

23 NOVEMBER 2011

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### COMMUNITY ACTION IN COALFIELD – PROGRESS REVIEW

#### Progress Report on 2011/12 Priority: Local Shopping Centres (Coalfield Shopping Initiative)

#### 1 Why has it come to Committee?

This report is presented on behalf of the Shopping Centres Task and Result Group and provides an update of progress against agreed actions in the current year's (2011/12) work plan (**Annex 1**).

#### 2 Progress report on 2011/12 priority: Local Shopping Centres

- 2.1 At the September 2011 meeting of Coalfield Area Committee a budget of £15,000 was approved to develop and deliver a marketing campaign in all three shopping centres– Houghton, Hetton and Shiney Row – in the run up to Christmas.
- 2.2 The Task and Result Group met in October 2011 and discussed ideas in order to draw up a draft programme for Christmas. This was then further developed by the Area Officer, Community Co-ordinator and Communications Officer in consultation with the Task and Result group. The draft programme is attached. (**Annex 2**).
- 2.3 A Business Survey and Best Practice Review was completed in September 2011 and a draft report presented to the Task and Result group in October 2011. The group considered the report findings and recommendations and developed proposals to be presented to Area Committee for consideration and agreement at this meeting (see item 3 below).

#### 3 Next Steps

- 3.1 The Christmas programme will be delivered in conjunction with the Area Network, partners, local traders and the local community. A series of events has been developed with the Shopping Centres Task and Result group, supported by the Coalfield Community Co-ordinator, Communications Officer and Area Officer, working with the Network and local volunteers. The project, including Christmas light switch-ons, school and community carol singing, visits from Santa, discounts for local shoppers and promotional posters and leaflets has been designed, developed and supported by the Task and Result group, and wherever possible the events and activities will link to other Coalfield priorities such as activities for young people, heritage and support for older people. The Area Response Manager will offer support to this work from a street scene perspective. Area Committee are encouraged to become involved and attend relevant events and activities within their neighbourhoods during November and December 2011.
- 3.2 It is proposed that from January 2012 a Business Support Programme will be delivered. A brief will be developed in order to engage a specialist organisation providing dedicated support for retailers. The programme will offer support to existing businesses and encourage new retail start ups and is expected to begin development in January 2012. (subject to agreement by Area Committee). Cost approximately £35,000 to support 24 businesses.
- 3.3 It is proposed that from January 2012 an Events, Markets and Activities programme will be planned. The programme will incorporate local craft/food fairs, community events, art

displays, information points and mobile health and advice services. The option of using empty shops will be explored. This will be discussed with the events team before being developed with the VCS Network (subject to Area Committee approval). The intention is to increase footfall in order to attract new custom to existing retailers. Cost approximately £15,000

- 3.4 It is proposed that from March 2012 an Environment and Public Realm project be explored. This could include improvements to shop fronts including empty properties and those closed during the day. Opportunities for working with trainee artists (university) and installing 'fake fronts' to shops as has been successful in other areas such as Whitley Bay will be explored. Signage for car parks and other improvements will be investigated via City Services. Ensuring the cleaning regime for the shopping centres is adequate and exploring the benefits of providing floral displays will also be considered. Cost approximately £20,000
- 3.5 There is no one organisation or Council service responsible for the improvement of shopping centres. Therefore, it is proposed that the Business Support Programme should be led by the Business Investment Team, the events and marketing be led by the events and comms teams, and the environment and public realm by Street Scene. All activity will be co-ordinated by the Area Officer in conjunction with the Task and Result group and a wider range of partners where appropriate. All activity will be supported by the VCS Network organisations.
- 3.6 The previously agreed budget of £80,000 will be utilised to implement the above projects. A more detailed programme of work with accurate costs will be developed by the Task and Result group if Committee agree to the above proposals being taken forward. The Task and Result Group and Area Network will also seek in-kind and match funding from other sources and partners to maximise this budget.

**Recommendations:**

- Approve the Christmas Marketing Campaign at Annex 2
- Approve the proposals and associated costs in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 above

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