

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 30th MARCH 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the activities of the Town Centre Development service in relation to the management of Halesowen.

2.0 BACKGROUND

What is Town Centre Management?

- 2.1 The Association of Town Centre Management has defined Town Centre Management as ‘improving the lives of real people by the enhancement of public resources, the physical and economic regeneration of urban centres and the creation and maintenance of a healthy business environment’
- 2.2 Town Centre Management has developed across the UK over the past 10-15 years, to address the competition faced by urban centres from out-of-town and edge-of centre retail developments and from other urban centres.
- 2.3 It emphasises the importance of creating a high quality customer and visitor experience at every level, from cleansing, maintenance and safety, to marketing and promotion, special events and festivals, providing advice and assistance to local businesses and attracting inward investment.
- 2.4 It is based on the belief that urban areas are complex and that the problems that affect them can best be addressed through full engagement of businesses, retailers, the local authority, statutory agencies, community groups and residents.

The Councils approach

- 2.5 Each pair of town centres within the Borough of Dudley (Dudley/Stourbridge and Halesowen/ Brierley Hill) have been allocated a dedicated Regeneration Manager, a Town Centre Manager and an Information Support Officer.

- 2.6 The aim of the team in respect to Town Centre Management in Halesowen is to work in partnership with others to: -
- promote the town centre to residents and as a place for businesses to invest and;
 - work with other Council services to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of appropriate services e.g. refuse, recycling, traffic, parking, crime and safety, street markets, information and advice.
- 2.7 A new Town Centre Manager for Brierley Hill and Halesowen was appointed in November 2004, with the specific remit to encourage: -
- the promotion of a positive image for the town;
 - a better perception of the town centre amongst retailers, businesses, visitors and residents;
 - increased income and investment in the town ;
 - enhanced business prosperity.
- 2.8 An important part of the teams approach initially has been to establish positive working relationships with a wide and varied range of individuals and organisations in Halesowen. This early work will now help to support the team (and in particular the Town Centre Manager) in moving forward to deliver the key tasks outlined in this report.
- 2.9 The role of the Regeneration Manager is to support the development of a long-term vision for Halesowen in partnership with others and crucially, through the work of the Town Centre Development Team.

Town Centre Development Service

- 2.10 It is now vital for the new team to establish itself and build a positive relationship with everyone associated with Halesowen. The team will regularly be represented at Halesowen Area Committee meetings and will be able to respond to town centre development issues raised.
- 2.11 The delivery of both town centre management and regeneration activities in Halesowen will help to -
- establish a shared vision for Halesowen Town Centre;
 - manage the Borough's amenities so that there is a safe and clean environment with good access for all;
 - involve and communicate with residents, businesses, investors, employees and partners to create a quality experience for all;
 - enable local people and businesses to benefit from the development and improvement of the Borough of Dudley;
 - to develop a masterplan for the town centre to bring together key stakeholders and partners to work together for its future regeneration. This approach will also provide a mechanism to raise funding for town centre initiatives.

Progress during 2004/05

- 2.12 The following has been achieved so far:-
- recruitment of a new Regeneration Manager Town Centre Manager.
 - resolving recent youth issues sensitively in the town centre in partnership with the police.
 - carrying out regular audit 'health checks' within the town centre and using information collated to report and resolve issues.
 - supporting the successful Christmas Lights Switch On Event on the 20th November 2004 in partnership with the Halesowen Town Chamber.
 - arranging the installation of the new permanent town Christmas tree with the support of Sandvik on the 29th November 2004.
 - helping to promote the successful 'Safer Shopping Award' to Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership on the 30th November 2004, and barging the benefits of this initiative to Halesowen.
 - encouraging regular use of Somers Square for entertainment and events (this new team is continuing to push forward with arranging for even more groups and organisations to use this area).
- 2.13 An increase in activity within the town centre has led to a range of interested groups and organisations working with the Council, such as:-
- both the 'Birmingham Christeldelphians' and the 'United Churches Together' performing carols during December 2004.
 - the regular Halesowen Farmers Markets successfully organised by an independent private sector organisation, LSD.
 - the Mayors Tsunami Disaster Coffee Morning in January 2005.
 - the promotion of BRMB's Tsunami Campaign in Somers Square.
 - the promotion of coach travel holidays by Global Travel which led to significant numbers of enquiries from both local residents and visitors.
 - 'Scorock' Dancing demonstration by a local dance company which was widely welcomed by local traders and residents alike.
- 2.14 The Town Centre Development Team is also coordinating both the St Georges Day Event (to be held on the 23rd April 2005) and the installation of the town's own civic flagpole. The St Georges Day event is significant in that Halesowen has been chosen as the first town centre in the Borough to hold this event.
- 2.15 A wide and varied range of day-to-day issues continue to be progressed from considering requests for licences for street traders to working with local groups to identify opportunities to secure funding for special projects.

Key priorities for 2005/06

- 2.16 Key priorities for the team for this coming financial year include:-
- developing a marketing campaign and signage programme;
 - working to improve the maintenance and cleaning of the town centre and to instil a sense of civic pride and ownership;
 - partnership work with the police, retail crime initiatives and the Crime Reduction Partnership to reduce the fear of crime in the town centre;
 - helping improve transport and access in and around the town centre;
 - supporting and exploring suitable retail and leisure opportunities that could enhance the town centre;
 - supporting the development of new town centre facilities that provide additional choice and meet demand;
 - assisting with organising on-going seasonal events and taking opportunities to raise Halesowen's profile as a visitor destination.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 That the contents of this report be noted and that the Committee support the work of the Town Centres Development Team.

4.0 FINANCE

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LAW

- 5.1 The Council may do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of it's area under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The proposals in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That the proposals set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report be approved.



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Director of the Urban Environment – John B. Millar

Contact Officer: David Guy ext 5460

Background documents used in the preparation of this report

None.