

Halesowen Area Committee – 1st July 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 21st May, 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. The Working Group has overseen the preparation of an Action Plan for environmental improvements, and these are set out in detail in Appendix 1 to this report. The programme includes the preparation of proposals for improvements to public realm in and around the town centre, a feasibility study on the opportunity for a 'Halesowen in Bloom' initiative, and a series of events with an environmental theme.
5. Work is well underway on the proposals for improvements to public realm and will include 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 on the basis of short, medium and long term projects and will assist in allocating financial resources as and when they become available.
6. 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.

7. 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 Obligations Supplementary Planning Document in February 2009 the Council has been able to secure increased levels of financial contributions from developers for the provision and enhancement of public realm in the Borough’s centres

Transportation issues

8. Work has started on improvements at the Grange island which are intended to improve safety by re-shaping the island and its approach roads, provide improved pedestrian crossing points and will be reinforced with reduced speed limits for traffic through the junction.
9. Diversion of Statutory Undertakes plant and equipment to facilitate the scheme commenced in April 2009 and was followed by the main construction works starting in June. The main works will take 20 weeks and should be complete for the end of October 2009

Town Centre Management Issues

10. Since the last report on this subject to the Area Committee on the 11th March 2009 the Town Centre Management services has carried out the following:
11. **Hollywood comes to Halesowen - Thursday 9th April 2009** Audiences in Halesowen were treated to the Hollywood experience when Reels on Wheels screened the film ‘Bolt’ on Thursday 9th April 2009. Set up by the Zion Christian centre in partnership with Town Centre Management, the family friendly animation was shown at The Auditorium at the Zion Christian Centre. Tickets for the showing cost £2.50 for adults and children and included free drinks and snacks. The screening entertained over one hundred youngsters enjoying their Easter school holidays in Halesowen and was attended by the Mayor Councillor Ray Burston
12. **Historic Halesowen Saturday 2nd May 2009.** This event included;
 - The Company of Artisans, (tile making, plaster cast making and wattle and daubing)
 - Arrow making, bow making and weaving
 - Arrows and weapon display
 - Music and wandering minstrels
 - Barber Surgeon with medieval medicine and surgery display and Armoured Knight

- Knights Hospitallers with display of weapons and equipment
- Jesters and Knights and street entertainers

The Mayor Councillor Ray Burston attended this successful event

13. **Whitsun Holiday week** - Climbing wall and three fair rides in Somers Square
14. **Celebration of Spring 30th May 2009** - LSD Promotions (who hold a fortnightly street market in Halesowen) have permission in their licence to hold an additional market in a month where a fifth Saturday occurs. Town Centre Management in partnership with LSD Promotions held a Celebration of Spring Street Market and Entertainment. Entertainment took place in Somers Square with jugglers, unicyclists, drumming tutorials, plate spinning and a jazz band with Porky the disk jockey acting as compere for the day. Both the market and the event were very well attended throughout the day. A key message that the Compere was asked to repeat was the special offer that Halesowen has and the opportunity for shoppers to support their local retailers
15. **Proposed events**; A programme of activities is currently being organised for the summer holiday, and this includes
16. **Halesowen by the Sea**; This event is still in development and will take place on Saturday 1st August 2009. This family event will include seaside donkeys, sand and street entertainment.

Finance

17. 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.
18. As detailed in paragraph 6 of this report, a partnership approach is being developed in order to potentially fund a Halesowen in Bloom initiative.

Law

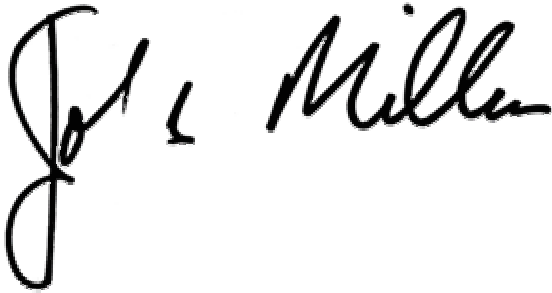
19. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough.

Equality Impact

20. The proposal contained within this report complies with the Councils equal opportunities policy.
21. 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

22. That the Committee notes the progress of development in Halesowen Town Centre and recommends the Cabinet Member for Regeneration approve the Action Plan for Environmental Improvements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John B. Millar'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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John B Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

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List of Background Papers
None

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE – ACTION PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS

ACTION	PROJECT DETAILS	INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY
<u>Halesowen in Bloom National Competition entry:</u>	<p>Feasibility study into a Halesowen 'In Bloom' entry</p> <p>Pilot phase using predominantly existing activities to test community support and provide evidence for the in bloom portfolio. Ongoing liaison with the national in bloom co-ordinator</p>	<p>Completion July 2009</p> <p>Pilot year March 09 - Dec 09</p> <p>June 09</p> <p>July 09</p> <p>Summer 09</p> <p>Oct 09 – Dec 09</p> <p>Summer 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p>	<p>This would be split into two areas;</p> <p>Overview Halesowen Working Group - In Bloom steering group</p> <p>Delivery The Church of St John the Baptist flower festival</p> <p>Allotment holders</p> <p>Schools Scarecrow Competition</p> <p>Tree dressing competition</p> <p>Input from Children's Centre</p> <p>Shop window dressing Christmas</p>

ACTION	PROJECT DETAILS	INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY
	Subject to available resources, delivery of In Bloom initiative	Yr1 - 2010 Yr2 – 2011 Yr3 – 2012 Yr4 - 2013	Potential engagement of Community Pay Back, Schools & Youth Services Support from Partnerships & local businesses and chamber of trade
<u>Halesowen Frost Fair</u>	This project could link in with the Halesowen in Bloom, demonstrates year round activity and will also increase footfall in the town if delivered after Christmas down turn.	Early 2010	Community involvement essential; would help generate good community spirit and partnership work with schools, traders and Chamber of Commerce
<u>Public Realm Study</u>	Will set out proposals for improvements to public realm and will include 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 on the basis of short, medium and long term projects and will assist in allocating financial resources as and when they become available	Draft report and proposals to Working Group early July 09; final proposals by end July 09; implementation then dependant on funding. Priority given to 'quick wins' using available resources	The work will require engagement with a number of partners and stakeholders

ACTION	PROJECT DETAILS	INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY
<u>Trout in the Town:</u>	An initiative promoted by the Wild Trout Trust which seeks to improve and celebrate 'lost' urban rivers, with clear environmental, cultural and educational benefits. The Environment Agency are prepared to support this in Halesowen; could link into Healthy Town option pilot	Baseline info Feb – Apr 09, Apr-May 09 look into funding from Wild Trout Trust & meetings with Environment Agency May – June Electric fishing survey of the water / environment	Opportunity for support from Community Pay Back Scheme. Children's Centre & Zion are interested
<u>World Rivers Day</u>	As a subproject, the celebration of this international event	Sept 09	
<u>Zion Christian Centre Regeneration</u>	Faith group working up wide ranging programme for 3 rd place project - opportunities for associated public realm improvements	Pre-planning application negotiations underway	Continuing liaison with project leaders
<u>St John's Church Regeneration</u>	Faith group prepared to invest in regeneration to bring the church up to 21 st century standards. Work may be phased and can offer a wide range of facilities - opportunities for associated public realm improvements		Continuing liaison with project leaders

