

**Halesowen Area Committee – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Halesowen Town Centre Development**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Committee on progress with regard to physical developments taking place in and around Halesowen Town Centre, with particular regard to the Halesowen in Bloom Initiative

**Background**

**Halesowen in Bloom**

2. Since the meeting of this Committee on the 14th March 2007, Members have received regular progress reports on Town Centre development and management activity. It is proposed in future to focus such reports with more detail on particular themes or work programmes, with the Halesowen in Bloom initiative in this report
3. The aspiration to develop a Halesowen in Bloom initiative has been developed over a number of years, with the ultimate aim of entering the town into the Heart of England in Bloom competition. A successful entry into this competition would need to demonstrate significant achievements in floral decorations, environmental improvements, high standards of care for public spaces, community engagement and environmental sustainability. Such achievements are considered to bring significant benefits to residents, visitors and investors in the town regardless of an entry into the In Bloom competition.
4. The In Bloom initiative was created by a Working Group of this Area Committee with the recognition that in time, as with successful in Bloom projects elsewhere, there would be the need to move the project from a local authority sponsored project to one which is owned and steered by partners in and around the town centre. This took place in September 2010 with the creation of a Steering Group with a Chair from the business community, and representatives from the voluntary and business sector, emergency services and the Council. This group has met on a monthly basis and has achieved the following:
  - Completion and adoption of a formal Constitution and procedures for the operation of the Steering Group
  - Opening of a bank account to manage sponsorship for In Bloom activities
  - An increase in sponsorship received and as a direct result, in the level of floral displays in the town
  - Production of a sponsorship pack to show the ways in which residents, businesses and community groups can help with Halesowen in Bloom

- Following the completion of a Town Centre Audit, the preparation of a costed action plan (for which the proposals in a map form are shown in Appendix A to this report) to assist in securing and targeting sponsorship funding
5. Through the work of the partners on the Steering Group the following activities have been achieved in the last 12 months.
  6. As a direct result of additional sponsorship monies received, a number of hanging baskets were installed in the town centre for summer displays. Stourbridge College have agreed to prepare hanging baskets for next year's displays, which will not only allow additional numbers of baskets to be installed, but will provide training benefits as well.
  7. 2 competitions have been arranged with design students at Halesowen College; the first to design a logo and brand for the In Bloom initiative, the result of which, won by Oliver Whittall, is now being used on marketing material for the initiative. The second has been for the production of a mural to be created on the wall of the GMB building in Birmingham Street. The students have found both exercises, with the research and design input required, to be extremely beneficial, with a 'real life' output achieved for the winning entry.
  8. The Committee have been informed at previous meetings of the success of the renovation of the planter at Peckingham Street, which was designed and planted with input of volunteers, local businesses and the Council, culminating in a successful planting day on the 19th March 2011. The planter has been subsequently 'adopted' by the Halesowen Gardening Club who carry out its maintenance and this has been carried out in an effective manner. Negotiations are currently underway with Dudley MIND, the charity that provides emotional, social and therapeutic support to individuals experiencing ill mental health, for them to 'adopt' further planted areas to be provided under the In Bloom initiative, again allowing for the provision of further environmental improvements with benefits to the charity's client group
  9. The current focus of the Steering Group is to prepare for the 2012/13 year by the identification of additional funding and voluntary support using the sponsorship pack referred to in paragraph 4 above, to allow for the purchase and installation of floral decorations for Summer 2012

### **Halesowen Area Action Plan**

10. This Committee has considered reports on the production of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Halesowen Town Centre, most recently on the 6th July 2011. The AAP will set out how the Town Centre will develop up to 2026. It will guide new investment into Halesowen Town Centre and will set out where new shops and other appropriate town centre proposals should be located.
11. The Halesowen AAP 'Options' stage consultation document was produced and was subject to a consultation exercise between July and September last year
12. Informed by responses to this 'Options' stage (and further evidence gathering and work since carried out) we are now working towards a 'Preferred Options' stage consultation document, which is currently scheduled for public consultation during January and February 2012.

13. This public consultation will take place over a 6 week period and will include a consultation event within Halesowen town centre itself. The 6 week consultation period will be advertised in the local press and on the Council's website with a wide range of stakeholders being consulted directly by e-mail or post

14. A subsequent Halesowen AAP 'Publication' stage document will be produced and consulted upon during mid 2012, with public examination of the Halesowen AAP scheduled for February 2013 and adoption in July 2013

## **Finance**

15. There are currently limited resources available for public realm developments which could contribute to an 'in Bloom' initiative.

16. Costs incurred to date in relation to the production of the Halesowen AAP have been funded by budgets held by the Directorate of the Urban Environment. Improvements of Council assets resulting from the AAP will be included in the Capital Programme as necessary.

## **Law**

17. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough.

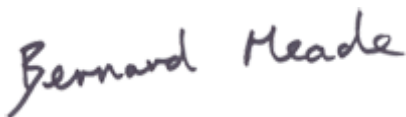
## **Equality Impact**

18. The proposal contained within this report complies with the Council's equal opportunities policy.

19. A principal role of the Directorate of the Urban Environment is to encourage regeneration which will impact on all sectors of the community, including the needs of children and young people.

## **Recommendation**

20. That the Committee notes the progress of development in Halesowen Town Centre



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**J. B. Millar**

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## **List of Background Papers**

Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP) Options document – available in Members Room

Black Country Joint Core Strategy

<http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/>