

Wolverhampton City Council

OPEN INFORMATION ITEM

Licensing Committee

Date **25 JULY 2012**

Originating Service Group(s) **EDUCATION AND ENTERPRISE**

Contact Officer(s)/ **ELIOT WARD**

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Title **CITY CENTRE REGENERATION - UPDATE**

RECOMMENDATION

Councillors are requested to note the report and significant progress made with a number of linked initiatives as part of a coordinated approach to regenerating the City Centre.

CITY CENTRE REGENERATION - UPDATE

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report updates Councillors on progress with the strategic initiatives aimed at regenerating the City Centre.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the 4 April 2012 meeting of the Licensing Committee, Councillors requested an update on progress with the various work streams in relation to the regeneration of the City Centre.

3.0 PROGRESS

3.1 Consolidating and expanding the retail and leisure offer

- 3.1.1 The Council and Mander Investments, the owners of the Mander Shopping Centre, have jointly commissioned research which has investigated shopping patterns within the city's catchment area, perceptions of the city as a retail and leisure destination, current retailer performance and realistic potential additional spend. Extensive consultation with the private sector and local communities has been undertaken to underpin the research findings.
- 3.1.2 Mander Investments is now working on a feasibility plan that could result in a major reconfiguration and refurbishment of the Mander Centre. Through a Partnership Agreement, the council will complement this private sector investment by improving the public realm and creating a high-quality pedestrian circuit around the central shopping areas including a more attractive east-west route along Cleveland Street to link the proposed Sainsbury's and Tesco foodstores. Enhancing the overall visitor experience will maximise the draw of the city centre to shoppers and leisure users.

3.2 The Interchange

- 3.2.1 A masterplan has now been prepared which includes a fixed Metro tram alignment and assumes that the multi-storey car park will be extended and refurbished with the station building being redeveloped in a location slightly northwards of the existing footprint. A bid has been submitted to Round 3 of the Regional Growth Fund to assist with the costs of station and Metro related infrastructure. Pre-let negotiations are advanced in respect of a major office user for Block 10 and the Council is exploring ways of generating more capital and/or receipts for re-investment in the scheme. Environmental improvements have been undertaken to the paving on Railway Drive using a mixture of new and reclaimed paving stones and existing maintenance revenue budgets.

3.3 Canalside

- 3.3.1 A bid has been submitted to the Growing Places Fund (GPF) for a grant of £0.6m to assist the relocation of the LPG tanks currently sited at Carvers on Littles Lane. An alternative site for the tanks has been secured by the Council outside the city boundary. Subject to the GPF grant being secured, the landholdings in the

Canalside Quarter will then be freed up for development, predominantly for residential uses but also with some commercial floorspace.

3.4 The Fox Hotel

3.4.1 Demolition of the physical structure of the Fox Hotel is now complete and the site is now in use as a temporary car park, pending redevelopment. In this respect, negotiations for a replacement hotel are ongoing and it is hoped that construction of the new hotel will commence later this year. The new hotel is scheduled to open in mid 2014.

3.5 Westside

3.5.1 This area, stretching from the former Fox Hotel site in the south to Birch Street in the north represents a major opportunity for developers and investors to engage with WCC in respect of development proposals. A mix of commercial, leisure, residential and car parking uses are envisaged together with new Market facilities and quality open space, all linking across the Ring Road to the new Sainsbury's foodstore.

3.6 Southside

3.6.1 In order to improve the physical and trading environment to support local businesses, the Council has offered enhanced grants to repair and refurbish premises and environmental improvements have been undertaken including street/pavement resurfacing, cleansing and improved lighting.

3.6.2 Looking ahead to longer term redevelopment, the Council has invested in a number of vacant or underutilised properties and it is now in the process of undergoing a programme of improvements to improve their appearance and to support short term lettings.

3.7 High Street Innovation Fund/Portas Pilot

3.7.1 Grant monies recently awarded to the City under the High Street Innovation Fund and Portas Pilot initiative (£100,000 each) present an opportunity to focus on specific areas and initiatives to support businesses in the City Centre. Under the former, the Council is considering how a positive environmental effect can be achieved by removing some of the long standing eye sores to make the City Centre more attractive for existing traders and shoppers. Around 20% of the money would be spent on other projects such as alley gating and support for pop up operations in vacant units to trial concepts.

