

PREFACE

As part of the EDCL portfolio we, the panel, decided to review the current regeneration and economic development strategy, focusing solely on the high streets across Portsmouth. The current regeneration and economic development strategy, concerning high streets, which was created pre-covid is unfortunately, 'not fit for purpose' due to the impact of Covid 19. Covid 19 accelerated shopping online and shopping habits, however in some parts of the city, where major brands once dominated or dictated the footfall, Portsmouth has seen an increase in smaller and local businesses shaping our high streets.

Modern day high streets are the heart of the city, not just financially but culturally. They should be active, vibrant and support businesses big and small as well as be a meeting point for cultural activity and engagement. Businesses want a closer relationship with PCC but have felt the communication wasn't what it once was and that, in part, has created division.

This report is a product of listening to officers and witnesses across the city to better understand how Portsmouth's high streets can be improved. We, the panel, have chosen these recommendations as they came directly from businesses, advisors and high street managers who have seen our city change over the decades.

As Chair of this panel, I want to take this opportunity to thank all witnesses for taking time to attend panels and providing us with the evidence of the work being done in the city and helping to highlight any gaps that need addressing. Thank you also to all of my fellow panel members and Allison Harper from Democratic Services for their assistance in preparing this report. I formally commend this report to Cabinet.

Councillor Russell Simpson Chair, EDCL Scrutiny Panel

Date: 17 March 2024