

## **Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience**

### **CORE QUESTIONS**

#### **How can Northampton Borough Council (NBC) further develop partnership working with the town centre business community?**

The Regeneration and Enterprise team helped to set up two Business Improvement Districts (BID), both in the town centre and at Brackmills Industrial Estate. NBC are supporting both the BIDs as they go forward

**Northampton Town Centre Business Improvement District** (Northampton Town Centre LTD) is a newer BID operating since October 2010. Their aims are to improve the Management in the Town Centre, Promote the town centre and attract more visitors and ensure Value for Money through shared services. Successes to date include:

- Promoting and sponsoring events in the Town Centre such as Northampton By the Sea, Frost fair, Go Safari and the Riverside Festival
- Britain in Bloom won Gold last year and will represent the East midlands in the National competition this year.
- Town Centre Hosts are being introduced onto the streets of Northampton with the remit of assisting people with their needs in the centre
- Christmas trees and decorations around the town
- Additional PCSOs are now on the streets
- Loyalty card introduced into the town
- Voucher booklets created for events
- Newsletter circulated on a quarterly basis

The Town Centre BID gets much support from the Town Centre Manager and team with one member of NBC staff now working on the BID full time in a supporting role as well as another employed for admin assistance.

Business Improvement Districts are a great way of encouraging businesses to work with the Council and together to improve an area not just for themselves but for their business, customers and visitors.

#### **How can NBC support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre**

Ensure that the local businesses are kept informed on progress of any developments that will be happening and that disruption is kept to a minimum. Ensure alternative routes are set up if needed and access is available to all shops and businesses. Communicating this information to the businesses prior to any development taking place will ensure that they can stagger their deliveries and inform their customers to minimise impact to their business.

**How can Northampton's retail experience be supported and the impact of low inflation and the economic downturn be mitigated?**

NBC will continue to pursue a broader retail offer in Northampton.

Parking is an issue which is discussed at all consultations with the public. If this could be improved in any way that may assist the town centre.

**How can the independent retail sector and multiple/larger chains work in partnership to ensure work towards sustaining the viability of the retail sector?**

The Town Centre BID works with all of the retailers in the town centre. They are working in partnership to ensure the town centre has a diverse offer.

**What effective marketing and promotion would benefit the town's retail sector and how do you feel the profile of the town centre could be raised?**

Northampton Alive and Love Northampton are two successful brands, which can continue to be promoted and marketed to ensure a wider audience. Northampton Alive shows the different regeneration projects that are planned, or in progress in the town.

Love Northampton outlines what Northampton has to offer including: Sport, Arts, Music, Food, Shops, Heritage, Offers and Learning amongst others. This includes events and exhibitions and promotes the town to both locals and potential visitors.

The BID also promote Northampton as part of their website and the 1 hour of free car parking helps to encourage people into the town .

**How can retailers, landlords, prospective developers and agents develop the town's retail sector?**

- Improve the offer in the town centre
- Encourage more niche retail shops into the town.
- Offer competitive rents
- Attract an anchor store

**How can regulations and advice regarding the retail sector be utilised and accessed more by retailers?**

The Town Centre BID should be keeping their members informed of any changes which will affect them.

**What other activities could have a more positive impact on retailers?**

- Reducing car parking charges
- Improve offer
- Niche Retail

- Public realm improvements – Market Square improvements completed, Abington Street will be designed and delivered.
- More advertising
- More events
- Encourage retailers to

**How can independent retailers compete with both larger multiples and internet shopping?**

Improve their offer and ensure competitive pricing.

**What would you like the town centre to look like in 5 years time?**

- A broader retail offer in the town centre
- More niche retail
- Build on success of events such Christmas 2011 to improve the town centre experience
- Less betting shops
- Less pound shops
- Anchor stores
- Improved retail offer
- Better transport network as the Bus Interchange is delivered
- Promote the whole town
- More emphasis on Wellingborough Road, Kettering Road and Abington Square as part of the retail offer

**How good are the communication channels from the Borough Council regarding new town centre developments?**

- NBC issue press releases on all the major projects
- Northampton Alive promotes the town
- NBC work in conjunction with the Town Centre BID to promote the town
- NBC are also involved in the Love Northampton Campaign

**What do you feel would enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre**

- Broader retail offer with units in line with the current and future market
- More niche retail on offer
- Encourage partners to contribute to and promote events in the town working with the BID
- Less betting shops
- Less pound shops
- Anchor stores
- Improved retail offer
- Better transport network as the Bus Interchange is delivered.

**Has there be any occasion where you have used the Internet to buy any item and why?**

N/A

### **Any other comments**

### **Additional questions to Cabinet Member (Environment)**

**What impact does the following have on the levels of cleanliness in the town centre:**

**Seasonal variation**  
**Enforcement and legal powers**  
**Resources available**  
**Partnership working with local businesses for overall presentation of retail areas**  
**Guidance available for new shops and businesses**  
**Positioning of waste bins to encourage use**  
**Vacant premises**

### **Additional questions to Cabinet Member (Planning, Regeneration and Enterprise) and Head of Regeneration and Development**

**In terms of Planning and Regeneration:**

**Please provide details of support available to retail businesses**

**NBC** are involved in an Enterprise Loans Panel which offers small loans to businesses at a competitive rate. The loan panel is an opportunity for those who have struggled to get finance elsewhere to obtain a loan. The panel meet on a 6 weekly basis where potential candidates present their business.

**Northampton Town Centre Ltd** support the local retail businesses in a variety of ways such as:

- Loyalty Card – Free cards are distributed at certain outlets people have a card it gives you different offers and discount in a town.
- Love Northampton Website promotes Northampton and allows free listing for all retail businesses in the town centre
- Voucher booklets for events
- Value for money offers – reduced insurance rates and waste collection reductions
- Christmas trees/Northampton in Bloom/Go Safari and other events to bring people into the town

**Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership** hold a variety of events and forums to encourage business to business working in the town.

**What are the key elements required for successful town centre regeneration**

- Niche retail
- Decent retail offer
- Easy access

- Attractive public realm
- Good signage
- Events to bring people into the town
- Innovative Marketing campaign
- Use Social media to promote the town
- Arts, Culture and Entertainment
- Good quality office space
- Open green space
- Restaurants, Cafes and bars
- Leisure facilities
- Affordable car parking/park and ride system
- Good business community
- Partnership working
- Good mobile signal
- Town centre wide WiFi

**Please supply details of whether the role of retail investment can be a catalyst for regeneration**

Investment into the retail sector can be a catalyst for regeneration in the town. Ensuring there are a good mixture of good quality floor space and perhaps reducing rent/rates would help ensure a better retail offer. Brining more people into the town with a better offer brings investment therefore is a catalyst for regeneration.

**Any other comments**