

## **UPDATE ON THE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP AND THEIR APPOINTMENT OF A TOWN CENTRES MANAGER**

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**Portfolio:** Regeneration, Planning & Town Centres Development

**Ward(s) affected:** Primarily the Town Centre

### **Purpose of the Report**

The report provides an update and clarifies the status of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP) including the appointment of their Town Centres Manager (TCM), outlines the current funding and initial TCP key priorities.

### **Recommendations**

- (a) That progress is noted.
- (b) That Scrutiny Committee directs any comments for the Town Centre Partnership via the Council's Executive Board representative; the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning & Town Centres Development.

### **Reasons**

It is appropriate that the Scrutiny Committee reviews the progress of this key Council priority and this report provides an update in relation to the formation of the Company, use of theme groups to take forward action and importantly progress in the TCP in appointing their Town Centres Manager.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The formalisation of a Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP) is a clear objective of the Council's Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme. In March 2012, Cabinet agreed to the Council becoming a becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorised officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate the same. In July 2012 Cabinet agreed to the preferred model and formalisation of the TCP as a Community Interest Group.
- 1.2 As part of the new administration's commitment to the development of the town centre(s) as a clear priority and in recognising the likelihood that it would take a few months to recruit dedicated support, in July 2012 Cabinet also approved additional support in the form of short term secondment of the current Business Development Officer on a 0.5 FTE basis and continued provision of in-kind support to the TCP.

## **2. Issues**

### **2.1 Formalisation of a Newcastle Town Centre Partnership**

The first shadow TCP Board meeting was on 11 September. Membership comprised representatives from the original group of Chamber of Trade & Enterprise, Partnership Against Business Crime, Newcastle under Lyme BC, the New Vic Theatre, the Roebuck Shopping Centre, Keele University, independent retailers and the commercial sector.

One of the first issues considered by the shadow TCP Board was the establishment of a number of theme groups covering a range of issues. The theme groups comprise local businesses and organisations and relevant officers/members including a Board champion.

The Council officers have submitted the documentation to Companies House to enable registration of the TCP. Once the company is formally established with Companies House, it will be able to set up a bank account to receive funds with which to pay the TCM. A verbal update will be given at the meeting to outline progress with the legal registration of the company.

## 2.2 Delivery of emerging TCP priorities through theme groups

In order that the TCP engages with a wide range of stakeholders and seeks the support of the most appropriate agencies there are a range of theme groups. At the time of writing the status of the theme groups is as follows:

- Business support – the group has met and is establishing its terms of reference. It will consider business support in its widest sense from retail coaching to creating conditions for growth.
- Environment and infrastructure – the group is well established and is considering a number of projects, including better use of upper floors of business premises and chewing gum removal.
- Enterprise and innovation – the group will be responsible for taking forward some of the proposed 'Starting up' Portas projects including developing the Keele University business model for retail and assessing 'early win' projects such as the pop-up emporium.
- Night time economy – group is well established and is working on re-introducing 'Student nights' to improve links to Keele and Staffordshire universities and reviewing the opportunities to link the daytime and night-time activities (5pm-8pm).
- Marketing and events – group is well established and has already organised the Christmas lights switch on and is currently assessing quotations for the setting up of a website.
- Safety and security – this is being delivered by the Partnership Against Business Crime (PABC) and there is a representative linking both Partnerships.
- Finance and funding – this group has yet to meet but at the time of writing, the Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry has agreed to support the group and is providing advice to the TCP.
- Outdoor markets – the group has met and is seeking more representation from market traders. One of the first tasks to be undertaken is a Healthcheck from an accredited body which has commenced.

## 2.3 Town Centre Manager (TCM)

In agreeing to support the development of a TCM, Cabinet recognised that a post would be beneficial to coordinating the development and delivery of the agreed initiatives and plans on behalf of the Town Centre Partnership and to engage the wider business community and the council together to develop the plans in the future. It was also clearly stated that the Town Centre Partnership as the employing company will monitor performance of the post holder and most importantly they will want there to be accountability for delivery of agreed priority actions.

