

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>TOWN CENTRES UPDATE REPORT</b>
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<i>ALL</i>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>HEAD OF REGENERATION</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	NO

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting of this Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012. I reported on the support being given to Wirral's retail areas. The Chair of this Committee has now asked for an update report on Wirral's retail centres, and the initiatives that are being pursued to support them. This report summarises progress with current initiatives, the development of a Trader Toolkit and Action Plans for individual centres. The report is for information and noting.
- 1.2 A short presentation on the contents of this report along with a demonstration of the toolkit and an example of one of the action plans will be given at the meeting.

### 2.0 PROGRESS REPORT

- 2.1 This report outlines progress to date on various initiatives and work areas.

#### **Town Teams**

- 2.2 In the September report, I indicated that following the second round of Portas Pilot announcements, Government had further announced a Town Team Partnership scheme which comprised a national package of support totalling £5.5 million. The purpose of this funding was to give those Town Teams which were unsuccessful in bidding to be Portas Pilots, the opportunity to sign up to be a Town Team Partnership. These proposals had to be endorsed and submitted to Government, by the Member of Parliament in whose constituency the Town Team is located.. The Town Team Partnerships will receive £10,000 of Government funds as part of a package of support, to help them put elements of their plans into action and they will also be able to access support from a variety of experts to help tackle issues within their centres. The Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) is playing a key role in delivering this support. The ATCM has published a 'Town Team Prospectus' which summarises what support will be available and which can be viewed on their website. A "Town Team Special Advisor" for the North West Region has been appointed, whose role it is to support, mentor and provide advice to Town Teams, especially those newly established. However, the support is not a full time role, but on a consultancy basis and with around 50 Town Teams in the North West Region, the advisor is not able to offer 'face to face' advice such as attending individual town team meetings although she may be able to attend a meeting of all the Town Team Partners in Wirral and this is currently being explored.

- 2.3 Seven Town Team partnerships are being supported by Government funding across the Borough and a summary of the individual projects and lead partner organisations are highlighted at Appendix 1. Liscard Town Team for their own reasons, chose not to submit an application to become a Town Team Partnership.

### **High Street X-Fund**

- 2.4 Members will recall that at the end of August 2012, the Government announced – *Our Town First: Future High Street X-Funds Prospectus*. Information regarding this opportunity was reported to Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The initiative sought bids from town centre locations to bid for resources to reward those areas that had introduced innovative and imaginative schemes in their locality since May 2011. The application process required applicants to submit an accompanying 2-4 minute YouTube video with their application form, along with a letter from the local authority, confirming its intention to act as the accountable body for any successful awards.
- 2.5 Information regarding the scheme was circulated widely to Town Teams and Trader groups and the closing date for applications to be submitted to Government was 6th December. Only one application has been forthcoming, that submitted by Oxtan Road Traders in Birkenhead, which is seeking support to build on previous work refurbishing empty units and then sub-dividing them into micro units for start up businesses.
- 2.6 The outcome of applications is expected to be announced in March 2013 and Members of this committee will be kept advised.

### **The Town Centre Tool Kit**

- 2.7 In the September report I indicated that officers were commencing work on the production of a Town Centre ‘toolkit’. The Toolkit aims to provide advice and encouragement to those centres without an active trader group by outlining some of the benefits of businesses working together, whether formally or informally. In addition the Toolkit provides advice on planning and other regulatory issues tailored to the specific needs of retailers and signposting them to appropriate contacts. It is intended that the toolkit will be a predominantly online resource and will be updated and expanded as necessary and form part of the suite of business support tools provided by the Council.

### **Planning Policy Developments in Relation to Retail Areas**

#### ***Core Strategy Local Plan Progress***

- 2.8 At its meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> October, Council approved the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy for Consultation. The consultation commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> December and runs until 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013 – The document can be viewed here [www.wirral-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal](http://www.wirral-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal). The Core Strategy proposes a network of 23 centres in the Borough (in addition to Birkenhead) which have provided the basis of the Strategy and Action Planning work. Additional policies relate to development within these centres, Food and drink uses, retail impact assessments and criteria for edge of centre and out of centre development

