

DEVELOPING A KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

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Portfolio: Regeneration, Planning & Town Centres

Ward(s) affected: Primarily Kidsgrove and Ravenscliffe

Purpose of the Report

To outline proposals for continuing support for town centre development, specifically highlighting ways in which support can be maximised in Kidsgrove with the development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.

Recommendation

That officers be authorised to proceed with the process of establishing a Kidsgrove 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.

Reasons

In March 2012 Cabinet agreed to the Council becoming a director of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership, in July 2012 there was an allocation of funding to this partnership to establish a Town Centres Manager and provide interim support for the partnership.

This report outlines an option to consider supporting the development of a specific Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership to further engage and support the Kidsgrove local businesses.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's new administration has made it very clear that it wishes to prioritise the development/improvement of town centres (both Newcastle and Kidsgrove); this is exemplified in the re-naming of the key portfolio as "Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres". It is anticipated that this will involve some re-alignment of resources in order to demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the centres, working in harness with private sector investors.
- 1.2 In July 2012 Cabinet received a report outlining progress made in developing a Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP). The decision was made to formalise the TCP based around a Community Interest Company model and importantly support the partnership with funding for the recruitment of a Town Centres Manager and continued interim assistance from existing Council resources.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Kidsgrove is an important town centre within the Borough and it is appropriate that the Council seeks ways in which to support the development of the area. The approach taken within Newcastle Town Centre may be appropriate in that it seeks to engage local businesses in the development and delivery of a town centre action plan. It is recognised that without the joint working of local businesses and other major stakeholders there will be limited successes in attracting people to visit, stay and buy in the local area.

- 2.2 Some of the plans for the Newcastle Town Centre may be suitable for replication in Kidsgrove and wherever possible officers recommend that best practice is shared and that local businesses are supported to learn from each other. For example the development of web based technology (accessible from 'smart phones') for marketing and promotion is likely to be a useful tool in any town centre.
- 2.3 Not all plans and partnerships should follow the same approach. It is important that local people with local knowledge of their businesses and opportunities are able to influence and direct the development of their area. For this reason it may be seen to be beneficial to have a separate Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership. This report does not seek to list out the opportunities and differences between the areas, but one example of where the approach would vary could be the development of marketing for the canal users to attract them into Kidsgrove. Clearly this type of promotional work would not be relevant for the town centre and bringing in partners with knowledge of water way users may be a priority for Kidsgrove.
- 2.4 In terms of the parties interested in the development of Kidsgrove clearly there is an important role for the Town Council. Whilst this report does not seek to limit the options for the potential development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership, it is recommended that any partnership does specifically include representation from the Town Council. In addition officers recommend that the Borough Council supports a community consultation and engagement event to bring Kidsgrove representatives forward to be part of the founding partnership. In tandem with this specific approaches could be made to local businesses in the area to secure their involvement.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 The Council could decide that the current support offered to the development of Kidsgrove Town Centre is appropriate or Members could consider that as the economic development of the town centres are key priorities that it is appropriate to offer additional support to enable the development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The new administration has identified the development/improvement of the two main town centres (both Newcastle and Kidsgrove) as a clear priority. In particular they wish to demonstrate that the Council is able to support and develop the town centres as vibrant places where people want to visit, work, invest and shop. Consequently it is appropriate that the Council seeks to work in partnership with the local businesses to develop a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.
- 4.2 At this stage the Council's preference is for the establishment of a Kidsgrove TCP as a Community Interest Company that will enable broad engagement of the business community, including key strategic partners. As highlighted above specific support could be directed to delivering community engagement to secure the founding members of the partnership including local businesses.
- 4.3 As part of the development of the Newcastle TCP it was recognised that where appropriate and possible, some of the initiatives would be replicated in Kidsgrove town centre. It was recognised that this could include sharing resources including an appropriate proportion of the Town Centres Manager and working alongside the Town Council and the LAP in order to secure complimentary support (this should include a financial contribution towards the post in due course).

4.5 Like the Newcastle TCP it is appropriate that the Kidsgrove TCP explores the potential opportunity for the establishment of a Business Improvement District to provide long term funding for the costs of any contribution to the Town Centres Manager and a range of initiatives/activities.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

5.1 Outcomes from these actions will significantly affect the 'Borough of Opportunity' and Promoting Healthy and Active Community corporate priorities, and will have implications for the quality of life, regeneration, and sustainability of the town centres, the borough as a whole and ultimately North Staffordshire.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 There is no statutory requirement to carry out these recommendations. The establishment of the Kidsgrove TCP as a formal legal entity will be undertaken with due regard to the associated legal implications.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out but the actions identified will help to make the town centres 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.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 Subject to Members and Partners views it may be appropriate for the Newcastle TCP and the Kidsgrove TCP to discuss joint investment and sharing of resources for the planned recruitment of the Town Centres Manager. This approach may also be relevant for future development of the TCP website.

8.2 As part of the Newcastle TCP plans the Council has committed to provide interim management support (0.5 FTE Business Development Officer) which is being achieved by re-prioritisation/re-profiling of the economic development team's activities to avoid the need for incurring extra costs. This resource can also assist with the Kidsgrove TCP.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There is a risk that the Town Centre Partnership will fail leading to reputational damage however the potential benefits of the partnership succeeding in contributing to the economic development of the area outweigh the risks.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

10.1 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agreed 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.

10.2 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agreed 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.

10.3 July 2012 – Cabinet agreed:

- (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.

6. **List of Appendices**

None.

7. **Background Papers**

None.