

Halesowen Area Committee- 14th January 2010

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Halesowen Town Centre Development

Purpose of the Report

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

Background

2. At the 14th March 2007 Halesowen Area Committee, Members requested that progress reports be presented to future Committees with an update on progress with regard to the development of the Cornbow shopping centre, bus station and town centre management issues. The Town Centre Working Group of Members and Officers last met on the 26th November 2009 to consider issues affecting the regeneration of the Town Centre. The Head of Executive Support will provide a verbal update on the outcomes of the Working Group at this Committee.

Regeneration Issues

Halesowen In Bloom/Environmental Improvements

3. The Halesowen Town Centre Working Group has overseen the preparation of an Action Plan for environmental improvements, and this is set out in detail in Appendix A to this report. The programme includes the preparation of proposals for improvements to public realm in and around the town centre, a pilot consideration on the opportunity for a 'Halesowen in Bloom' initiative, and a series of events with an environmental theme. As can be seen this programme is divided into short, medium and long term projects and is currently being costed with a view to identifying 'early wins' that can be implemented with the £17,000 allocated by this Committee and additional resources of £6,000 from the Capital Programme allocated for town centres. The first of the 'early wins' proposed to be implemented are improvements to the Husky Dog island. These improvements, which will complement those associated with the Cornbow Redevelopment, will consist of a tidy up of the island and additional planting, whilst retaining the existing trees. Work is also being carried out on improved signage so that Halesowen will be more visible to the shopper, tourist or visitor. It is also envisaged that these signs will serve the dual purpose of addressing and fitting in with the proposed plans to develop the in bloom scheme.

4. The partnership approach to developing the “in bloom” initiative is continuing with partners from Sandvik, Asda, Vale Retail and the Chamber of Commerce: efforts are being made by the working group attract new potential partners.

Transportation issues

5. The Grange Island safety scheme has reached completion according to programme.
6. As reported at the last meeting, the Council’s Landscape Architects have started work on the design for the surface using themes local to Halesowen to help to mark this gateway location. A second future phase comprising a piece of sculpture using, perhaps, references to Halesowen Abbey, the Stour and Clent Hills and the surrounding countryside, would depend on the availability of future finance. This could include imaginative lighting, helping to give a sense of place to the gateway to Halesowen from the A456.
7. A display for Grange island was held between 1st December 2009 to January 4th 2010 following a report and display at this Committee. A verbal report on the outcome of both these consultation will be reported to the Committee.

Town Centre Management Issues

8. Since the last report on this subject to the Area Committee on the 11th November 2009 the Town Centre Management services has carried out the following:

Proposed events:

Christmas Lights Switch On 21st November 2009

- Halesowen Chamber of Trade held Halesowen Town Centre’s annual “Christmas lights” event on Saturday 21st November 2009. A fun fair was arranged for the day. The day was hosted by BRMB’s radio; the torrential rain did not stop visitors and shoppers from enjoying the day. Peppa Pig entertained the crowd and switched on the towns Christmas lights with the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Peter Miller.

Sandvik Tree Christmas Lights Switch On 7th December 2009

- This is an annual event with representatives from Sandvik who have sponsored the Christmas tree inviting the Deputy Mayor to switch on the town tree lights. The event had approximately 100 local school children singing Christmas carols accompanied by a school brass band in Somers Square. After which the Deputy Mayor Councillor Peter Miller and Deputy Mayoress Hillary Miller were presented with a new tree by Mr. Alan Boulton Managing Director for Sandvik Ltd a brief speech of thanks to all present was made and the tree’s white lights were then switched on to applause from everyone.

Churches Together Carol Service 19th December 2009

- Churches Together held their annual Carol Service in Somers Square on Saturday 19th December 2009. It was well received by visitors, shoppers and residents in the town centre.

Finance

9. There are currently limited resources available for public realm developments which could contribute to an 'in Bloom' initiative. All other activities and developments detailed within this report are funded from resources held by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
10. A partnership approach is being developed in order to potentially fund a Halesowen in Bloom initiative which will be supported by external funding.

Law


11. 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

12. The proposal contained within this report complies with the Council's equal opportunities policy.
13. 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

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



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John B Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officers: Michelle Clare
Telephone: 01384 815428
Email: michelle.clare@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers
None