

BROMSGROVE CENTRES MANAGEMENT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Rita Dent – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centre
Portfolio Holder Consulted	✓
Relevant Head of Service	Dean Piper – Head of Economic Development & Regeneration – North Worcestershire
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Key decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal for the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) service to host a new Bromsgrove Centres Management function on behalf of the Council that will cover the Town Centre and outlying centres and villages including; Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Cabinet is requested to recommend that:

- 1) **The funding of a unavoidable budget pressure is approved to be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan assumptions :**
- 2016/17 £16k
 - 2017/18 £41k
 - 2018/19 £43k

The Cabinet resolve that:

- 2) **The proposed model for Bromsgrove Centres Management is endorsed;**
- 3) **The new function is hosted by the North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration (NWEDR) service on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council;**
- 4) **That delegation for the Centres Management function is added to the existing NWEDR Collaboration Agreement relating to the provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services, to reflect the decision at 2) and 3);**

- 5) That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to amend the Collaboration Agreement referred to at 4).
- 6) The associated pension and redundancy costs of approximately £31k to be released from reserves set aside for restructuring the organisation.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The creation of the new function will require the recruitment of a new post, a new dedicated operational budget for delivery of activities and initiatives in each of the centres and additional capacity within NWEDR to deliver economic regeneration projects in each of the centres as appropriate. Should Members agree the proposed approach, the funding required for the new function will be included as a budget pressure from 2016/17 as part of the current review of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 3.2 An analysis of existing revenue budgets has identified the available funding that could be re-allocated to support the cost of the new function and achieved improved outcomes for the centres. However, there will be financial implications for the Council as set out below:

Expenditure	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
Centres management function (hosted by NWEDR)	91	94	97
Funded from:			
Savings from existing posts	52	53	54
Business rate pool money earmarked for economic development activities	23	-	-
Budget Pressure	16	41	43

- 3.3 The proposal would involve the Council increasing its financial contribution to the NWEDR service from its current baseline position to cover the costs of the new function. As a result of this financial increase, the percentage contribution that the Council makes to the shared service would increase, whilst Redditch and Wyre Forest Councils would see their percentage contributions (not financial contributions) reduce slightly.

Council	% contribution to NWEDR shared service 2016-17 as per current budget	% contribution to NWEDR shared service 2016-17 (as an effect of this proposal)
Wyre Forest	36.0	32.6

Redditch	38.2	34.5
Bromsgrove	25.8	32.9

Legal Implications

- 3.4 The original collaboration agreement relating to Wyre Forest District Council hosting the NWEDR service and providing economic development and regeneration services to the Council, made reference to town centre management arrangements eventually being extended to Bromsgrove (subject to funding), therefore an amendment to the agreement will be required. It is proposed that a 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the Council and Wyre Forest District Council as host authority for NWEDR be developed setting out the exact remit of the Centres Management function.

Service / Operational Implications

Background

- 3.5 In July 2015, Cabinet approved a new set of economic priorities for the district, which provide a focus to the economic activities of the Council, its partners and to NWEDR, which the Council supports financially. One of the priorities is to 'create a more vibrant Bromsgrove Town Centre by enhancing the current retail and leisure offer'. Delivery of this priority is supported by a number of deliverables and measures.
- 3.6 The selection of this as a priority is supported by recent CACI industry data profiling, which shows that Bromsgrove town centre has a retail expenditure of £53.2m (this includes spend in all retailers and traders within the town centre), with 90% of expenditure accounted by local residents. The profile also identifies that Bromsgrove lacks a 'premium' retail offer and is suffering from leakage of expenditure, as residents have to travel elsewhere if they want to shop from a premium retailer.
- 3.7 The Council's aspiration is to uplift the current offer and to retain as much spend from local residents as possible, whilst attracting in more shoppers from adjacent areas.
- 3.8 Meanwhile, other centres and villages within the district have their own specific needs and requirements. For example, a recent public meeting in Rubery identified concerns from local residents regarding a number of local issues such as on-street car parking, signage, empty properties, potholes etc.

Current context

- 3.9 The completion of the £2m Bromsgrove High Street Regeneration Programme has helped to create a more modern and welcoming town centre environment and other projects within the town centre are now starting to come to fruition,

which will drive new investment and growth into the town and bring forward further residential, employment and retail opportunities.

- 3.10 The regeneration work has been wrapped into a wider branding exercise, with the 'Better Bromsgrove' brand launched and used as a way of promoting the changes that are taking place to local residents.

