



Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Town Centre Vitality

Agenda and Reports
for consideration on

Thursday, 14th January 2010

in Committee Room No. 1, Town Hall, Chorley

At 6.30 pm



www.chorley.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

08 January 2010

Dear Councillor

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - TOWN CENTRE VITALITY -
THURSDAY, 14TH JANUARY 2010**

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Town Centre Vitality to be held in Committee Room No. 1, Town Hall, Chorley on Thursday, 14th January 2010 commencing at 6.30 pm.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda. If the interest arises **only** as result of your membership of another public body or one to which you have been appointed by the Council then you only need to declare it if you intend to speak.

If the personal interest is a prejudicial interest, you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

3. **Minutes of last meeting (Pages 1 - 4)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Town Centre Task Group held on 3 December 2009 (Minutes enclosed).

4. **Markets Issues (Pages 5 - 6)**

The principal purpose of the meeting will be to consider issues around the importance of the Markets to the vitality of the town centre.

The Task Group may wish to consider, amongst other factors, the impact of the outcomes of past scrutiny inquiries; the impact of the recent Covered Market refurbishments; ways of enhancing the vitality of the Flat Iron Market; and the effectiveness of Themed Markets.

A copy of the Executive Summary and Recommendations extracted from the final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry into Chorley Markets published in September 2004 is attached to aid discussion. Notes on market stall occupancy rates and the current situation on the recently commissioned Consultants' review of the Flat Iron Market will be circulated at the meeting.

There will be an opportunity to question the Officers and determine preliminary recommendations for assessment at a later stage.

5. **Witnesses**

The Task Group has agreed to interview and/or consult the Executive Member (Business), the Disability Forum Co-ordinator and selected representatives of town centre retailers and market traders as part of the review process.

Members' instructions will be requested on the most appropriate means of obtaining and considering this evidence. Responses to e-mailed questions could be sought or witnesses could be interviewed separately or in an open forum at the next meeting.

The performance and activity reports requested of the Sports, Play and Physical Activity Manager and the Arts Development Officer at a previous meeting will be presented to the next Task Group meeting.

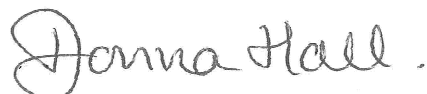
6. **Town Centre Visit**

The Task Group agreed at its last meeting to accept an invitation from Macclesfield Borough Council to visit the town and learn at first hand the measures being taken to improve the town centre. Arrangements for the visit agreed with the Chair will be reported to the meeting.

7. **Dates of future meetings**

The Task Group will need to agree the dates of its final meetings.

Yours sincerely



Donna Hall
Chief Executive

Tony Uren
Democratic and Member Services Officer
E-mail: tony.uren@chorley.gov.uk
Tel: (01257) 515122
Fax: (01257) 515150

Distribution

1. Agenda and reports to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Town Centre Vitality (Councillor Peter Wilson (Chair), and Councillors Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, Pat Haughton, Harold Heaton, June Molyneaux, Mick Muncaster, Geoffrey Russell and Stella Walsh for attendance.
2. Agenda and reports to Cath Burns (Economic Development Manager), Peter McAnespie (Policy and Urban Renewal Design Manager), Conrad Heald (Town Centre Manager) and Tony Uren (Democratic and Member Services Officer) for attendance.

This information can be made available to you in larger print or on audio tape, or translated into your own language. Please telephone 01257 515118 to access this service.

આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون

01257 515823

کیجئے:

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Town Centre Vitality

Thursday, 3 December 2009

Present: Councillor Peter Wilson (Chair) and Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Anthony Gee, June Molyneaux, Mick Muncaster, Geoffrey Russell and Stella Walsh

Also in attendance: Simon Clark (Service Manager (Environment), Zoe Whiteside (Strategic Housing Services Manager), Ian Aldred (Housing Enabling Manager), Cath Burns (Economic Development Manager), Conrad Heald (Town Centre and Markets Manager) and Tony Uren (Democratic and Member Services Officer).

10.TCG.35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Marie Gray and Pat Haughton, Peter McAnespie (Policy and Design Team Leader) and Louise Finch (Acting Head of Communications, Marketing and Tourism).

10.TCG.36 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the members of the Task Group in any of the meeting's agenda items.

10.TCG.37 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group on Town Centre Vitality held on 5 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair, subject to the correction of Minute 09.TCG.33 (Gateways into the Town Centre (Signage etc)) by the clarification that the Pavement Café Policy (referred to in the fifth proposed recommendation) was, in fact, introduced in December 2007. The Service Manager (Environment) confirmed that the policy was currently being reviewed by the Licensing Team and that Members would be consulted as part of the review.