3.7.2 In the second initiative, WV One is the lead body for the Portas Pilot bid which was won against stiff competition from 371 other locations. The first round of 12 pilots will be joined by 13 others later in the year. Each location has to test a range of solutions for improving the high street and produce best practice guides for other locations to use. WV One was supported by a range of partners including the City Council, University, College and third sector organisations and put forward a range of projects including a Wolf's Liar, Dragon's Den style competition to find and support entrepreneurs to trade in shops or from market stalls; supporting

independent traders with free business support, a common identity and joint marketing and a 'sights and sounds of the city' project improving street vibrancy with roving reporters and contemporary town criers.

- 3.7.3 Benefits include reducing empty shops, improving footfall and diversifying the retail offer, sustainability for entrepreneurs and independent traders, positive publicity as a result of the 'Portas Factor' and working with the Mary Portas team, support from national organisations and access to civil servants and the Minister for lobbying and improved perceptions.

3.8 City Centre Management

- 3.8.1 A dedicated City Centre team has now been established under the Environmental Health Commercial service to complement and support all other initiatives to regenerate the City Centre. Taxi marshalling has been re-introduced as a six month pilot to a positive reception from taxi firms and users. A coordinated approach to the provision and management of the public realm will include a review of street trading with the aim of introducing an appropriate level, composition and location of the street trading offer to enhance the City Centre retail offer and experience. Since the licence fee for tables and chairs was reduced from £250 to £25, there has unsurprisingly been an increased level of interest from leisure operators around the City Centre in siting external tables and chairs. Positive progress is being made in looking at the provision of full CCTV coverage across the City Centre as part of the BID proposals.

3.9 People and Transport Movement/Public Realm

- 3.9.1 The Council is exploring how it can address some of the traffic management issues that arise around the City Centre in areas like Lichfield Street and Queen Square. The aim is to significantly improve the pedestrian experience through improvements to the public realm including key routes to the shops from the bus and railway stations. A simple public realm guide for developers will be produced.

3.10 Townscape Heritage Initiative

- 3.10.1 A bid is being progressed for Heritage Lottery Funding under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) to refurbish and repair buildings along gateway routes and in the historic retail core which fall within the Wolverhampton City Centre Conservation Area. Up to £2m of HLF funding is available.

4.0 CITY CENTRE PROSPECTUS

- 4.1 A City Centre Prospectus has been produced which reflects the above progress and the development opportunities that are available within the City Centre. It highlights progress across the City and City Centre and focuses on the Westside development opportunities. A verbal update with feedback on the 19 July launch event will be given to the meeting

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The current approved Capital Programme approved by Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 26 June 2012 and then Council on 11 July 2012 includes £12.000M for implementation of the Southside Delivery Plan, £6.000M for City Centre Acquisitions and £5.000m for City Centre Transport and Movement Enhancements. Alongside these targeted capital resources, revenue resources of £4.600M were set aside in a specific reserve at the end of 2010/2011 to implement the Southside Intervention Plan over the subsequent three years. The majority of initiatives covered in this report are funded or will be funded through these City Centre targeted resources. Any other costs incurred to date have been covered through existing approved budgets across the Council. [ES/12072012/F]

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Full legal advice will be sought, where appropriate, more particularly with regard to the Partnership Agreement between Mander Investments and the Council. [SH/11072012/M]

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The work outlined in this report is designed to improve the environment for all, with no preferential treatment to any individual person or business. All individual schemes of work will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment in accordance with Council Policy. Economic and community considerations for the City Centre will need to be included as part of evaluating the outcomes of completed projects with an equalities impact assessment.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The initiatives and works detailed in this report will significantly improve the City Centre physical environment and the visual amenity and experience of being in the City Centre, particularly for shoppers and visitors.

9.0 SCHEDULE OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Report 20 February 2012 - City Centre Regeneration - Delivery Business Plan/City Centre Prospectus
- Cabinet Report 7 December 2011 - Taking Forward the Regeneration of the City Centre - City Centre Prospectus/Strategic Parking Review
- Cabinet Report 15 November 2011 - Taking Forward the Regeneration of the City Centre - City Centre Prospectus/Progress Update
- Cabinet Report 7 September 2011 - Taking Forward the Regeneration of the City Centre
- Cabinet Report 25 May 2011 - Taking Forward the Regeneration of the City Centre
- Cabinet Report 20 June 2012 - City Centre Regeneration - update / City Centre Prospectus.