Rationale for change

- 3.11 There is still some residual work outstanding on certain town centre regeneration schemes, most notably on securing the re-development of the Hanover Street site, where a preferred developer has been appointed but development delivery is yet to commence.
- 3.12 The needs of other centres has also come into sharp focus, with each individual centre requiring specific support around various issues such as the state of shop frontages, repairs to footpaths and roads, empty shops, ASB and lack of vibrancy and footfall.
- 3.13 It is clear that the focus now needs to be extended to include regeneration and the on-going 'management' of Bromsgrove Town Centre and the outlying centres and villages across the district including Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall. This will ensure that they remain vibrant, provide a quality offer and continue to provide vital services and facilities to residents.
- 3.14 The Council already plays a critical role in supporting the on-going development of the centres in Bromsgrove, through the delivery of various services and functions including planning, street scene, environment, leisure and events.
- 3.15 However, there is an opportunity to work more pro-actively with each of the centres, by creating a more 'hands-on' role which is able to deal with all of the issues that may arise within a town centre or a smaller centre. The proposed mechanism to achieve this is to create a 'Town Centre Manager' (TCM) role.
- 3.16 A TCM role involves delivering town centre strategies, initiatives and projects aimed at ensuring that centres remain competitive and vibrant. TCMs have in recent times become a more visible presence in the UK in town and city centres of various sizes and TCMs now have their own recognised membership association, the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM). Often, the role of a TCM is not confined to supporting the development of a single town centre, but can cover a number of centres in a particular locality.
- 3.17 It is considered that the creation of a TCM role would provide the Council with additional capacity to tackle a variety of issues in the main centres in Bromsgrove including:

- Working with traders, businesses, community groups, partners and Councillors to ensure effective communication and co-ordination of activities;
- Identifying strategic priorities and improvements for the centres;
- Working towards safer centres;
- Better promotion and marketing;
- Organising events, promotions and markets to increase footfall and vibrancy;
- Working in partnership to ensure that the centres remain clean and benefit from high quality streetscene.
- Ensuring each centre is distinctive and can play its own role in the wider prosperity of the district.

3.18 Bromsgrove is presently the only North Worcestershire district not to have some form of TCM arrangement in place. Members are advised that a 'Town Team' for Bromsgrove Town Centre has recently been formed which consists of representatives from the Council, key public sector stakeholders and several local traders and has undertaken a number of initiatives, including the submission of a bid to the Great British High Street competition

3.19 NWEDR already has experience of hosting a successful Town Centre Management function for Wyre Forest and is currently supporting the delivery of a number of high profile regeneration schemes in Kidderminster Town Centre.

3.20 To date, NWEDR has not had a mandate to support the delivery of the Bromsgrove Town Centre Regeneration Programme. When the shared service was created in 2011, the Council transferred an existing Economic Development Manager and Assistant role to Wyre Forest District Council; however these roles did not have an explicit remit to deliver town centre management or regeneration activity, but were more focused on general economic development activities such as business support and attracting investment. Also at that time, the Council decided to progress delivery of the High Street regeneration programme via a seconded role from Worcestershire County Council, however that arrangement has now lapsed.

3.21 The time does now seem right for the NWEDR service to play a lead role in the delivery of town centre management and regeneration activities in Bromsgrove, utilising the skills and experience that the service has acquired managing similar activities in Wyre Forest.

Developing an effective model for Bromsgrove –proposal

3.22 It is proposed that a new Bromsgrove Centres Function hosted by the NWEDR service is created to take forward the future workload around the management and regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre and the various centres within Bromsgrove district. The diagram at Appendix 1 sets out the remit of the new function.

Required resources

3.23 To ensure that NWEDR has the appropriate capacity and skills base to host the function, the following resources are required:

- (i) Creation of a new full time Centres Management role to provide a dedicated resource to assist in the development and implementation of plans for Bromsgrove town centre and the outlying centres.

The Centres Manager role will support Bromsgrove Town Centre and key centres across the district including Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall i.e. centres that serve a population of between 2,500 and 10,000.

The post holder will work closely with local businesses and traders to identify and support their needs. They will also be responsible for pro-active engagement work with the various public and private stakeholders and the development of town centre partnership, promotion and marketing initiatives and campaigns to drive footfall into the centres, projects to improve the environment and quality of the centres.

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.

