

Brierley Hill Area Committee – 2nd July 2009

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership

Purpose of the report

1. To update the Committee on progress in delivery of a Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership.

Background

2. Brierley Hill (comprising the Merry Hill Centre, Waterfront and Brierley Hill High Street) was recognised as the Black Country's fourth Strategic Town Centre in the Phase 1 revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in January 2008, and concluded a decade's work in seeking such recognition for the centre.
3. The adoption of the RSS review was significant both for Brierley Hill and nationally as it was the first time that an 'out of town' centre has been reclassified as a Town Centre.
4. This recognition was good news for the future regeneration of the Black Country as a whole, and particularly for the refocus on a heritage based regeneration of Dudley Town Centre and the future development of Brierley Hill
5. The key messages and recommendations contained within the RSS Phase 1 review were;
 - Designation of Brierley Hill as a new Strategic Town Centre within the region to include Brierley Hill High Street, the Waterfront and the Merry Hill Centre
 - Recognition of Dudley Town Centre as a significant centre for tourism and cultural facilities, as well as for housing-led regeneration making the most of its historic and cultural heritage and its civic function
 - Development of a network of quality public transport routes, building on the existing rail and proposed Metro together with new approaches to bus transport, linking people with jobs and the Black Country network of Centres
 - Provision of new high quality homes along transport corridors creating a much greater variety of choice of homes and living environments for people in the Black Country
 - The strategic town centres of the Black Country will also be the focus for new homes, new office and leisure based opportunities as well as significant new retail development

- Transformation of the environment using the heritage of canals and nature reserves within the Black Country to make it more attractive to live, work and invest
 - The provision of jobs within designated employment land corridors through land assembly and improvements in land, buildings and transport infrastructure in such areas
 - Increasing the emphasis in mitigating for climate change, including use of renewable energy sources, reducing waste, reducing the need to travel and enhancing and extending natural habitats and environments
6. As a response to a number of enduring challenges to regeneration activity in the area, the idea of a partnership for Brierley Hill emerged during the late 1990s and the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership (BHRP) was formally established in November 2002. BHRP was a public, private and community partnership, a company limited by guarantee and the product of a shared vision for the integrated regeneration of Brierley Hill - that is Brierley Hill High Street, Merry Hill and the Waterfront. Its overall aim was to co-ordinate policy, strategy and funding to deliver the regeneration of Brierley Hill and to ensure that the benefits of regeneration are *maximised and focused on the local community*.
7. The BHRP was set up with four major objectives:
- To facilitate sustainable economic growth for Brierley Hill, ensuring development projects benefit the surrounding communities
 - To coordinate employment and other social benefits
 - To create sustainable environmental improvements
 - To contribute towards delivery of the Dudley Metropolitan Unitary Development Plan (UDP, now to be replaced with the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan) vision and regional economic objectives.
8. BHRP has been very successful in supporting the designation of Brierley Hill as a strategic centre and in building strong developer and community linkages, however, its funding expired in December 2008, and although it still exists as a legal entity, it no longer employs any staff and is not active in any form.
9. Members will be aware that the Council has created an Arms Length Company to deliver its regeneration agenda across the Borough. New Heritage Regeneration was launched on 30th January 2009 and the Chair and Chief Executive have been appointed. The company aims to work at arms length to, but on behalf of, the Council and its public sector partners to provide a broad range of expertise in programme management and design, public and private finance, valuation and cost consultancy, commercial and legal advice, and fundraising.
10. A report to Cabinet on the 11th June 2008 proposed that the arms length company would be supported by town centre partnerships that would fulfil a community engagement and promotional function. This would then require a review of the BHRP terms of reference to ensure continuity between the proposed Dudley and Brierley Hill Partnerships. Cabinet on the 11th June 2008 authorised the development of a town centre partnership in Dudley and, in consultation with the BHRP Board, the establishment a new town centre partnership for Brierley Hill

11. The Dudley Town Centre Partnership was launched on the 24th March 2008 and has subsequently met on a number of occasions

Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership - Current Position

12. Draft Terms of Reference have been produced for the Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership that meet the requirements of the Council's *Guide to Partnership Working* and *Partnership Evaluation Tool*, and also the best practice set out in the Department of Communities and Local Government Guide *Managing Town Centre Partnerships – A Guide for Practitioners* and these are set out in Appendix 1

13. Specifically, the Partnership's purpose and objective is to support the Council, businesses and the community in:

- Promoting Brierley Hill Town Centre's renaissance through its unique character, cultural assets, development and tourism
- Acting as a consultee in Town Centre projects and policy initiatives (development plans, local development documents, council sponsored and private sector projects)
- Providing a forum for reporting back progress of key projects complementary to the delivery of Brierley Hill Town Centre Area Action Plan. Subgroups to the partnership may be established when necessary to facilitate more detailed work
- Encouraging opportunities to assist and work with organisations to achieve major new development for the creation of new employment prospects and developing an economy with diversity of opportunities including: manufacturing, information communication technologies, recreation and leisure, tourism, business services and retail
- Supporting and promoting Town Centre community safety initiatives
- Supporting and promoting Town Centre events
- Supporting and promoting a healthy town
- Maximising the economic opportunities in the town centre, creating better job and investment prospects to ensure it retains its distinctive local character and liveliness
- Supporting the council and other partners bidding for resources
- Supporting town centre management issues; and
- Promoting the town's 'liveability' by creating a place that people want to visit, live and invest in

14. Members from key stakeholders and organisations with an interest in Brierley Hill, have attended a series of 5 induction workshops to gain an understanding of the rationale for the Partnership and how the Partnership will operate.
15. Organisations and stakeholders who have signed up to be members of the partnership have provided their named representatives and deputies. Each organisation has been invited to nominate persons for the executive committee roles of Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary.
16. The launch event will be held at the Dudley College Campus, Brierley Hill at 11a.m. on Thursday 16th July 2009. This will be followed at 12.30 pm with the inaugural meeting of the Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership, where the executive committee will be elected and the series of partnership meetings agreed for the year.

Finance

17. Any costs incurred in supporting the creation of the Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership are funded from existing budgets held within the Economic Regeneration Division

Law

18. The Council may do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social, or environmental well being of its area under section S2 of the Local Government Act 200.

Equality Impact

19. The proposals contained within this report comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy whilst also seeking to introduce measures that will be of direct benefit to children and some of the most vulnerable within the community.

Recommendation

20. It is recommended that:

The Committee note the progress made in delivery of the Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership



.....
for John Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officer: George Whitehouse
Telephone: 01384 815537
Email: george.whitehouse@dudley.gov.uk
Rupert Dugdale
Telephone: 01384 815538
Email: rupert.dugdale@dudley.gov.uk