

Halesowen area Committee - 3rd September 2009

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 27th August, 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.

Town Centre Development

3. Following the redevelopment and successful opening of the Cornbow Centre and Bus Station in late 2008, attention is being given via the Town Centre Working Group to improving the street scene and to further regeneration projects in the town centre.
4. At the last Area Committee meeting on 1st July 2009, Members supported the Action Plan for Environmental Improvements and recommended the Plan for approval by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration.
5. The first stage of work in the Action Plan has been completed in relation to proposals for improvements to public realm and includes proposals for improvements to key gateways, town centre lighting and public spaces. This study is identifying opportunities for environmental improvements, will set priorities for action and will assist in allocating financial resources as and when they become available. It also includes the feasibility study into the "Halesowen in Bloom" initiative.
6. The second stage, for which the Working Group on the 27th August are also to choose preferred locations will involve the preparation of a number of more detailed proposals.

7. The feasibility study into 'Halesowen in Bloom' is currently assessing the opportunities, resources and partnership engagement required for a successful programme. With respect to community engagement, it is proposed to carry out a series of community based environmental projects and events over the next 12 months in order to measure the interest and support for an 'In Bloom' initiative. A partnership approach to developing the "in bloom" initiative is being put in place with partners from Sandvik, Asda, Vale Retail and the Chamber of Commerce who have been invited to participate and given the strong history of private sector support for environmental enhancements in the town this will prove a good starting point. Subject to the outcome of the feasibility study and the identification of resources required for the delivery of an 'In Bloom' initiative, it is proposed that these partners, together with the Working Group, will oversee the initiative.

8. In terms of available resources for environmental enhancements, a sum has been allocated for landscape/public art provision as part of the capital budget for the Grange Island improvements, which will allow for early delivery of enhancements to a key gateway to the town. Furthermore, Members will be aware that the Committee's Delegated Capital Budget includes £17,000 for town centre improvements. Since the adoption of the Planning Obligation..

9. The Working Group will also consider the proposal to organise and oversee a competition for pupils in schools and colleges in Halesowen to design a flag for Halesowen. A verbal report will be given on progress at the Area Committee meeting.

Transportation issues

10. The Grange Island safety scheme is proceeding according to programme. At the time of writing all traffic cross overs are substantially complete in preparation for contra flow working, as are the outer kerb lines and service duct crossings. Although the temporary traffic management (TTM) associated with the works has been removed whenever possible it has caused delays as was to be expected, and work will continue to minimise delays.

11. The Committee will no doubt be pleased to hear that as discussed at the meeting of 4th September 2008 and in accordance with their request at the meeting of the 1st July 2009 the four pedestrian crossings situated between the Grange and Hayley Green islands are included in the scheme.

Town Centre Management Issues

12. Since the last report on this subject to the Area Committee on the 1st July 2009 the Town Centre Management service has planned the following:

13. Proposed events

Summer 2009

A programme of children's activities was organised for the summer holiday in Somers Square on Thursdays.

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| ▪ Climbing wall | 30 th July 2009 |
| ▪ Jolly Jesters Bouncy Castle | 6 th August 2009 |
| ▪ Ray Roberts Mini Fair rides | 13 th August 2009 |
| ▪ Jolly Jesters Bouncy Castle | 20 th August 2009 |
| ▪ Climbing wall | 27 th August 2009 |

14. Halesowen by the Sea

The event took place on Saturday 1st August 2009 on a typical summers day. This family event included Punch and Judy, seaside donkeys, sand and street entertainment and Halesowen sticks of rock. DJ Porky compared the day providing music and competitions for children. The RNLI brought in a life boat. The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Pat Martin attended.

Finance

15. 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 reported are funded from resources held by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

16. As detailed in paragraph 8 of this report the Committee's Delegated Capital Budget includes £17,000 for town centre improvements. Additional funding may also be forthcoming through Planning Obligations which seek financial contributions from developers for the provisions and enhancement of public realm in the Borough's centres.

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 Councils 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 the Action Plan proposals for Halesowen Town Centre and the progress regarding the Grange Island Safety Scheme.



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List of Background Papers
None