward councillors

Business interests including

- Individual businesses
- Weston Business Improvement District
- Weston Chamber of Commerce

Public service providers including

- Education providers, both schools and Weston College
- Health services
- Weston Town Council
- West of England Combined Authority

Other sectors including

- The arts, culture & heritage sector, eg Weston Civic Society
- The wider voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors

The 'missing', including potential

- Residents
- Visitors
- Institutions

- Employers

C. Deliver the programme

- Prepare and deliver a campaign to energise interest among stakeholders
- Design and produce promotional material for the programme
- Design and produce engagement material
- Facilitate engagement sessions
- Propose and agree a decision making/governance process or structure so that stakeholders own the process of co-production
- Undertake analysis and share results

D. Resources

- Officers engaged in placemaking and cultural strategic development will be available to support and shape your thinking through project team meetings. They can offer guidance and make connections, but they are very stretched.
- Links to Town Council, Civic Society and local business organisations
- Terrestrial Arts Space
- The Stable
- The Sovereign Centre and its management team
- Invest Bristol and Bath (to help with access to potential businesses and investors)

9. Programme

We want to launch the Weston Placemaking Strategy by the end of this financial year. We anticipate the project workstreams working concurrently so that while engagement needs to get going as soon as the procurement is completed, so can work on refining objectives and projects and the preparation of the Strategy itself.

Suggested programme	Sept 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20
Contract advertised								
Consultant appointment								
Analyse data								
Present conclusions from data								
Define objectives								
Design and deliver engagement programme								
Design identity								
Draft document								

Publish and print								
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10. Governance and reporting

Your Client will be Rachel Lewis, Regeneration Programme Manager. She will be the point of contact for this commission and will signpost to colleagues and local contacts.

This project reports to the Weston Regeneration Project Board (officer group) with monthly updates on progress.

The strategic overview is provided by the Weston Strategic Placemaking Board (senior members and officers) and you will be required to present the draft Strategy to this group and also to the Great Weston Placemakers group (Key partner organisations such as Homes England, Historic England, NHS, Arts Council and NHLF)