



AGENDA ITEM: 5(k)

CABINET: 15th September 2015

Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor I. Moran

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SUBJECT: ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY 2015

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the consultation exercise in relation to the draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 and to agree the final version of the Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the final draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 as attached at Appendix C be approved.

2.2 That the key delivery partners set out at paragraph 5.5 be invited to sign up to the final draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015.

2.3 That the management arrangements for the delivery of the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy, set out in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5, be agreed and the Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to implement these management arrangements and to make any appropriate adjustments to the management arrangements as required.

- 2.4 That the Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise and publish the final Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 when signed by key delivery partners, and to make any appropriate minor amendments before the document is finalised.
 - 2.5 That the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be authorised to implement the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following Cabinet approval of the Draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy in January 2015, the document has been through a comprehensive consultation exercise.
- 3.2 During the twelve week consultation exercise which began on the 14th January 2015 and completed on the 14th April 2015, officers participated in a number of events to promote the consultation and encourage engagement. These events included holding six exhibitions within Ormskirk across a range of venues with officers attending an exhibition at the Chapel Gallery, three events at Ormskirk Library and a full day at Morrison's together with a business 'Start Up and Growth' event at Edge Hill University. In total officers recorded 252 attendees at these consultation events. Officers have also met with some of the major landowners within Ormskirk, Edge Hill University, Edge Hill Students Union, representatives from Ormskirk Parish Church, as well as meeting with Love Ormskirk, Ormskirk Community Partnership (OCP) and representatives from Business in the Community (BITC).
- 3.3 A dedicated web page was created on the Council's website and details of the consultation exercise were sent to businesses on the Economic Regeneration's business database. Letters were also sent to all businesses in the town centre, as well as a number of other stakeholders including West Lancashire College and Lancashire County Council. Two press releases were issued during the consultation period letting members of the public know when events were taking place and how they can engage in the consultation.
- 3.4 For the purposes of minimising cost and the impact on resources required to input and analyse individual responses, respondents were encouraged to complete an online questionnaire, although some paper copies were also available should individuals have preferred this method. These paper copies were also issued during consultation events if requested by members of the public.
- 3.5 Copies of the consultation documents and questionnaires were also made available at the Council offices in Ormskirk, the Council Customer Service Point in the Concourse, Skelmersdale, and the Investment Centre at Whitemoss Business Park, Skelmersdale, as well as the library and the Chapel Gallery within Ormskirk. In total a 118 responses to the online/paper questionnaire were received.

- 3.6 The Council's Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee are currently working on a project entitled 'A Market Strategy for Ormskirk' in which they are examining/reviewing a series of topics which are also covered within the Town Centre Strategy. The recommendations from this project will be reported back to Cabinet for approval and if they are approved can be fed into the implementation of the actions within the Town Centre Strategy.
- 3.7 In addition, a special Members consultation event took place in which Ormskirk Ward Councillors, relevant Portfolio Holders and Opposition spokespeople were invited to discuss the development and implementation of the strategy.

4.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 4.1 Appendix A contains an analysis of the responses received to the paper and electronic versions of the consultation questionnaire.
- 4.2 We also received a number of detailed letters and comments from meetings with groups such as OCP, Love Ormskirk, Ormskirk Parish Church, Ormskirk Residents Group, Edge Hill University/Students Union and some key landowners. A summary of these responses can be seen within Appendix B attached to this report.
- 4.3 Given the nature of the document, a good response was received. It was pleasing to note that so many people (252) attended the consultation events to discuss issues with officers with some leaving feedback.
- 4.4 Comments received have generally been supportive and constructive both from the completed questionnaires (118 in total), and the discussions and meetings which have taken place. Of particular note there appears to be overwhelming support for the vision, whilst a large number of respondents believe that Ormskirk gives a negative first impression. Also when asked if respondents could prioritise areas in which they would like to see improvements within the strategy, these were '*Brand, Marketing and Town Centre Management*'; '*Buildings and Place*'; and '*Ormskirk Market*'. All three responses received between 20 and 26%. Out of all the responses received the majority (69%), were received from West Lancashire residents with 18% also received from businesses in West Lancashire.
- 4.5 In addition, some of the key points raised by respondents to the questionnaire included:
- Improving the relationship between Edge Hill University and the town
 - Improving the range of shops available in the town
 - Concerns were raised over the current appearance of Ormskirk Market, and the town generally
 - There appears to be support to encourage a series of events within Ormskirk to encourage visitors and shoppers into the town
 - Concern over the current car parking arrangements and transport generally within the town
- 4.6 To summarise, from the meetings which were held with key stakeholders some of the main points raised included:

- There appears to be support that the Council is developing this Strategy and an understanding that this demonstrates the Council's commitment to the continued success of Ormskirk Town Centre
- A number of respondents said that they believed the Council could help support businesses more by being more flexible
- Some discussion over whether the Council could help attract larger retailers to the town
- There appears to be general consensus that the market requires improving and needs to find a niche
- Transport into and out of Ormskirk should be improved
- The appearance of the town centre needs to be improved to help improve confidence in the town centre
- There was a general consensus that the Wi-Fi coverage in the town centre needs to be improved
- Some respondents said that there are too many actions contained within the strategy and that the strategy should be more concise
- Support for the development of a dedicated town centre management group
- Ormskirk Parish Church, Edge Hill University and Edge Hill Students Union said that they would welcome the opportunity to get more involved in the development and implementation of this Strategy with all groups offering support.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION AND PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Following the consultation exercise and the responses received, it is proposed to make a number of minor amendments to the strategy which can be viewed within Appendix B. These include:
- Giving greater priority to utilising Ormskirk Parish Church, as well as other churches within Ormskirk
 - Amendment to the list of key partners to reflect additional organisations the Council has engaged with
 - Slight factual changes to the document including the Ormskirk Improvements Map
 - Reducing and merging some of the actions within the Strategy so that it is more focused and less repetitive
 - Alteration to the vision to make it more locally specific to Ormskirk
- 5.2 These changes have been made to the document and a Final Draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 has been attached to this report as Appendix C.
- 5.3 It is proposed that we get key delivery partners (as set out in paragraph 5.5 below) to sign up to this Final Draft Strategy before the document is finally published. This will ensure that the Strategy is truly a joint partnership strategy and not just viewed as the Council's Strategy. A delegation is sought to allow the final publishing of the Strategy once it is endorsed by the other key delivery partners, and to allow for any appropriate minor amendments to the document that may be required.
- 5.4 A broad structure for engagement and delivery of the Strategy is set out in Appendix D. It is proposed that there will be an Ormskirk Town Centre

Stakeholder Event which will be held once a year with a wide range of stakeholders present to allow feedback on how progress is being made on delivering the Action Plan and to allow an opportunity for stakeholder input. This event will include a wide range of relevant political representatives, council officers, and representatives from the business, resident and voluntary community, and could be led by the Portfolio Holder or Economic Regeneration Champion.

- 5.5 The day to day work of delivering the Strategy will be undertaken by an officer level Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group. This group should involve representatives from the key delivery partners, namely: the Council, Love Ormskirk, Ormskirk Community Partnership, Edge Hill University and Students Union, and Business in The Community (who run the Healthy High Streets Campaign in Ormskirk). There will be separate working groups (e.g. marketing) that will be established to focus on specific areas and report back to the Management Group. Other delivery partners may be asked to attend meetings of the Management Group or working groups as required.
- 5.6 It is proposed that, following every Stakeholder Event, that a report will be prepared for Cabinet to update on progress and to review the Action Plan
- 5.7 The Council is already currently working on a number of initiatives mentioned in the draft Strategy to improve the town centre. These initiatives include:
- Financially supporting the delivery of public realm improvements on Moor Street
 - Monitoring town centre vacancy levels periodically
 - Updating signage and maps across the town centre
 - Painting all street furniture in appropriate colours
 - Assisting with the development of a food and drink festival for September
 - Enhancing flower beds around the town centre
 - Currently in the middle of a programme of resurfacing and improving all Council owned car parks with environmental improvements
 - Made a number of amendments to the parking regimes including increasing the 2 hours parking stay to 4 hours and providing free car parking in the Derby Street car park of a weekend
 - Provided new Christmas lighting for the town centre last year and will provide additional Christmas lighting this year
 - Assisting with the running of Motorfest event
 - Improvements around Coronation Park and providing events in the park
 - Running events and exhibitions at the Chapel Gallery

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The Draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 has a number of key themes which contain actions. The purpose of this Strategy is to increase the vibrancy of the town centre, supporting growth and developing opportunities in terms of increasing visitor numbers, reducing shop vacancy rates even further, improving the shopping and leisure experience for residents and visitors alike and providing environmental improvements.

- 6.2 The Strategy also aims to improve the appearance and image of Ormskirk town centre, helping to make the town more attractive to both visitors and investors. In turn this should help increase footfall which should help improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the town centre, helping to support existing, as well as create new jobs.
- 6.3 The Strategy aims to help improve and promote the local distinctiveness of Ormskirk Town Centre by helping to provide physical and environmental improvements within the town centre, as well as working to promote Ormskirk's historic character to visitors. By improving the appearance of the town centre, the Strategy should also help reduce the fear of crime helping to make the town centre more accessible to all members of society.
- 6.4 Through the promotion of cultural and other leisure activities, the Strategy should help promote social wellbeing and levels of physical activity helping to reduce health inequality.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 has been produced using existing staff resources, although producing the consultation materials has incurred some costs as will the production of the Final Strategy. At this stage the total cost of all of the actions contained within the strategy are not yet clear and further work will be required to firm up on this position and develop some of the proposals. Initial funding for the strategy (£210,000) has already been agreed from the Environmental / Town and Village Centre Improvement Fund but this may not be sufficient to cover all of the costs involved. In addition, some of this funding has been used to contribute towards work on Moor Street. In addition at the recent (July) Full Council meeting it was agreed that a further £25,000 would be made available to support marketing/branding of Ormskirk town centre. This funding is delegated to the Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration in consultation with the Leader. If further funding is required then this will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet or Council as appropriate. In addition it is hoped that additional resources may also be secured through submitting grant bids, partnership working and investigating opportunities to generate revenue.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant operational risk registers.

Background Documents

The following background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing this Report.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Document</u>	<u>File Ref</u>
Sept 2014	West Lancashire Economy Study 2014	ED Study 14
March 2015	West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025	ED Strategy 15

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 – Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 Questionnaire Analysis
- Appendix B – Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015 Consultation Responses Summary and suggested proposed changes
- Appendix C – Final Draft Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy
- Appendix D – Proposed Engagement & Delivery Structure
- Appendix E – Equality Impact Assessment