

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny



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Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

14th February 2013

Briefing Note: Response to the core questions: Association of Town Centre Managers (ACTM)

1 Background

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting the Scrutiny Panel agreed that as part of its evidence gathering process the Association of Town Centre Managers (ACTM) would be contacted and asked to provide a response to the core questions.
- 1.2 The Director, ACTM, provided some documents that he felt would be useful background information for the Panel. This information was provided instead of a formal response from ACTM to the Panel's core questions.

2 Information

- 2.1 The documents provided, as attached, are:-
 - 100 ways to help the High Street – A Toolkit for Town Centres
 - Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

2.2 100 Ways to help the High Street

The Toolkit comprises eight key sections:

- Building a Sustainable Partnership
- Accessing the High Street
- Enhancing the Streetscape
- Place Identify, Branding and Experience
- Attracting New People and Businesses to High Street and Keeping the Old Ones
- The Safe and Secure High Street
- The Evening and Night-time Economy
- Training, Development and Accreditation

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- 2.3 The Toolkit reports that it is a collection of schemes which, if implemented in the right place at the right time, can have a positive effect for town centres. It goes on to say that the Toolkit is primarily for town centre managers and local government. A running theme throughout the Toolkit is that whatever resources you have, and whoever takes the lead on many of these activities, success is achievable through co-operation.
- 2.4 The Toolkit comprises a number of case studies, the purpose of which is to demonstrate how some of these hints and tips originate from real life examples.

Building a Sustainable Partnership – The Toolkit states that good town centre management is often dependent upon strong partnership.

Accessing the High Street – The Toolkit advises that transport considerations are amongst some of the most important for town centres. Manchester was provided as a case study.

Manchester city centre is linked together by its free city centre bus service, the Metroshuttle, which has been operating since 2002. It has three routes that navigate the city centre, linking the city's major thoroughfares and stations with its main commercial, financial and cultural districts. The Metroshuttle costs around £1.2 million to operate. Smaller schemes operate in Bolton and Stockport.

Enhancing the Streetscape – The Toolkit reports that streetscape is the physical aspects of public spaces in town centres. It advises that there are a number of different components which work together to create a streetscape, that would ideally be unique to the town but also being clean and orderly, avoiding clutter and dereliction, including landscaping, lighting, paving, planting, public art and effective signposting.

Edinburgh was provided as a case study – Castle Street Project. A new road surface was laid using granite setts and Caithness flags. New street furniture and improved lighting was also installed. Power pods were put in for activation of the streets for events. It is reported that controlled vehicular access and the restoration of a quality streetscape has made walking and exploring the whole area a more pleasant and satisfying experience.

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Cardiff was provided as a case study – The project was put together by city centre management and Cardiff City Council, the Keep Wales Tidy Campaign and a range of private sector organisations as an innovative and direct way to engage with the growing population that live in the city centre. It featured a unique process of recycling and key locations were branded ‘thanksbanks’.

It was reported that as a result, more waste is recycled than deposited in standard litter bins and recycling in the city has increased by 43%.

The Kirkcaldy Art Trail was provided as a case study; the aim of which was to inspire and encourage people to visit different areas of the town centre. Art in shop windows was a creative initiative that transformed eight empty shop windows in Kirkcaldy town centre into works of art. An arts trail leaflet was produced providing details of a map and information of the displays.

Place Identify, Branding and Experience – The Toolkit reports that it is impossible for town centre managers to dictate, or predict what type of experience each visitor may have because there are so many disparate elements that make up a high street.

Wood Green: International Short Film Festival was provided as a case study. The Town Centre Manager was a film fan and filmmaker who had the idea of the best way to achieve this would be through the magic of cinema. In 2003 the Wood Green International Short Film Festival was launched as a one day event. By year three it was selling out in minutes of opening and attracts short films from all over the world.

Attracting New People and Businesses to High Street and Keeping the Old Ones – The Toolkit reports that effort has to go into getting the basics right to make any high street the primary destination for people and business. It suggests a few schemes that can act as the building blocks to constructing a viable place for people to trade, employ and reside:

- Developing a general town centre website
- Virtual tour of the High Street
- On-line Town Centre Shopping
- Free Wi-Fi Hotspots
- Town Centre Loyalty card
- Empty Property Scheme
- Offering Incubator units
- Community Ownership of businesses
- Temporary Pop-up Services
- Entrepreneurial Competition for Incubator Space
- Building Upon Existing Footfall Generators

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- Branding of your Town Centre
- Marketing with Neighbouring Town Centres
- Turning Empty Shops into Temporary Art Galleries
- Getting the Right Mix of Businesses
- Cheque Book Promotion
- Using Evidence to Promote your Town Centre to Investors
- Distribution of Shopping Guides to Households
- Know your consumers
- Auction

Mansfield Christmas Auction was provided as a case study. The purpose of the auction was to raise funds for the town's Christmas lights by selling a range of goods and services pledged by local businesses. A total of £23,000 was raised in one day. It was stated that the event demanded effort and goodwill but very little cash outlay.

