

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEETING**

**26 JULY 2007**

**KIDDERMINSTER: TOWN CENTRE MANAGER**

OPEN	
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME</b>	Shared Prosperity
<b>CORPORATE PLAN THEME:</b>	<i>Promoting Economic Prosperity</i>
<b>KEY PRIORITY:</b>	<i>Town Centres</i>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Cllr. Stephen Clee
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
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<b>APPENDICES</b>	Appendix 1: Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership Structure

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 For members to consider the benefits of appointing a Town Centre Manager and to seek Cabinet approval to the appointment of a Town Centre Manager for Kidderminster.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE** that:

- 2.1 The Head of Planning, Health and Environment in conjunction with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to enter into an Agreement with Henderson Global Investors or their managing agents Savills for the appointment of a Town Centre Manager. The post to be funded for a 3 year period by the Council for 50% of the salary and subject to agreeing a Job Description for the post and a Service Level Agreement setting out the operation of the post between the two partners. The cost of the project in 2008/09 and 2009/10 be included in the Council's Base Budget and be met from the Council's LABGI Grant.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Town Centre Managers are now in place in many of the UK's larger towns. Kidderminster is recognised as one of just 25 'Strategic Centres' in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. However, it is worth noting that 72% of these centres now have a Town Centre Manager (TCM) in place. Their role is often to deliver town centre strategies and projects in areas such as marketing, cleansing,

events etc. It is about applying the model of shopping centre management to the entire town centre. The origins of many schemes often lie within local authorities before developing into more independent partnerships and companies. The TCM initiative, which developed largely during the 1990's, now has its own Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM).

<b>Birmingham</b>	<b>Y</b>	Lichfield	?	Sutton Coldfield	?
<b>Burton-on-Trent</b>	<b>Y</b>	Newcastle-u-Lyme	?	Tamworth	?
<b>Cannock</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Nuneaton</b>	<b>Y</b>	Telford	?
<b>Coventry</b>	<b>Y</b>	Redditch	?	<b>Walsall</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Dudley</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Rugby</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>West Bromwich</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Hanley (Stoke)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Shrewsbury</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Wolverhampton</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>Hereford</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Solihull</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Y</b>
Kidderminster	N	<b>Stratford</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Leamington Spa</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Stratford</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>07</b>

Table 1: Strategic Centres in the West Midlands with Town Centre Managers (or equivalent) in place or pending (Y).

- 3.2 Through its car parking, street scene, markets and events responsibilities, the District Council is the main delivery agency for many town centre management functions. The main shopping centres including the Swan Centre, Rowland Hill and now Weavers Wharf also perform some of these functions. In Kidderminster Town Centre it is clear that the District Council has much to gain from the co-ordinating influence of a town centre manager who can also build confidence with the traders.
- 3.3 In 2006, the District Council endorsed Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership's Business Plan on which the funding and development of a Town Centre Manager was originally based. In its support of the business plan, the District Council approved the allocation of District Council Officer support to assist the Partnership to deliver the Business Plan. Since then the Economic Development and Tourism Manager and the Economic Regeneration and Funding Officer have been working to deliver the Town Centre Management model. Importantly, the Council also agreed (subject to partnership funding) to set aside up to £15,000 for 2007/08 and 2008/09 to help fund the post.
- 3.4 On the above basis, the aforementioned District Council Officers have been engaged with public and private stakeholders in the town centre in an attempt to generate match funding investment and create a sound basis for launching the proposed Manager post. The original intention was for the employing authority to be the restructured Town Centre Partnership.
- 3.5 Despite the progress made in formulating the business plan and steps towards restructuring the Partnership, the Council's Regeneration and Economic Funding Officer experienced difficulties in securing match funding for the Town Centre Manager initiative. Ultimately only relatively small sums were offered by the other partners who could not commit beyond the financial year 2007/08.
- 3.6 In order to build capacity and confidence the Town Centre Partnership introduced a new structure in early 2007 aimed at creating a more efficient and business orientated model. The structure has led to the creation of a series of action groups. However, these require the voluntary input of partners and remain heavily reliant on

the support of the District Council's Link Officer and other officers responsible for delivering services. A town centre manager would provide a critical new resource and could take on responsibility for co-ordinating and helping deliver the action plans of the five key work areas. This will provide significant efficiencies in service delivery and provide additional capacity.

