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Document / Report #880

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Title	Shopfront & Window Dressing Scheme
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OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

1. **Approve the launch of the Shopfront & Window Dressing Scheme as outlined in the report; and**
2. **Authorise officers to agree installations with landlords/property agents, commission designs & printing within the approved budget.**

1. Purpose

1. To seek approval to launch a small-scale shopfront and window dressing scheme for vacant commercial premises within Welshpool town centre, in accordance with Action TC1 of the Council's Interim Strategic Plan.

2. Background

1. Vacant commercial premises can have a disproportionate effect on the appearance and perception of a town centre. Empty windows, deteriorating displays and visibly unused units can create an impression of decline even where the remainder of the town centre remains active.
2. The Council's proposed scheme would not seek to conceal the fact that premises are available. Instead, it would make empty properties more attractive while providing an opportunity to promote Welshpool, local attractions, events and the availability of the premises themselves.
3. Council made a budget of £500 available for this financial year under ISP Action TC1.

3. Advice

1. Window Dressing
    1. Where the cooperation of the landlord or agent can be obtained, the Council would seek permission to install temporary displays immediately behind the windows of vacant premises.

2. These would include large format printed banners with attractive photography of Welshpool, artwork from local schools and groups and other creative media.
3. The intention would be to create displays which look like deliberate shop-window installations rather than simply covering windows with advertising.
4. Where appropriate, displays could be reusable and moved between vacant premises as properties are let.

2. Premises without internal access
    1. There may be properties where the landlord is supportive of improving the frontage but access to the interior cannot readily be arranged, or where the condition immediately behind the shopfront makes an internal display impractical.
    2. In exceptional circumstances, consideration could be given to a temporary freestanding screening arrangement, potentially using Heras-type fencing fitted with professionally designed printed mesh banners.
    3. However, this should be regarded as a secondary option rather than the standard treatment and it would require additional highways consents and liabilities.

3. Working with owners
    1. Before installation, the Council should obtain simple written permission from the property owner, authorised agent or person with sufficient control of the premises. The Town Clerk will draw up a suitable agreement form.
    2. The scheme would be permissable under the Council's Section 144 powers to encourage visitors and tourists. Written consent should therefore be obtained from the freeholder, landlord, managing agent or other person legally entitled to authorise the installation before any works are undertaken.
    3. Advertisements require consent either expressly from the Local Planning Authority or by virtue of the Control of Advertisments Regulations themselves. The legal position will depend upon the individual design, size, location and content.

4. Links to Strategic Objectives and Interim Strategic Plan

1. TC1 - Roll out shopfront/window dressing scheme for empty premises in partnership with landlords.

5. Resource & Legal Implications

1. A budget of £500 is included within the 2026/27 budget for this action. This is sufficient to establish the scheme as a pilot but would not support comprehensive treatment of every vacant property. It is suggested that the initial allocation is concentrated on approximately 2–4 prominent units, depending upon frontage size and printing/installation costs.

6. Specific Implications

1. **Crime and Disorder** - improving the appearance of vacant shopfronts can contribute positively to perceptions of safety and town-centre vitality by reducing the visual impact of long-term vacancy, neglected frontages and visibly unused premises. (Crime and Disorder Act 1998).
2. **Biodiversity** - N/A (Environment (Wales) Act 2016).
3. **Well-being** - would contribute towards a Prosperous Wales (Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015).
4. **Risk Management** - N/A

7. Recommendation

1. Approve the launch of the Shopfront & Window Dressing Scheme as outlined in the report; and
2. Authorise officers to agree installations with landlords/property agents, commission designs & printing within the approved budget.

8. Decision

1. To resolve to adopt the recommendations as above.