

Halesowen Area Committee –9th September 2010

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 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, which has with the remit of overseeing physical development in the Town Centre, last met on the 21st April 2010.

Regeneration and Planning Issues

3. As reported to this Committee at its meeting on the 7th July, work is continuing on the Action Plan for environmental improvements for the Town Centre with particular focus on the first and pilot year for 'Halesowen in Bloom' and on seeking financial and voluntary support from partners and the community.
4. A wide range of community, social and voluntary groups and schools in the Halesowen area have been approached for support and as a result a number of positive responses have been received towards supporting the in bloom scheme. Research and experience elsewhere suggests that this support will continue to grow as the scheme develops.
5. The partnership approach reported to previous meetings of this Committee continues to develop. Officers are continuing to work with Future Skills Dudley to develop horticultural training options for volunteers who may work on the Halesowen in bloom scheme and will as a result be able to achieve nationally accepted qualifications.
6. To date 9 expressions of interest and 8 full funding applications have been submitted to external funding organisations. Work is continuing with the preparation and submission of applications to other sources of external funding. Funding bids continue to focus on;

- Town Centre floral displays and environmental enhancements as a horticultural training initiative through Halesowen In Bloom
 - The development of a 'pocket park', with planting, seating and public art, on the open space adjacent to Birmingham Street
 - A public art mosaic project, possibly incorporating the recent Halesowen flag
 - Creation of a Town Vegetable Garden as a process to develop skills and interest in healthy eating and food preparation
7. It is fair to say that as a Pilot Year the initiative has so far been a success in that it has demonstrated that, based on the work carried out to date, there appears to be an appetite from business and the community to support an In Bloom initiative. Based on this, and the need to secure additional resources to deliver more in the first full year In Bloom scheme, work has been completed on identifying actual locations, costs and feasibility of future floral displays in the town centre and on proposals on how an effective In Bloom submission will be made. It is proposed that this work will form the basis of an active marketing campaign that is intended to secure additional sponsorship in time to provide a much greater level of floral displays in the town for the 2010/11 season.

Installation of welcome/information for shoppers & visitors

8. Officers are currently working with Centro on the location of new welcome and information signage at the Bus Station and work is continuing to secure the installation of the second sign at the top of the High Street.

Replace the Fingerpost in the Finger Post Garden

9. The replacement fingerpost sign has been installed in Fingerpost Gardens.

Husky Dog Island

10. The works have been completed but the planting will now take place in the autumn, having been postponed due to the exceptionally dry weather earlier in the summer.

Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP)

11. The Halesowen AAP is going through the Options Document stage and is currently subject to a consultation exercise running from July 30th to September 10th 2010. This has included a two day community consultation period in the Cornbow Centre on the 12th and 13th of August. The Publication Stage of this work will commence in January 2011 with a further consultation period of 6 weeks. The completed document will be subject to an Examination in Public in October 2011 followed by adoption by the Council in July 2012.

Halesowen Bus Station

12. A number of complaints have been made by members of the public in respect of lack of litter bins in the Bus Station adjacent to the entrance to the Cornbow Centre. It is ultimately intended that the Concourse area between the station

and the Cornbow Centre will be adopted as public highway and maintained at the public expense. Unfortunately this has been delayed by a number of issues that have emerged since the bus station opened. The Concourse is therefore not currently maintained by the Council and remains the responsibilities of the developers concerned.

13. Officers are seeking to resolve these issues at the earliest opportunity in order that appropriate litter bins and receptacles for cigarettes will be provided.

Town Centre Management Issues

14. Summer activities started in Halesowen on between Wednesday 28th July and 25th August with the provision of free activities for children in Somers Square.
15. The Halesowen by the Sea event on Saturday 7th August attracted thousands of visitors all enjoying free donkey rides, stilt walkers, side shows and Halesowen Rock.
16. The Victorian Fair is due to be launched again as a partnership between the Council and Halesowen Rotary Club, and the event is scheduled for the 8th October.
17. The Christmas lights are due to be switched on Saturday November 20th 2010 .
18. The Christmas Tree kindly sponsored by Sandvik Coromat Uk will be installed and the lights switched on the 10th December 2010.

Finance

19. A number of the issues raised within this report have a direct financial implication on the Council. However, all costs detailed which fall on the Council will be funded by existing capital or revenue budgets.

Law

20. 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.
21. The Council is empowered to improve Highways under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980. Traffic Regulation orders are made under powers contained in section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The traffic calming Act 1992 amends the Highways Act 1980 to allow works to be carried out to promote safety and to preserve or improve the environment. Section 111 of the local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.

Equality Impact

22. A principal role of the Directorate of the Urban Environment is to encourage inclusivity amongst all sectors of the community, including the needs of children and young people. All projects have been conducted in full accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policies and should in no way have any prejudicial impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and / or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

23. That the Committee notes the progress of development in Halesowen Town Centre.



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