- 3.7 Despite the apparent progress in restructuring the partnership, the process of a appointing a Town Centre Manager through the Town Centre Partnership has stalled. One reason for this is likely to be the level of commitment required and the lack of joint responsibility and accountability within the Partnership i.e. the proposed contributions would be voluntary and would involve some retailers and property owners investing in the Town Centre Manager to the benefit of all whether or not they have bought in to the Manager. In this context it is proving difficult to attract match funding for the District Council.
- 3.8 During 2006 a major investment occurred which could potentially have significant strategic implications for the town centre. When Henderson Global Investors acquired the Weavers Wharf development for in excess of £90m they demonstrated considerable confidence in the town. Their retail successes elsewhere include the Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham where they are part of the Birmingham Alliance and where the new shopping centre is an integral part of the city. From initial discussions with Henderson and their agents (Savills) it is clear that they are interested not only in Weavers Wharf but the mutual benefits of a healthy and successful Kidderminster town centre and a positive image. For example, one of their first tasks has been to appoint 'Saatchi and Saatchi' to look at the brand and marketing of Weavers Wharf in its wider context in Kidderminster. Whilst they want to improve Weavers Wharf, it is also clear that they also want to see the rest of the town centre benefit.

#### **4. STRATEGIC IMPACT**

- 4.1 Building capacity will be critical for Kidderminster in attaining the ambitious regeneration agenda for the town. The Cabinet are considering elsewhere on the agenda the West Midlands Economic Strategy and the prospect of raising the profile of Kidderminster on the regional stage. There are plans in the pipeline to take forward the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for the town through the development of a 'Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus' that will link the work of the Oldington and Foley Park Pathfinder in the south, the Town Centre Partnership and the Horsefair, Broadwaters and Greenhill Partnership in the north. It has been explained above that the current Town Centre Partnership structure remains heavily reliant on officer input. It is clear that a Town Centre Manager post to which the Council remains committed will help provide a stronger basis to deliver improvements whilst bringing the town centre in line with the other Strategic Centres in the sub-region.

#### **5. THE PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 It is understood that Henderson are proposing to appoint a part time 'park manager' to manage Weavers Wharf for 2.5 days per week. Given that such a manager would

need to possess the same skills and attributes expected of a town centre manager, in February 2007, the District Council entered discussions with the Henderson Group to establish whether there might be scope to extend the post to create a full time joint opportunity, enabling the other 2.5 days per week to be apportioned to a wider Town Centre Manager role.

- 5.2 An 'in principle' agreement has been reached with Henderson for a 50:50 joint funded post which for 2.5 days would be based in the Council's Planning, Health and Environment Division and would work on wider town centre proposals in conjunction with the Town Centre Partnership. This would require the Council to enter into an Agreement with Henderson with delivery through a Service Level Agreement. A 3 year proposal has been tabled.
- 5.3 The appointment process will involve the joint preparation of a job description and person specification. The advertisement, selection and interview process will also be carried out jointly with the interview panel consisting of representatives of the District Council. It is envisaged that the post may become operational during September to October 2007.
- 5.4 Whilst working for the District Council, the Town Centre Manager will be based in Council premises or the Town Centre Partnership and will support the Town Centre Link Officer. The post holder will be subject to a contract that ensures the lines of communication and responsibility are clear and provides safeguards to deliver impartiality. The Weavers Wharf Park Manager would be managed by the agent acting on behalf of Henderson.
- 5.5 One of the key safeguards that will need to be incorporated in to any contract or Service Level Agreement will be a means of addressing the potential conflict of interest that may arise between working to support the owners of Weavers Wharf whilst at the same time supporting all of the other retailers and property interests in the wider town centre. This will be essential to ensure that the new post holder has the confidence and support of the entire business community and Town Centre Partnership.
- 5.6 One of the key issues to be addressed in both the job description and contract will be the need for the Town Centre Manager to concentrate on the older, traditional, parts of the town centre and in this respect the need for the Manager to be guided by the work of the Town Centre Partnership.
- 5.7 In the current climate, it is considered that the proposed joint venture approach with the Henderson Group represents Kidderminster's only opportunity for delivering its long term ambition for a Town Centre Manager in a reasonable timeframe. Once in place on a fixed-term of three years the onus will be on the Manager assisting the partnership action groups and establishing a sustainable business plan which may ultimately lead to an independent role outside of the District Council and probably within a rejuvenated Town Centre Partnership.

