



Regeneration and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee

Date: 22nd April 2009
Report of: Jackie Roberts (Town Centre Manager)
Open Report

Kidderminster Town Centre Manager's Annual Update Report

1. Purpose of Briefing Paper

1.1 To advise the Regeneration & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee of progress, achievements and challenges of the Kidderminster Town Centre Management role in the inaugural year 2008/09.

2. Background Information

2.1 Kidderminster's first Town Centre Manager was appointed in March 2008.

2.2 The position is a three year, dual role collaboration between Wyre Forest District Council and the owners of Weavers Wharf, Henderson Global Investors, with an equal time split between Weavers Wharf and Wyre Forest District Council/Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership of 18½ hrs each.

2.3 The attached Report gives an overview of the town centre management structure, how the role has been established and a snapshot of the work completed in the first year.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Key elements of the first year have included:

- Establishing business objectives for the role and updating the Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership business plan to reflect these;
- Networking and building support within the local business community;
- Developing a town centre data base;
- Developing a town website; and
- Organising of the 2008 Christmas Light Switch On.

3.2 A business survey was also conducted which was sent out to all 850 businesses within the town centre to find out what they wanted from Town Centre Management.

- 3.3 The survey generated 21 replies with the main concerns being the market, parking, empty shops, rents and rates, lack of marketing playing to the town's strengths and events to drive foot fall, antisocial behaviour and the demise of the night time economy.
- 3.4 Kidderminster currently has 30 empty units which is a 9% vacancy rate the national average is 11%. Although a number of national chain stores have closed we have had an equal amount of new business coming into the town, a high number of these are independent retailers. At present Kidderminster appears to be bucking the national trend with a steady increase in business which is very different to the national picture and most stores are reporting reasonably strong sales performances.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 It is proposed that a town centre audit involving high level partner organisations, be undertaken early in 2009/10 with a view to preparing a visionary strategy for the town centre that links with the 'Connecting Kidderminster' Regeneration Prospectus and the emerging work on the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (part of the new Local Development Framework).

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Town Centre Manager role has become well established within and town and its business community.
- 5.2 The Post operates on an 18½ hours basis and expectations need to reflect what can be achieved within this time. In order to move Town Centre Management forward there needs to be an agreed and realistic sense of direction, a strong support structure, defined areas of responsibilities, a sustainable budget to reflect those responsibilities and recognition of the role.
- 5.3 There are now 2 years remaining of the current post and consideration needs to be given as to how the post and role can be funded after March 2011.

6. Options for the Committee

- 6.1 To note the Kidderminster Town Centre Manager's Annual Report 2008/09.

7. Background Papers

- Town Centre Managers Business Objectives 2008
- KTCP Business Plan 2007 – 2010

8. Consultees

- Corporate Management Team

9. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Town Centre Manager Annual Report

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