

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 22nd JUNE 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 Team in relation to the management of Halesowen.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A report was presented to this Committee on the 30th March 2005 by the Town Centre Development Service providing a summary of the work of the team, progress made during the 2004-5 municipal year and an indication of future issues and priorities for the 2005/06 municipal year
- 2.2 The Committee requested that the Town Centre Manager provide regular updates on Town Centre issues on future occasions
- 2.3 The following information provides a summary of progress made by the team since the last report in March 2005

3.0 ST GEORGE'S DAY CELEBRATIONS – 23rd April 2005

- 3.1 The event was attended by over seven thousand people, it received extensive media coverage and is considered to have been an extremely successful event. The Mayor of Dudley, Cllr Malcolm Knowles opened the festivities by leading a formal civic procession through the town centre to Somers Square.
- 3.2 Following the release of over 500 red and white balloons, those present were invited to become involved in a wide variety of events and activities scheduled throughout the day. The main focus of the celebrations took place in a large covered stage at the top of the square, supported by a special entertainment area, flanked by classic Mini cars provided by Halesowen Classic Mini Owners Club.
- 3.3 The activity in and around the square was complemented by the widespread enthusiasm and support shown by local businesses, residents, visitors & entertainers in celebrating the true spirit of St Georges Day.

3.4 Dudley Performing Arts provided the acts which included:-

- A medley of Beatles songs by Earls High Orchestra
- Short pieces of Shakespeare performed by Netherton Arts Centre
- Newfield Park Primary School singing a range of traditional English songs
- Sea Shanties performed by Halesowen Brass Band
- A medley of English folk songs by the Earls High Folk Group

3.5 The entertainment area was also used throughout the day, by special representatives of the Sealed Knot, the Ceroc Dance School and the Bedcote Morris Dancers providing entertainment in between acts. Halesowen Rotaract and Halesowen Rotary Club provided volunteers to act as marshals for the day.

3.6 A children's face painter and hair braider were employed for the day resulting with a multitude of colourful faces in the town. Halesowen Library held storytelling sessions for local children on the legend of St George, and a painting and dragon making competition for local children with the Mayor awarding book tokens for two age group winners.

3.7 Having reviewed the day's events with West Midlands Police, it was encouraging that with so many people in the town centre, that there were no reports of criminal incidents or antisocial behaviour taking place in the town on the day. Significant thanks must go to West Midlands Police and the Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership for their support in ensuring this aspect of the day was so well controlled.

4.0 ST GEORGES - BEST DRESSED SHOP AWARDS

4.1 Through the St Georges Day Celebrations, Halesowen pioneered a new award event, namely The Saint Georges Day Award for the best dressed shop presented and judged by the Mayor of Dudley. This is proposed to be a regular competition at future St Georges Day celebrations to be held through the Borough

4.2 The winners from this years award were:-

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|-----------------------|---|
| 1 st Place | Hallmark Card Shop, High Street |
| 2 nd Place | Thorntons Chocolates, Cornbow Shopping Centre |
| 3 rd Place | Help The Aged Shop, Queensway |

A "Best Dressed Shop" Trophy was awarded to the winner and second and third prize winners were presented with commemorative bottles of wine from Half Penny Green Vineyard.

5.0 ACHIEVEMENTS AND ISSUES

5.1 A new flagpole adjacent to the Social Services office in the Great Cornbow has been erected and has been well received by members of the public. The flagpole has been used to fly the Saint George's flag on Saint Georges Day and the Union Flag on the 8th May 2005 for the VE Day celebrations.

- 5.2 New “Safer Shopping Zone” signs will soon be erected in Halesowen as a result of the Home Office recognition of the Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership and Halesowen Town for their continued fight against crime. It is hoped that this will promote the work of the partnership in the future and encourage investment into the area to tackle the fear of crime.
- 5.3 Halesowen’s pigeon population was discussed at the last Halesowen Area Committee. As a result two new “Please do not feed the pigeons” signs will soon be installed in the main areas of concern. Expert advice is currently being sought to assess the extent and impact of pigeons in the town centre and to give the Council a set of recommendations on how to act.
- 5.4 The ongoing issue of fly tipping on land in the Council’s ownership at the back of the Housing Office on the Queensway has now been addressed by officers in Waste Care. Regular cleaning up of this area will now take place and it is intended to seek prosecutions where appropriate.
- 5.5 A planning application has now been submitted by Vale Retail Ltd for the redevelopment of the Cornbow Shopping Centre and this will be considered by the Development Control Committee in due course. The Town Centre Management Team is continuing to provide advice on the proposals as part of the planning consultation process.
- 5.6 In addition to these achievements/ issues, the Town Centre Management Team continues to work proactively for the benefit of the town centre on a daily basis through:-
- Carrying out regular audits of the town centre and working to resolve issues to ensure that the town centre is kept safe and attractive
 - Maintaining a local presence in the town centre so we can develop an open and working relationship with local residents, businesses and visitors
 - Working with West Midlands Police and the Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership to tackle crime and reduce the fear of crime, through early identification of potential offenders and the development of new initiatives/ projects
 - Liaising with environmental enforcement officers to ensure that problems relating to dog fouling, littering etc are tackled proactively
 - Attending and participating fully at community, voluntary and business meetings to contribute towards their own aims and objectives
 - Liaising with licencing to take action against illegal street trading, collections etc and in providing comment on licence applications, including attendance at licencing committee meetings to justify any objections/ recommendations for support
 - Offering advice and guidance to people wishing to use entertainment areas or other areas of the town for various uses

- Responding proactively to planning applications as part of consultation process, looking at the impact on the town centre and ensuring that the interests of the town centre are raised with the relevant planning officer
- Working with local groups/ organisations to provide guidance as to the development of local community projects
- Responding promptly to queries and requests for help from the general public

6.0 PROPOSAL

6.1 That the contents of this report be noted and that the Committee continue to support the work of the Town Centres Development Team.

7.0 FINANCE

7.1 There are no direct financial implications contained in this report.

8.0 LAW

8.1 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.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 That the proposals set out in paragraph 6.1 of this report be approved

Bernard Meade

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J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Contact Officer: Stuart Perry, Town Centre Manager - extension 5708

Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

None