

## Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

### Response to core questions from Neighbourhood Warden Team

#### Background

Neighbourhood Wardens employed by Northampton Borough Council each have responsibility for a small number of Wards within the Borough. They carry out patrols and work closely with residents, businesses and community groups to deal with a wide range of issues including littering, accumulations of refuse, antisocial behaviour and abandoned vehicles. They have legal enforcement powers to deal with many of these issues and also act in a signposting role directing enquiries to appropriate bodies. In recent years, one warden has had specific responsibility for the town centre area. However, this post is currently vacant and whole team are working together on a rota basis to provide a daily visible presence in the town centre. In addition a town centre patrol is also provided on a rota basis every Saturday morning. In undertaking their duties the Wardens work closely with partners both within and outside the Council. In particular they maintain close contact with the NBC Environmental Crime Officer whose area includes the town centre, the NBC Town Centre Operations Team, the two Town Centre Rangers and the Police.

The Wardens have discussed the core questions and make the following response. The response does not address all questions as some of the issues do not fall within their remit.

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

Actions from within this team. Continue and improve on-going working through Town Centre Task Group, Town Centre Partnership and BID working groups.

Wider actions within Regulatory Services: Provide advice and information to businesses about steps that are required to comply with legislation and signpost to relevant sources of information e.g. plans are in hand to provide links from the NBC website to the ERWIN site <http://www.everythingregulation.org.uk/Pages/home.aspx> which provides a one stop website for regulatory information for businesses. NBC are also involved in the Northamptonshire Better Business Initiative which is exploring new ways of providing interface between businesses and regulators. As part of this initiative a workshop was held on 29 November to set parameter for the scheme.

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

Within this team, by ensuring that accurate and timely information is provided to businesses regarding the impact of any works, road closures etc.

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

It is not considered that this team have the power to take any specific actions that will achieve this aim.

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

This is considered to be outside the remit of this team.

5. *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?*

This is considered to be outside the remit of this team.

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

This is considered to be outside the remit of this team

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

See response to question 1 above.

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

Further town centre events to attract more people into the area, improved parking, including use of park and ride (this also has benefits in relation to air quality).

Action is taken to improve the appearance of the town centre by education and enforcement of littering legislation. Problems are experienced with commercial waste collections occurring at various times of day which lead to accumulations of materials which can result in litter etc. Possible solutions to this issue are being investigated.

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

This is considered to be outside the remit of this team.

10. *What would you like the town centre will look like in 5 years time?*

Personal observations from the team are that we would like to see a vibrant town centre with a good range of large multiples and independent retailers together with a range of eating and drinking places offering a welcoming and unique experience to visitors.

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

It is considered that communication channels are reasonably effective but that they could be improved.

*12. 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*

See response to question 8 above.

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

Personally I have occasionally purchased items from Amazon and similar sites on the basis of price and ease of availability.

Any other comments