## **6. THE BENEFITS**

- 6.1 The Town Centre Manager post will provide a dedicated resource to assist in the development and implementation of plans for the town centre. The post holder will work closely with local businesses to identify and support their needs. They will also be responsible for raising finance for future initiatives and ultimately will seek to make Town Centre Management and the work of the wider partnership self financing. Ultimately, the Town Centre Manager will be required to maintain and improve the quality and viability of the town centre for all users by acting as a co-ordinator and catalyst and encouraging co-operation between key stakeholders, users and service providers.
- 6.2 The Manager will have a key role to play in developing appropriate strategies and plans for the town centre. They will be expected to organise promotional activities for the town centre that will help to attract more shoppers, businesses and visitors to the centre. In co-ordinating the existing activity, resources and interests of all stakeholders the Manager will greatly assist towards enhancing the attractiveness and security of the town centre, including streetscene and other services carried out by the Council's Cultural Leisure and Commercial Services teams. Other key tasks will include liaising with appropriate agencies to provide business advice and support. The Manager will facilitate improved communications between the providers and users of town centre services. In this respect, the Town Centre Manager will be expected to advise Council service managers on areas where standards can be enhanced for the benefit of the town centre.
- 6.3 One of the key outputs will be to deliver long term sustainability for the post and ultimately the wider town centre partnership. This will involve the preparation of a business plan that will need to consider various funding opportunities including sponsorship together with the scope for introducing a Business Improvement District.
- 6.4 The Manager will have a significant co-ordinating role and should serve to offer confidence to public and private sector stakeholders including the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands. This will further support the proposed programme to deliver the Kidderminster Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy and the preparation and implementation of a 'Kidderminster Prospectus'.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the post be funded on a 50:50 basis between Henderson and the District Council each making an estimated contribution, subject to the appointment process (see paragraph 5.3 above), of around £15,000. This sum was previously agreed as part of consideration of the Town Centre Partnership Business Plan, however, the availability of this funding will cease in 2008/09. Therefore, assuming an appointment in September 2007, it is proposed that Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) monies be used in the two years from September 2008 to September 2010. A LABGI grant has been awarded to the District Council for its work in encouraging business growth and is based on actual changes to rateable values.

In this respect the proposal to fund the Town Centre Manager is highly complementary.

## **8. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed Town Centre Manager position will be subject to a formal contract and Service Level Agreement between the District Council and Savills (as agents for Henderson Global Investors).

### **a. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 Any potential conflict of interest between the role of Weavers Wharf Park Manager and the wider Town Centre Manager will have to be carefully understood and managed under the terms of any contract.
- 9.2 The success of the Town Centre Manager appointment will be dependent on the relationship with the Town Centre Partnership and the delivery of the work programme emanating from the numerous action groups established under the new structure (See Appendix 1).

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The opportunity has arisen for Kidderminster to realise the shared ambition of having a Town Centre Manager in place. The proposed appointment through a public/private partnership involving Henderson Global Investors presents a unique opportunity for Kidderminster to have a dedicated manager to undertake the day to day tasks of co-ordinating the work of partners in the pursuit of more effective management. There will be considerable benefits to the District Council and wider Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership.

## **11. CONSULTEES**

- Head of Financial Services
- Head of Legal and Democratic Services

## **12. Background Papers**

None