## ***Progress with Town, District and Local Centre Action Plans***

- 2.9 As Members may recall, my September report identified 6 centres to be the subject of a first phase of more detailed action planning work following on from the completion of the Town District and Local Centres Study and Delivery Framework in July 2011. These are Liscard, New Ferry, Seacombe (Poulton Rd / Borough Rd), New Brighton (Seabank Rd), Wallasey Village and Irby.
- 2.10 It is intended that each action plan will follow a common format and maps will be produced for each area. Each action plan will begin with an introductory section, which outlines the background to the work and explains the linkages with other plans and strategies. This leads into a section outlining the situation in the centre now, under the thematic headings of “Diversification and Identity”, “Transport and Accessibility”, “Placemaking” and “Events and Marketing”. This is followed by a section on the centre looking forward with suggested goals, outcomes and possible interventions in table format for each of the above headings.
- 2.11 The range of issues to be addressed under each heading within each action plan will vary between centres depending on their individual circumstances, but will include such things as:
- Clustering of non- retail uses and the appropriate policy response;
  - Detailed assessment of upper floor uses;
  - Detailed work on scope for contraction (or expansion) of the centres and how this would be managed;
  - Potential detailed environmental improvements;
  - Traffic management and parking;
  - Centre-specific design and other guidance;
  - Options for the local marketing of the centre and linkage to any borough wide initiatives.
- 2.12 An internal Council Team has been looking at each of the centres in turn drawing on expertise from Urban Design, Forward Planning, Transport and Investment Strategy teams. The first draft Action Plans for Liscard, New Ferry and Seabank Road have been prepared in draft form and are undergoing consultation with trader groups (where they exist), Ward Members and other stakeholders. It is intended that following consultation the first six finalised Action Plans will be reported to Cabinet in April for adoption. It is planned that a further six Action Plans will be prepared during 2013/14 and this will be considered further in the April Cabinet report.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 A risk register for each of the Town Centre Action Plans will be developed.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The action Plan reports for each area will consider options during the process of their preparation.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION**

5.1 Consultation has been undertaken on all of the elements outlined in the report. The Action Plan work will involve a series of consultation meetings which will be arranged for each of the centres.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

6.1 The Action Plan work will provide opportunity to involve voluntary, community and faith groups to inform the detail of the action plans.

## **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

7.1 Existing resources from a number of departments have been used to undertake this work.

7.2 There are no IT or asset implications.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached – (*insert appropriate hyperlink*).

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The Town Centre work will be in conformity with national policy in terms of sustainable development.

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 These are set out in the report.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 That progress is noted.

## **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 To update Members on the progress made to date on initiatives taking place in Town Centres.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Hayley Crook/ John Entwistle  
Investment Strategy / Forward Planning  
telephone: (0151) 691 8297 / 8221  
email: [hayleycrook@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:hayleycrook@wirral.gov.uk) or [Johnentwistle@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:Johnentwistle@wirral.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1 - TOWN TEAM PARTNERS – SUMMARY OF WIRRAL PROPOSALS**

#### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

#### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet- Town, District and Local Centre Study and Delivery Framework</b>	<b>21 July 2011</b>
<b>Cabinet – Neighbourhood plans and Area Forum funding</b>	<b>24 November 2011</b>
<b>Cabinet – Wirral Town Team funding</b>	<b>12 April 2012</b>
<b>Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>5 September 2012</b>
<b>Cabinet - Our Town First: High Street X-Fund</b>	<b>8 November 2012</b>

**APPENDIX 1 - TOWN TEAM PARTNERS  
SUMMARY OF WIRRAL PROPOSALS**

<b>Town Team and Sponsor</b>	<b>Project Summary</b>
<b>Birkenhead Market Town Team</b> (Birkenhead Market)	The resources will be used as a contribution towards the refurbishment of the ladies toilet block within the market complex.
<b>Birkenhead Town Centre</b> (Wirral Chamber of Commerce & Industry)	Funding will be used as a contribution to the salary costs to employ a dedicated Town Centre Manager, with a view to seeking further resources to establish a business improvement district for the area.
<b>Hoylake Town Team Partnership</b> (Hoylake Village Life)	The funding will be spent on a series of creative community events i.e. arts and cultural activities to be held in 2013 aimed at helping invigorate the high street and bringing businesses and communities together. These will complement activities that are being proposed in relation to a Viking Festival in the area.
<b>Moreton Cross Town Team</b> (Leasowe Development Trust)	The project seeks to pilot an initiative around alternative currency and to develop a Local Business Association through a dedicated web portal.
<b>New Ferry Town Team</b> (NFRAG)	To commission consultants to undertake a masterplanning exercise to turn the fortunes of the town around by attracting new, independent traders and nurturing start up businesses.
<b>New Brighton Town Team</b> (New Brighton Community Partnership)	The project will focus on a number of activities to create a "Town Square" concept. This will include activities such as markets, arts and book fairs and carnivals.
<b>Seabank Rd Town Team</b> (Seabank Rd Residents & Tenants Association)	Funding will go towards creating websites for 10 local businesses to promote their shops and the creation of a Business and Enterprise Forum. In addition project will support local unemployed residents to enable access to IT training and CV and jobhunting techniques and volunteer opportunities.