10.TCG.38 USE OF VACANT PROPERTIES/ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

The Chair reminded the Task Group that the primary purposes of the meeting was to consider issues around the number of vacant retail and commercial properties in the town centre.

The Chair welcomed in particular, Simon Clark (Service Manager Environment), Zoe Whiteside (Strategic Housing Services Manager) and Ian Aldred (Housing Enabling Manager) who had been invited to attend the meeting to advise Members on current policies and practices on the enforcement of statutory or discretionary obligations and the residential usage of town centre property.

(a) Residential Usage of Vacant Property

Zoe Whiteside reminded the Task Group that the Strategic Housing Services Section was responsible for the strategic planning policies in relation to the provision of differing types of housing units across the whole of the Borough. Zoe referred to the money currently being invested in the Purchase and Repair scheme operated with Registered Served Landlords, under which the RSL's aimed to provide a number of 2

and 3 bedroomed affordable housing units through the refurbishment of 13 or so empty properties in the Borough.

Zoe also referred to the general reluctance of RSL's to invest in the conversion of empty properties or flats above retail premises in the town centre for residential use, principally because of the difficulties in attracting scarce funding and the potential future management problems. However, Adactus was currently planning to make available 8 flats at Halliwell Street in the town centre for social rented housing.

Simon Clark advised the Task Group of the reactive role of the Neighbourhoods Directorate in responding to complaints regarding empty properties in the Borough. Simon explained the processes adopted by the Directorate in contacting the owners of the properties to seek their intentions. The Directorate was currently involved in the examination of 46 vacant properties throughout the Borough (none of which were located in the town centre), including 13 properties currently being renovated under the Purchase and Repair scheme. Simon also referred to the provisions of Empty Property Management Orders, which sanctioned the local authority to assume the management of a property from the owner; repair the property and rent the property to an occupant. However, this measure imposed a future management role on the authority.

A member of the Task Group, whilst accepting the limited funding and resources available, considered that concerted efforts should be made to convert the flats and spaces above the large Victorian premises in the town centre to residential use, particularly as a means of providing affordable accommodation for young people. In response, Simon Clark intimated that the Neighbourhood Directorate could be willing to provide practical advice to owners of suitable properties wishing to convert empty space into residential units and Zoe Whiteside offered assistance in the marketing of the additional units provided.

(b) Vacant Town Centre Properties

Conrad Heald (Town Centre and Markets Manager) circulated a note drawing attention to 10 retail or food businesses that had either recently opened, expanded or relocated to new premises in the town centre. The note indicated the current property vacancy rates within the town centre, which revealed that whilst the total of vacant square metres had increased since the last quarter, the number of vacant retail square metres had reduced slightly. Out of a total of 315 units, 31 made up from the following sectors were currently vacant:

Retail	13
Pubs/Leisure	6
Development	7
Offices	5

One member of the Task Group proposed the formulation of a specific policy to define and guide future practices and actions in relation to empty town centre properties, under the leadership of an identified officer.

In addition, a number of measures and proposals were put forward by the Task Group members to address differing aspects and problems associated with empty properties.

(c) Recommendations

At the conclusion of the debate, the Task Group **AGREED** that the ideas and suggestions as outlined below be considered and reviewed by the Task Group at a later stage, with a view to firm recommendations on vacant town centre premises issues being formulated.

- That the Adactus scheme to provide 8 affordable housing units at Halliwell Street, Chorley be monitored by the Strategic Housing Services Section, with a view to Registered Social Landlords being encouraged to develop other similar feasible schemes in the town.
- That the Neighbourhoods Directorate be requested to offer an advice service to owners of properties in the town centre that are capable in whole or in part of conversion to flats, in order to clarify the relevant regulations, directives and standards which require to be complied with.
- That the Strategic Housing Services Section be requested to offer assistance in the marketing of new affordable housing units provided by Registered Social Landlords in the town centre, and provide details of applicants on the housing working list to the owners of the housing units.
- That developers of new schemes in the town centre be encouraged to consider mixed use developments (comprising retail, storage, residential units, etc) whenever practicable.
- That a specific policy document on the practices and procedures to be adopted and implemented in relation to vacant town centre properties be compiled, the package to include advice and guidance to prospective developers on relevant planning application procedures, licensing regulations, funding sources and business support services etc.
- That an officer be identified to undertake the role of Lead Co-ordinator responsible for the implementation of the Empty Property Policy,
- That owners of vacant town centre premises be encouraged to enhance the appearance of the empty property by an appropriate window dressing (eg advertisements for other businesses or attractions in the town or the promotion of prospective retail/business occupants).
- That owners of empty shops in the town centre be requested to consider more robust means of marketing the available retail premises.
- That, in order to reduce the negative perception created by the profusion of large 'For Sale' notice boards attached to vacant town centre premises, the vendors agents be requested to examine means of mitigating the negative impact by, for example, reducing the size of notice boards or reducing the number by combining two or more properties on one board.

