

Councillor Questions for Cabinet 18 May 2021

Question from the Ferndown and West Parley councillors

Cllr Mike Parkes – Ferndown North, Cllr Cathy Lugg – Ferndown North
Cllr Rod Adkins – Ferndown South, Cllr Julie Robinson – Ferndown South
Cllr Andrew Parry – West Parley

Like many other towns in Dorset and further afield, the town centre in Ferndown has seen significant decline in recent years resulting in multiple empty units and a further influx of charity shops and other businesses that bring little benefit to the local economy. This has been compounded by a further blow, with the recent announcement by one of the remaining banks that they will close at the end of July. A town centre regeneration study was undertaken by the former district council which would revitalise the economy with a modern vibrant town centre shifting from the traditional 'high street' to a mixture of hospitality industries (restaurants, bars, cafes) offering a daytime and evening culture, complimented by small boutique shops and service businesses.

Much of the regeneration plan can be implemented within the gift of Dorset Council, particularly with the ongoing assets review which could free up the day centre and office space within the town centre.

Both ends of Victoria Road will be see changes made as part of the Transforming Cities Fund cycle routes and it would make sense that alterations to the traffic flow and parking take pace at the same time particularly as Victoria Road has seen several serious and one fatal road traffic collisions in the past year.

Can we have an assurance from the Cabinet that they will review and implement the Town Centre Regeneration Plan so that Ferndown can become a trail blazing modern 21st century town centre that can in turn be modelled elsewhere in the Dorset area.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets & Property

Many town centres across Dorset have been impacted by a combination of changing retail trends and the lockdown restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A great deal of effort is initially being devoted to welcoming people back to town centres and supporting businesses to reopen and stay open. A review of all town centres is likely to be needed, to understand the impact of the factors mentioned and assess the changing policy and funding landscape to secure further appropriate investment to improve and sustain our town centres to be vibrant and viable places that residents and visitors will want to use.