The Safe and Secure High Street – The Toolkit reports that the town centre is a central point for many. It goes on to say that it can attract undesired activities that threaten otherwise healthy high streets and damage people's perceptions of the town centre. It gives examples of successful efforts to improve safety and security of all town centre users:

- Creating a Retail Specific Crime Reduction Partnership
- Working with your Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- ShopWatch Scheme
- PubWatch Scheme
- Community Alcohol Partnerships
- Retail Radio Link
- Using on-Line Technology for Real-Time Crime Tracking
- Re-Deployable CCTV Capability
- CCTV Video Analytics
- Making Crime Reductions Visible
- Community Wardens
- Member Exclusion Scheme
- Safety Scheme for Lost Children
- Penalty Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices

Rochdale's Safer Communities Strategy was provided as a case study. The Project introduced a number of initiatives, including:

- Talking signs around the town
- Dispersal orders and high visibility patrols
- Subway murals
- A magazine to 30,000 people informing them of what business is doing to combat crime
- Local press advertising to promote safe venues

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Plaques in situ around the town centre reminding visitors that the town has received a Safer Business Award
Monthly town centre columns in the local press

The Evening and Night-time economy – The Toolkit states that versatility can be the making of a great town centre. A town centre must strive to offer a clean, safe, vibrant and engaging environment for different types of people. It details a number of schemes which it feels would make this a possibility during the evening and night-time:

- Planning for the evening
- Managing the transition between day and night
- Promoting of late night transport
- Taxi marshal Scheme
- Late night bus service
- Purple flag – to establish national standards and raise the image of Britain's town centres at night.
- Dedicated ambassadors for the evening economy
- Accreditation Scheme for Licensed Premises

A case study was provided - Bolton has pioneered a time-time management structure that involves the employment of ambassadors for the evening economy. The aim being to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour and reassure the public that the town centre is a safe place to visit at night.

Training, Development and Accreditation – The Toolkit encourages a culture where training, development and accreditation are prerequisites. It goes on to support professional accreditation for Town Centre Manager and auditing the quality of the town's retail offer. Support is also given to:

- Pointing retailers towards advice on training
- Learn from real-life retail expert
- Become a retail ambassador
- Encourage junior managers to apply to Oxford summer school
- Get young learners to learn through retail
- Know what qualifications are out there
- Local Business Awards

2.3 Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

2.3.1 The reported purpose of the Guide is around setting up and evaluating town centre management initiative. The Guide is set out in two sections:

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An outline of set up and evaluation – A brief description of the core elements in the life cycle of a successful town centre management initiative, an explanation of the set up and evaluation process, and guidance on when, why, how and by whom the process should be undertaken.

Implementing set up and validation – Examples of good practice are provided and detailed checklists for setting up and validating each of the core elements of successful town centre management initiatives:

- Strategy and vision
- Partnership and structure
- Business and Action Plans
- Funding
- Key Performance Indicators

2.3.2 Examples of good practice have been drawn from the Guide:

Implementing set up and Validation – The Guide reports that the essentials of good practice are both set up and evaluation must work to build and maintain Town Centre management initiatives based on good practice, including a focus on:

- A clear Strategy, shared by all stakeholders
- Robust partnerships
- Strong partnerships
- Matched funding and leverage
- Consultation
- Outputs

Strategy and Vision – The Guide reports that a shared vision is an essential component in finding the common ground necessary for all stakeholders to give their fullest commitments to the objectives of town centre management.

Partnership Structure - The Guide reports that to be successful, town centre management must comprise a genuine, robust and stable partnership between the public, private and community sectors.

Business and Action Plans – The Guide reports that key aspects of good practice are that the range of stakeholders and their differing contributions must be recognised for a town to achieve competitiveness and the best way to achieve this is for all parties to follow the same well developed business plan.

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Funding - The Guide reports that key aspects of good practice are that several sources of funding exist for town centre management, most importantly the public sector and private business, both large and small, all of which need to be fully explored.

Key performance indicators – The Guide reports it is important that the town centre management partnership establishes a number of benchmarks to determine how the town centre changes over time.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 That details from the documents referred to in section 2 of this briefing note inform the evidence base of this Review.