10.TCG.39 TOWN CENTRE VISIT

Conrad Heald sought the Task Group's instructions on a suggestion that the Group visit either Chesterfield or Macclesfield as part of the inquiry's evidence gathering exercise. The Task Group would benefit by visiting and assessing one of the new development schemes currently being pursued in both towns.

It was **AGREED** that Conrad be requested to agree arrangements with the Chair for the Task Group's visit to Macclesfield town centre on a suitable date in early January 2010.

10.TCG.40 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Town Centre Task Group be held on Thursday, 14 January 2010 at 6.30pm to consider Market related issues.

Chair

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertook this Scrutiny Inquiry into Chorley markets to investigate methods to increase the take up and quality of market stalls in Chorley and to make proposals to increase the numbers of customers of Chorley markets.

The Panel utilised documents, evidence and questioned several witnesses. The Panel undertook consultation and research, including a survey of customers and non-customers of the markets and market traders. Two site visits were also undertaken, to Bury and Ormskirk market, which were noted as a flourishing market.

The evidence gathered was considered in relation to the Inquiry objectives and desired outcomes and the Panel have made several recommendations. The members of the Panel found that there had been a decline in markets in general. Chorley market had seen a fall off in stall take up, but that Chorley markets were successful in the main.

FINANCIAL

- R1 To reduce the rents for the stalls on both markets to ensure that Chorley markets are competitive and attract new traders.
- R2 To implement new rent payment methods eg the Direct Debit system and on-line payments, including a discount for traders paying three months in advance.
- R3 To roof over the central aisle of the covered market for protection for traders and goods from the elements.
- R4 To have more lock-up stalls on the covered market.
- R5 To buy or rent new stalls for a trial on Market Street/Fazakerley Street.
- R6 To explore partnership and alternative arrangements for the management of the markets, with a view to bringing in additional investment and other commercial benefits.
- R11 To change tenure options to offer leases as well as licenses.
- R12 To improve the lighting facilities, provided by the Council, on both markets.
- R18 To install flag poles either side of the covered market entrance.
- R26 To install brown signs in Chorley to highlight the markets, on the main approaches into Chorley, the M61 motorway and at the district boundaries.
- R27 To improve the signs for the car parks in Chorley.

* To consider Flat Iron traders erecting their own stalls.

ADVERTISING/MARKETING

- R7 To e-enable stall holders to apply for stalls.
- R10 To encourage Flat Iron traders to have similar colourful protective covers for visual enhancement.
- R13 To concentrate advertisement on the Tuesday market as the busiest day on the markets.
- R14 To increase advertising for traders for the markets, directly targeting under represented trades eg pottery, by utilising trade magazines and the Internet.
- R15 To develop the website page regarding the markets, to include advertisements and information about market stalls.
- R16 To implement an advertising strategy for the markets, eg using Chorley cakes.
- R17 To advertise via different methods, eg radio, local papers and the Internet.
- R19 To offer sponsorship opportunities, eg planted flowerbeds under the district boundary signs.
- R23 To provide information, for customers, regarding product ranges and stall location, e.g. flyers.
- R24 To advertise Chorley market particularly for customers who live out of the area, e.g. the Internet, magazines, specific radio advertising, local paper and flyers etc.
- R25 To approach the management of Chorley Interchange regarding coaches parking at the Interchange as part of a future exercise to increase the number of coach operators running trips to Chorley.

MARKET DAYS

- R8 To have a trial of stalls on Fazakerley Street and to alter the layout of the Flat Iron Market to reduce fragmentation and make it more attractive. In the long-term to relocate the Flat Iron market to Fazakerley Street and the pedestrian area of Market Street, subject to consultation with groups such as the Chamber of Trade as to the time Market Street would remain open for vehicular access.
- R9 To have occasional specialist markets once a month on a weekend, lasting 1 to 3 days depending on what kind of market.
- R20 To increase the range and variety of stalls on Chorley markets in line with customer recommendations. To facilitate this offer incentives, e.g. a free stall for a month for traders with a new line.
- R22 To retain the covered market on a Thursday, but not to add any further trading days.
- * To consider alternative days rather than Tuesday for the Flat Iron market eg making Saturday the main focus for promotions
- * **Recommendations put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**