The TCP advertised the TCM post on the Association of Town Centre Management website, the council website and social media. Twenty applications were received and Shadow Board Members of the Town Centre Partnership interviewed four candidates on

22 November. The TCP has informally offered the position to the preferred candidate subject to normal checks including references and the establishment of the CIC company.

The Town Centre Manager will be employed by the TCP and it is expected that the TCM will take up their position in early in January 2013. A verbal update will be given at the meeting to outline further progress.

When Cabinet agreed to support the partnership financially to recruit a Town Centres Manager it was recognised that it was likely that it will take a few months to recruit and therefore interim arrangements were agreed. This included offering 50% of Business Development Officer's time to provide interim management alongside the related post tasks of providing support to town centre-related activities, consistent with the Council's objectives. In July this interim management role was agreed for three months subject to review, this support has continued and it is recommended that it continues until the TCM has been in post for a few weeks in order to provide successful handover of Board and Theme Group activity.

#### 2.4 Funding update

There is potentially a range of funding streams for the TCP and a significant level of funding is already coming together:

- The Council is committed to £30,000pa to support the recruitment of a TCM and a one off sum of £5,000 to develop a website.
- All towns that submitted Portas Pilot applications were eligible for a £10,000 payment from the DCLG provided the local MP confirmed support for the town team. Paul Farrelly signed up as a town team supporter and the money has been received by the Council on behalf of the TCP.
- As part of the M&S plans to develop at Wolstanton there has been a commitment to give the Town Centre Partnership £100,000 to deliver the partnership's objectives, along with a £10k p.a. revenue contribution. The main contribution of £100k is payable to the TCP on commencement of development but this is at least six months away and the five year commitment to an additional £10k per annum doesn't commence until M&S is trading.
- Looking forward it is still intended that the TCP explores the potential opportunity for the establishment of a Business Improvement District to provide sustainable long term funding for the TCP including the Town Centre Manager and a range of initiatives/activities.

It is expected that the formalised TCP will develop annual business plans and allocate funding to their priority areas over the forthcoming months.

### 3. Scrutiny Views

- 3.1 This report outlines progress and does not seek to make any recommendations. Members of the Scrutiny Committee are therefore asked to note progress and to direct any comments for the TCP via the Council's Executive Board representative; the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning & Town Centres Development.

#### 4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Outcomes from these actions will significantly affect the 'Borough of Opportunity' corporate priority, and will have implications for the quality of life, regeneration, and sustainability of the town centre, the borough as a whole and ultimately North Staffordshire.

#### 5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

There is no statutory requirement to carry out these recommendations.

#### 6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out but the actions identified will help to make the town centre more able to meet the needs of both residents and the business community, in particular those interested in the possibility of starting their own business.

#### 7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 Whilst the Council has allocated £30,000 to the TCP it has been recognised that the new partnership and the delivery model needs to be supported to establish itself and that it would be appropriate to allocate funding for at least a further two years with a review by the end of 24 months. As the TCP is formalising itself in December officers are recommending that this be seen as the formal commencement of the partnership and that the review takes place by no later than the end of December 2014 in order to both inform the Council's budget setting process and to ensure that the TCP is focused upon resolving the long term funding issue.
- 7.2 As mentioned above it is recognised for the Partnership to have long term sustainability it is intended that officers work with the partnership with a view to optimising external funding options (including the M&S funding, the potential for a Business Improvement District and support from Kidsgrove Town Council).

#### 8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1 Whilst the TCP shares many of the Council's aims and objectives in terms of economic development of the centres the Partnership is a separate company and as such the Council needs to be clear that whilst it can utilise the Member involvement at the TCP Board it cannot prescribe actions. There is a possible reputational risk if the TCP fails but potential benefits outweigh the risk.

#### 9. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 9.1 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agree to Newcastle under Lyme B.C. becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorises officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate the same.
- 9.2 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agrees to officers working under the auspices of the Newcastle town centre partnership to prepare and submit a bid to become a "Portas pilot", in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning and for the Council to act as the accountable body for administering any grant.
- 9.3 July 2012 – Cabinet agreed to the formalisation of the Town Centre Partnership and financial support for the TCP to appoint a Town Centres Manager

#### 10. **Background Papers**

None.