

UPDATE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17th September 2012

UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING THE NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP AND PLANS FOR A KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

Background

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 director of the emerging Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorised officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate it.

On 21st June 2012 the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a discussion paper drafted by the President of the Chamber, which outlined the possible ways forward to achieve the ambitions of the emerging Town Centre Partnership. Scrutiny also reviewed the revised Portas Pilot bid which was submitted for the second bidding round.

Cabinet Decision

Following Scrutiny Cabinet considered the issues around the TCP development and it was resolved at the July Cabinet that:

1. That Members agree to support the emergent Town Centre Partnership with the allocation of £30,000 in the current financial year for the recruitment of a Town Centres Manager and £5,000 to support the establishment of a website, both from the re-allocation of existing budgets.
2. That Members agree to the short term secondment of the current Business Development Officer on a 0.5 FTE basis to support the business community with town centres development activities / initiatives.
3. That officers be authorised to proceed with the formal establishment of the town centre partnership based around a Community Interest Company model (or similar entity), including the appointment of Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres.
4. That Members agree to the continued provision of in-kind support to the town centre partnership to assist with the following activities:
 - a. Recruitment of a town centres manager;
 - b. Formalisation of the town centre partnership;
 - c. Preparation of an action plan for at least the next 12 months and;
 - d. Exploration of options for establishing a sustainable funding model for the TCP.
5. That members note the plans included in the revised submitted Portas pilot application.

Newcastle TCP

Officers have met with local business representatives and agreement has been reached that the Newcastle TCP will be established as a Community Interest Company and at the time of writing this update the legal registration is being completed.

The Newcastle TCP objectives are:

- a. To develop and sustain a vibrant town centre for Newcastle-under-Lyme;
- b. To encourage private, public, community and voluntary sectors and any other stakeholders to work together to provide a prosperous and vibrant town centre;
- c. To create an inclusive environment for the enjoyment of all users of the town centre;
- d. To seek to raise Newcastle-under-Lyme's civic pride and sense of community;
- e. To promote a safe, clean and managed Town Centre during the day and night catering for businesses, visitors of all ages and local residents;

- f. To actively promote Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre as a first-choice destination for investment;
- g. To do all such other things as may seem incidental or conducive to the pursuit of the Objects and the exercise of powers (whether expressed or implied) of the Company.

The first TCP Board is meeting on 11th September, the aim of this meeting is to further develop theme groups and champions for a range of issues. At draft themes include:

- Innovation and best practice;
- Business support;
- Environment and infrastructure;
- Enterprise and business growth;
- Night time economy;
- Marketing and events;
- Safety and security;
- Finance and funding;
- Markets.

The TCP meeting will also seek to take forward the recruitment of the Town Centres Manager, discussing the terms and conditions alongside the draft job description.

Kidsgrove TCP

The report to July Cabinet highlighted the need to consider supporting a Kidsgrove TCP and a report on this is due to be considered by Cabinet on 19th September. It is intended that, where appropriate and possible, some of the initiatives would be replicated in Kidsgrove town centre. It may be appropriate in Kidsgrove to work alongside the Town Council and the LAP in order to secure complimentary support and identify champions from the local business community (this should include a financial contribution towards the post in due course).

Portas Pilot plans

Although the Newcastle TCP was not successful with the revised Portas Pilot bid, the opportunity brought together more partners in the town centre and importantly focussed the partnership approach on initiatives / schemes they wish to deliver. The Portas Pilot focussed on two key strands; 'Start Up and Start Again' under the overarching Partnership approach (summary attached). These were chosen to portray the ambitions to help more business "Start Up" and, equally importantly, aid current businesses to be more profitable under the heading of "Start Again". Officers continue to work with partners towards delivering some of the plans in the Portas bid and hope that the TCP will be able to deliver most of the schemes.

Portas projects currently in development:

There are plans to develop a Newcastle town centres website and to utilise this platform as the basis for a range of marketing and promotional work. It is also clear that to attract younger, and more affluent, shoppers to the town centres there needs to be an investment in more modern ways of marketing focussing on web-based technology (accessible from 'smart phones'). A number of options are possible and currently a 'virtual high street' based around Facebook is being explored with retailers.

In terms of support for the development of new businesses there are ambitions to develop a range of partnerships with local landlords, business support and Keele University. These will seek to develop models which link available retail units with mentoring and practical business support. Discussions are underway with NBC Property section, Aspire Group and Keele University about the development of a model.

A local entrepreneur is working with members of the Property and Market teams to hold monthly vintage and high-end craft markets in vacant properties. Plans are also in hand to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Farmers' Market by extending it to include a craft market.