- (ii) An operational budget for the Centres Manager will be required to provide the capacity to start up new initiatives to promote and develop the centres. Past experience in Wyre Forest has proved that a budget of £30k per annum has proved to be effective in supporting project activity across 3 town centres.
- (iii) Additional capacity within NWEDR to facilitate delivery of identified regeneration schemes and projects within Bromsgrove town centre and other centres as appropriate. Specific activities that will be progressed include:
- Working pro-actively with developers to bring forward development delivery on key development sites i.e. Hanover Street, Birmingham Road / Stourbridge Road junction site, Bromsgrove Enterprise Park;
 - Redditch Eastern Gateway; working with the land owners and developer to promote the site and secure early delivery of the required infrastructure;
 - Working with the County Council and Bromsgrove District Council to develop the business case for investment on the A38 corridor to improve capacity at key bottlenecks;

- Identifying relevant LEP funding opportunities that could support the delivery of regeneration schemes across Bromsgrove;
- Identifying regeneration priorities in centres and villages across Bromsgrove district and working with land owners, developers and partners to draw up re-development plans.

Priorities

3.24 Initial priorities for NWEDR will include:

- In each centre working with partners, local residents, resident groups, business associations and other stakeholders i.e. the Economic Development Theme Group to identify local priorities and action areas, transferring good practice from the 'Town Team' approach that is being developed in Bromsgrove Town Centre and NWEDR experience in Wyre Forest;
- Develop a Strategic Action Plan for each of the identified centres;
- In line with the agreed Action Plan, bringing forward identified priority projects and initiatives, ensuring that there are effective delivery mechanisms in place to support activity on the ground in each of the centres;
- Further development of an effective Bromsgrove Town Centre partnership or 'town team' involving the public and private sector (building on the emerging 'Town Team') and the Economic Development Theme Group.

Management and monitoring arrangements

3.25 It is proposed that the management of the new function would be encompassed within the NWEDR shared service collaboration agreement. Priorities and activities for the function would be added to the NWEDR Work Programme and regular reports would be provided to the NWEDR Client Management Group and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Town Centre.

3.26 The proposed new Centres post would be integrated within the existing NWEDR structure, with a direct reporting line to the Head of Service and that additional support around delivery of complex regeneration projects across Bromsgrove would be provided to the Council by NWEDR.

Key benefits of the proposal

3.27 The specific benefits to Bromsgrove district is that there will be a formal resource to support the long term strategic vision of the Town Centre and outlying centres and to identify potential growth opportunities and to plan/deliver activities on the ground that promote and market the centres to a wider audience. The Council will also be able to make further use of the existing regeneration capacity and expertise held by NWEDR, to help accelerate the delivery of key development sites and regeneration schemes.

3.28 The outcomes that the new function will generate are as follows:

- Increased footfall into Bromsgrove Town Centre and other centres within Bromsgrove district through effective marketing and promotional activities;
- Reduced shop vacancy rates in centres;
- Bring forward key development / regeneration schemes identified in Bromsgrove to create new retail, residential and commercial development opportunities;
- Support the Council's aspiration to attract 'big names' to the High Street to complement the existing offer and vibrant independent sector
- Increased confidence in Bromsgrove as a place to invest and potential increase in the 'premium' offer to the town centre;
- Increased public and private sector investment;
- Improved engagement with local communities and key stakeholders;
- Opportunity to increase retail expenditure from visitors outside of the area;
- Build pride in Bromsgrove's key centres and address negative perceptions that exist about Bromsgrove.

Timescales for implementation

3.29 The proposal will be progressed in line with the following timetable:

- Handover of current town centre regeneration work to NWEDR and put in place transition arrangements – December 2015 to March 2016
- Recruitment process for Bromsgrove Centres Manager post – January / February 2016
- New officer in post – April 2016
- Refreshed Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Action Plan – summer 2016
- Identify local priorities for other centres – September 2016

3.30 As a result of the proposed approach to centre management the post of Town Centre Regeneration Officer will be deleted as the current post relates to the negotiations and delivery of the new developments in the town. The costs associated with the resulting redundancy and pension strain are approximately £31k and will be met from existing reserves set aside to fund restructuring costs.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.31 An impact assessment will need to be undertaken to ensure that the new function meets the needs of diverse customers across the district.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 Risks associated with the delivery of the individual activities will be added to the NWEDR Risk Register and monitored and managed by the Head of Service.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Proposed remit of new Bromsgrove Centres Function.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report 1st July 2015: Bromsgrove Economic Priorities and Action Plan

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Dean Piper
Head of Economic Development & Regeneration - North Worcestershire

email: dean.piper@nwedr.org.uk
Tel.: (01562) 732192

Appendix 1 – Proposed remit of new Bromsgrove Centres Function.

