

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **17TH FEBRUARY 2015**

REPORT BY: **MEMBER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER**

SUBJECT: **CHANGING TIMES: HELPING FLINTSHIRE'S TOWN CENTRES ADAPT TO A CHANGING WORLD - RECOMMENDATIONS.**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To present to Cabinet the recommendations of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the “Changing Times: Helping Flintshire’s Town Centres adapt to a Changing World” workshop held on 14 July 2014.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a report in January 2014 to consider how the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee could support the rejuvenation of town centres and High Streets.

2.02 It was agreed that a workshop would be held involving a range of stakeholders including all Members of the Council, officers from relevant Flintshire County Council departments, Town Council representatives, Town Centre Managers, Landlords and Business representatives.

2.03 A workshop was held at Theatr Clwyd on 14 July with over 45 delegates in attendance representing a range of stakeholders. Presentations were given by representatives of the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales, Towns Alive and the Council’s Economic Development department.

2.04 Following the presentations, delegates formed into three discussion groups to consider what the top five priorities the Council and its partners should focus on in the next three years to support the revitalisation of town centres and high streets. The feedback was presented in a report to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2014.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 In summary, the groups recognised the challenges that town centres in Flintshire, and across the UK, are facing. Whilst this is largely a

result of changing consumer behaviour and business decision-making the role of the public sector as facilitators of positive change was highlighted and widely supported. The groups felt that the focus for this facilitation should be on:

- effective town centre management, co-ordinating the work of the different stakeholders;
- developing opportunities for investment through land assembly and proactive planning;
- encouraging appropriate business investment and enabling High Streets to adapt through the planning system;
- maintaining effective communication with communities and businesses;
- increased promotion.

3.02 Many of these areas of work are already underway and have met with considerable success over recent years, including the Flint regeneration process, regeneration in Deeside and land assembly in Buckley. The challenge for the Council will be balancing the clear desire from the stakeholders at the workshop for this to be increased and accelerated against the need to manage scarce resources in the future.

3.03 The Environment Overview & Scrutiny considered the feedback from the workshop at their meeting on 17 September and agreed to put forward a number of recommendations to Cabinet for consideration. It is therefore recommended that the Council should:

- review town partnership structures to ensure continued effectiveness and build upon the inter-disciplinary internal team approaches already used in major regeneration programmes;
- review and improve communication channels with town centre stakeholders and the wider regeneration sector;
- use the opportunity offered by the development of the Local Development Plan to create a flexible planning framework to support the changing roles of the town centres;
- maximise the use of external funding in supporting town centre regeneration; and
- review and improve the marketing of Flintshire and of the town centres.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the Cabinet considers and accepts the recommendations offered in 3.03.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None directly arising from this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 Town centres play a key role in providing accessible goods and services for the most vulnerable.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Vibrant town centres support a large local business community and supply chain and facilitate local purchasing by residents. The quality of the built environment is a major factor in the quality of life of residents.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 Vibrant town centres provide a range of vital local services which is especially important for those without access to private transport.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Any changes to town centre action plans will require consultation.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Publication of this report constitutes consultation.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Reports to Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee January and September 2014.

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