

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 28th JUNE 2006

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Committee on the preparation and progress of a consultation exercise to support the future development of Halesowen town centre.

Background

2. Members, residents and local stakeholders in Halesowen have recently expressed concern at the short term impact of the significant regeneration activities underway in the town centre, and in respect of associated transportation issues. Members will recall a joint report of the Director of the Urban Environment and Halesowen Area Liaison Officer, presented on 22nd March 2006, advising the Committee of the measures currently taken to address such concerns. Specifically, the report detailed proposals by Vale Retail, concerns relating to the departure of Safeway, traffic congestion and town centre access, proposed improvements to Halesowen bus station, traffic regulation orders, sustainable transport and car parking. This report stated that given the wide range of regeneration and transportation issues identified “consultation with the public, town centre traders and others would be appropriate”.
3. The purpose of the public consultation exercise is two-fold. Firstly, to seek the views of Members, residents and local stakeholders on their perceptions of the existing town centre environment and opportunities for future enhancements. Secondly, to collate information in relation to transportation and accessibility issues within and adjacent to the town centre.
4. This exercise will be carried out separately to the Halesowen Area Action Plan which is scheduled to commence in July 2008 and for which the timescale is constrained by the Council’s Local Development Scheme. However, the results obtained will provide useful information which will support the evidence base for the development of the Area Action Plan. In the meantime, the results of this exercise will be analysed and made available to the local community and other

stakeholders. Moreover, this exercise supports the strategic aims of the Council Plan and Community Strategy, respectively, by focussing on the regeneration of the town centre.

5. The timetable for public consultation and feedback of headline findings has been prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the draft 'Statement of Community Involvement' (March 2006) and the 'How to Consult' (Dudley MBC, 2004) document; the latter being a practical tool kit to assist in undertaking consultation activities.
6. The management of the process is fundamental. It is therefore proposed that the process is steered by a working group of members consisting of the chairman of the Area Committee and one Member from each of the wards in the Area Committee jurisdiction.
7. The timetable for implementing the Halesowen consultation exercise is separated into three stages, namely:

Stage One

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| July 06 | Establish working group to steer consultation exercise. |
| August 06 | Prior to the six-week consultation exercise, pre-consultation will be carried out with key stakeholders to inform the focus of a questionnaire. A progress report will be presented to Area Committee in September detailing stakeholders consulted and a timetable for the 6 week consultation period. |

Stage Two

September / October 06

Commencement of six-week consultation period to include consultation stands in Halesowen town centre, publicised questionnaire and tailored consultation with specific stakeholder groups.

Progress report to Area Committee in November detailing the consultation approach and stakeholders consulted

Stage Three

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| March 07 | Final report to Area Committee detailing the outcomes of the consultation exercise and solutions to address town centre concerns. |
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Finance

8. The cost of preparing the Halesowen consultation exercise will be met from existing revenue budgets.

Law

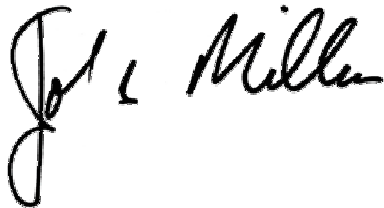
9. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough.

Equality Impact

10. The proposals set out in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. The consultation exercise will offer the opportunity to engage all sectors of the community particularly 'hard to reach' groups such as children and young people, ethnic communities and elderly.

Recommendation

11. That the Committee endorses the above consultation exercise and timetable from July 06 to March 07
12. That the Committee agrees to the formation of a Working Group to steer the consultation exercise as detailed in paragraph 6 of this report.



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Director of the Urban Environment

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List of Background Papers

- 1 *'How to Consult'* (April 2004) Dudley MBC
- 2 *'Draft Statement of Community Involvement'* (March 2006) Dudley MBC
- 3 Report to Halesowen Area Committee (22 March 2006) *'Halesowen Town Centre – Transport and Regeneration Issues'*