



AGENDA ITEM: 5(g)

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
27th NOVEMBER 2014**

CABINET: 13th JANUARY 2015

Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor D. Griffiths

Contact for further information: Mr I Gill (Extn. 5094)

(E-mail: ian.gill@westlancs.gov.uk)

Mr D Carr (Extn. 5359)

(Email dominic.carr@westlancs.gov.uk)

SUBJECT: DRAFT ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Wards affected: Knowsley/Scott/Derby Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To agree the draft Ormskirk town centre strategy for consultation purposes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That the content of this report and the Draft Ormskirk town centre strategy at Appendix A, be considered and that any agreed comments be referred to Cabinet.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

3.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Ormskirk town centre strategy (Appendix A) for consultation from 14 January to 14 April 2015, having regard to any agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.2 That Call In is not appropriate for this item as this report has already been considered by the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 November 2014
-
-

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The draft Ormskirk town centre strategy has been developed to set out the key activities for the Council and Partners.
- 4.2 To revitalise the town centre bringing new investment, businesses and visitors the Council will seek to work with various partners to deliver these aims.
- 4.3 The strategy will seek to build upon the work of the Ormskirk Market Town's Initiative and take into consideration external factors such as how the economic climate has affected the town centre and what actions need to be taken to maintain the vitality and viability of Ormskirk town centre.
- 4.4 In order to further develop this strategy and ensure a co-ordinated approach across the Council, a wider Ormskirk town centre cross-service working group was established and has held a number of meetings. This wider officer group was made up of the Heritage and Environment Manager, Technical Services Manager, Market and Car Parking Officer, Arts Development Manager and the Planning Policy and Implementation Team Leader. Through this group a list of priorities and stakeholders were identified and meetings with external stakeholders have taken place.
- 4.5 To further develop a draft strategy, initial discussions have taken place with a number of partners including Ormskirk Community Partnership, Love Ormskirk, Edge Hill University and the Students Union.
- 4.6 In November 2013, a special Member workshop for Ormskirk Members, relevant Portfolio Holders and opposition Spokespeople took place in which the following key themes were explored:
- The market
 - Car parking
 - The environment & special features
 - Leisure and night-time economy
 - Technology and marketing

Following this workshop, the views expressed by Members were taken into consideration as this draft strategy was further developed.

- 4.7 Love Ormskirk has also submitted and been successful in applying for Ormskirk to become a Healthy High Street pilot area. This initiative is supported by Business In The Community (BITC) and provides intensive support to Ormskirk town centre over a three year period. This support includes providing business experience or resources to high street champions to help develop and implement initiatives. Since being successfully nominated Council officers have attended a number of meetings with BITC and are have ensured that this initiative and the town centre strategy would work to complement each other.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The draft strategy identifies and investigates seven key areas in relation to the town centre in which a number of actions are identified. These areas are listed below.

Brand, Marketing & Town centre Management

- 5.2 The draft strategy identifies that one of the main issues with Ormskirk town centre is that there is no defined recognisable brand and that the management and marketing of the town centre is currently fragmented and unco-ordinated, although the 'Love Ormskirk' initiative has been positive. There is a recommendation that a new town centre forum should be established to enable a better dialogue between stakeholders, as well as establishing a monitoring programme for delivering the strategy and action plan once adopted. There is a proposal to set up a marketing sub group to develop and promote a brand for Ormskirk.

Building and Place

- 5.3 It is recognised that the historic importance of Ormskirk town centre is one of the town's unique selling points. However, in order to capitalise upon this heritage, improvements to some buildings and currently vacant development sites are required. This section also identifies several areas in which gateways into Ormskirk can be improved, therefore improving first impressions of the town.

Ormskirk Market

- 5.4 This theme investigates the strengths and weaknesses of both the Thursday and Saturday market and explores opportunities to diversity the appeal of the market. This will complement the work being carried out by the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as proposals to redevelop Moor Street.

Car Parks

- 5.5 This section explores the current situation in regard to car parks in Ormskirk town centre and examines a range of issues including the differentiation between Council and private car parks, signage for long and short stay car parks, as well as the physical condition and pricing. It recommends a review of the current pricing strategy in relation to car parks and explores whether new technology could/should be introduced.

Transport and Access

- 5.6 Looks at some of the issues in regards to transport and access and investigates some of the possible improvements which can be made. The draft strategy recommends that the Council work with LCC to provide improvements to bus and

rail provision, as well as developing a much improved pedestrian and cycle network including links to Edge Hill University.

Night Time/Evening Economy

- 5.7 This section identifies that although Ormskirk has a relatively strong night time/evening economy there are still opportunities for growth. Some recommendations include exploring if an evening events programme could be developed to help support shops opening up later, introducing new permanent lighting to help create a safer and more attractive night time environment and working with a number of agencies to ensure that the town centre remains a safe environment.

Recording Monitoring Town centre Information

- 5.8 The draft strategy identifies that in order to monitor the health of a town centre; a range of data sets will be required. This data can help the town centre become more responsive to changes and monitor which initiatives are working, helping to target available resources where they are having the greatest effect. The draft strategy recommends that we investigate opportunities to attain as much data as possible including working with the Healthy High Streets campaign to investigate if retailers can share their footfall data to help with more targeted marketing.

6.0 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 A full copy of the draft Ormskirk town centre strategy is attached at Appendix A for comment and then approval for consultation purposes
- 6.2 Following Cabinet approval of the draft strategy, a consultation exercise will be undertaken between the 14 January and 14th April 2015 to enable relevant stakeholders, partner organisations and businesses, as well as the general public to participate and comment. Following comments and any necessary changes to the draft Strategy, it is anticipated a final draft strategy will return to Cabinet in June 2015 for approval with implementation of the action plan commencing in 2015.
- 6.3 A series of consultation questions have been devised in relation to the aims and objectives of the draft strategy and the seven key themes to add structure to the consultation process.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 7.1 The draft Ormskirk town centre strategy has been developed to help deliver growth in Ormskirk town centre. The strategy aims to address a number of issues including reducing vacancy levels, improving the appearance of the town centre, developing a brand which can be promoted to encourage visitors developing the evening/night time economy and improving access into and out of the town Centre.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The draft Ormskirk town centre strategy has been produced using existing resources, although the final strategy will incur some printing and design costs.
- 8.2 Some of the actions contained within the strategy have already been budgeted for, however, there are some actions contained within the draft strategy which will require Council resources if they are to be taken forward, in terms of both financial and officer time. In this year's budget (April 2014-March 2015) £490,000 was made available to fund Environmental/Town & Village Centre improvements across the Borough and officers have already requested that some of this funding be used to help deliver some of the actions within this strategy.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The draft strategy identifies a range of actions to be investigated and delivered to help improve Ormskirk town centre. Some of these actions have the potential to deliver significant benefits in terms of helping to deliver a more prosperous and vibrant town centre. The draft strategy has the potential to revitalise the town centre, bringing new investment, business and visitors to the town.
- 9.2 In order for this draft strategy to be successful it requires buy in from a range of partners and stakeholders. The draft strategy will also require funding to deliver some of the initiatives identified, as well as a staff resource in terms of officer time.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Ormskirk Town centre strategy

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Minute of Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27 November 2014 (Cabinet only)

