

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE CABINET

10th July 2007

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Hollingworth
Responsible Head of Service	Phil Street – Corporate Director - Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Report outlines the approach being proposed to regenerate the town centre taking account of planning and the pressure from residents and local businesses for redevelopment.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. It is recommended that Executive Cabinet agree:
 - 2.1.1. the overall project plan as detailed in the report;
 - 2.1.2. to follow the OJEU route to obtaining a development partner; and
 - 2.1.3. to the need for obtaining specialist expertise to assist in the project management of the regeneration of the town centre until the end of March 2008 and that this is funded from town centre budget.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The issue of town centre development has been a feature of the Council's considerations for several years. It now forms a central priority of the District Council's plans.
- 3.2. Initial work was undertaken in 2005 primarily on the redevelopment of the market hall site and the bus station however some continuity has been lost around this. In part this was due to Council restructuring and legislative change, but also by the need to give further consideration to outcomes of the work undertaken in 2005.
- 3.3. The current momentum behind town centre redevelopment could not be greater. Therefore, the Council recognises it has to make progress as quickly as laws and regulations will permit. There has been an underlying conflict between the need to plan properly and ensure the redevelopment of the town centre conforms to law and regulation and a desire to act to address both the reputation of the high street and the cynicism amongst residents and traders which is leading to a decline in retail activity in the town centre.
- 3.4. Possessing a clear vision and plan for the town centre is crucial. The Council needs to be clear about what people want and define its own perspectives on the future redevelopment of the town based on this consultation. Furthermore, the

redevelopment of the town centre needs to be coherent and avoid taking a piece meal approach. Land use needs to be carefully planned and the allocation of land for retail, housing, employment and leisure needs to be thoroughly considered.

- 3.5. However, it is important to recognise that commercial life and redevelopment cannot be put on hold until plans are perfected or even finalised. The current atmosphere in the town centre is deflated and businesses are leaving as there are no apparent signs of regenerative activity. Plans and words will not be enough to restore confidence, actions are critical.
- 3.6. Officers have taken substantial amounts of advice and have been to see a wide range of developments. This process of data collecting and investigation has revealed the conclusion that there is not a single accepted or agreed way to regenerate town centres. Therefore, Bromsgrove has to take its own view and plan its own way forward,

4. Area Action Plan

- 4.1. The following approach to the redevelopment of Bromsgrove town centre is being proposed. Bromsgrove needs to take a balanced approach between planning and development. To this end the Council will pursue two parallel tracks. One will be the pursuit of an Area Action Plan (AAP). This will involve consultation and evidence collection to formulate ideas for the planning of the redevelopment of the town centre. The AAP will provide the parameters for development and it will indicate land use and will shape the regeneration of the town centre. It will contain a vision for the town centre and determine how the land in the town centre will be developed in-keeping with that vision.
- 4.2. Work on the preparation of the AAP will commence in July and resources have been allocated for this purpose. The AAP process will include the preparation of an issues and options stage where a number of options formulated through consultation will be presented for comment and response. The target for the issues and options consultation is January 2008.
- 4.3. The outcome derived from an analysis of the issue and options stage will be a preferred option. This should indicate the form that town centre should assume. This preferred option will also be subject to further consultation and once this has been concluded the AAP will be submitted to Government Office.

5. Preferred Partner

- 5.1. The second track of the regeneration of the town centre is related to the identification of a developer. The process is that the Council will voluntarily use the Official Journal of the European Union. This will entail undertaking the necessary work to prepare an advert for the Official Journal (OJEU) and the pre-qualification questions. It will necessitate certain legal preparatory work and analysis of the responses. The process will result in presentations around set questions for a selected number of companies that have indicated an interest in the town centre redevelopment.

- 5.2. The process of using the OJEU is that it allows for a structured and transparent process. It will allow the Council to filter out those who do not have the finance, technical ability or track record for a town centre redevelopment project. The process that will be pursued is known as competitive dialogue and has to be conducted in a statutory time frame. It allows for companies to express an interest and the open nature of the approach will limit risk and any challenge from companies not invited to participate.
- 5.3. It is anticipated that an advert could appear in the OJEU by August and selection for presentation by developers in November with a developer identified by January 2008.
- 5.4. This timeframe would permit the developer to contribute to the preparation of the AAP.

6. Project Management

- 6.1. There is a considerable amount of work and specialist expertise required in pushing forward a project of this nature. The work associated with the AAP and the identification of a developer is extremely complex and involved and given the magnitude of this project it is essential that it is well managed. Presently the Council does not possess this expertise.
- 6.2. This is a major piece of work that will influence the shape of the town centre for many years. The Council needs to consider the level of resource it wants to devote to the redevelopment of the town centre. The council has already identified resource to support development of the AAP.
- 6.3. It is being recommended that specialist expertise should be obtained to assist and support the project management of the town centre regeneration. The current situation is that the complexity and detail of redevelopment has to be managed with both experience and knowledge. The Council does not possess this experience and it cannot afford to fail or follow approaches that prove inappropriate.
- 6.4. This is a complicated piece of work and is the Council's primary priority. The scale and detail of the project needs dedicated time and attention. The project has to be closely managed so that processes and procedures are pursued. This will mean working on a day to day basis with specialists preparing the Area Action Plan and liaising with other Council officers in legal and finance.
- 6.5. There is need for personnel with a knowledge and experience in town centre redevelopment. They will need to possess a track record in regeneration activities of this kind. The Council needs a project team that is stable and contains the right people. They have to be capable of working effectively with the commercial sector and technical advisers.
- 6.6. It is suggested that a project adviser would be required for some six days per month for some eight months at a cost of not more than £25,000.

- 6.7. Therefore, Members are being asked to support a recommendation that expertise is obtained to support the work associated with the town centre redevelopment and that this is funded from town centre budget.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The principal financial implication is obtaining the time of expertise to assist in the project management of the regeneration of the town centre.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The pursuit of a development partner will be a voluntary decision to use the European Union Official Journal. It is anticipated that the development partner would be recruited to work with the District Council on a long term basis. The reason for adopting a voluntary approach to OJEU is that it is likely in the process of regenerating the town centre financial transactions may occur. Therefore, it is regarded as prudent to pursue an OJEU approach to avoid challenge and disgruntlement at a later stage in the regeneration process.

9. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 9.1. The redevelopment of the town centre is an objective of the District Council. The redevelopment is mentioned by all customer surveys and is a source of general concern amongst traders and residents.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1. There is major risk that failure to regenerate the town centre will result in the loss of further businesses and a growing feeling of disappointment amongst residents about the Council's inability to improve conditions in the town centre.
- 10.2. This is a complicated process and a project of this scale requires appropriate experienced expertise. This is a project that will affect the shape and appearance of the town centre for many years. Therefore, it is essential that the management of the process is adequately informed and resourced.

11. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The Council is aware that at most focus groups and through various forums customers express concern and disappointment with the condition of the town centre. Businesses and traders confidence is limited in the Council's response to the issues facing the town centre.
- 11.2. Many local residents do not use the town centre for either leisure or retail and the local economy is failing to attract consumers and inward investment.

12. 9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues: Use of OJEU discussed with procurement officer

Personnel Implications: A requirement to engage expert assistance to project advise.
Governance/Performance - Management Project plan to be devised to establish time frames and targets
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
Policy – N/A
Environmental – Environmental baseline study will form a key dimension of the AAP. Issue of sustainability will strongly inform the process of planning and development
Equalities and Diversity – Issues of access and mobility will significantly inform the redevelopment of the town centre.

13. OFFICERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Chief Executive	Yes
Corporate Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

CONTACT OFFICER

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