



Cabinet: 11 September 2018

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**Report of: Director Development and Regeneration**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor I Moran**

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**SUBJECT: DEVELOPING AND SELLING PRODUCTS TO PROMOTE PLACES  
WITHIN WEST LANCASHIRE**

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Wards affected: Primarily Ormskirk Ward(s)

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek agreement to move forward to develop and sell Ormskirk branded products to promote the town and enable the possibility of similar future initiatives elsewhere in the Borough.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the sale of, Council created, branded items through a range of mediums including utilising local retailers, attractions and online be approved.
- 2.2 That authority be given to the Director of Development & Regeneration to take all steps necessary to design, produce and sell products through local retailers, attractions, the Chapel Gallery and/or online, subject to suitable financial probity measures being put in place

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## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Ormskirk Town Centre (OTC) Strategy 2015-2020 was adopted in September 2015 and that following its adoption Council officers, along with partner organisations have been working to deliver key actions contained within the Strategy
- 3.2 One of the key action areas highlighted in the OTC strategy was to address issues relating to brand, marketing and town centre management. Some of the key issues highlighted were that of fragmented town centre management, the lack of a clear recognisable brand for Ormskirk and the lack of one comprehensive website to promote

Ormskirk and the wider area and act as a 'one stop shop' promoting events and activities taking place in and around the town centre.

- 3.3 To help address these issues a new Ormskirk branding has been established which is based on a comprehensive market research exercise undertaken by place making specialist consultants Thinking Place.
- 3.4 As part of the OTC strategy, and the more recent research undertaken to investigate the feasibility of developing a Business Improvement District for Ormskirk it was agreed that the town and brand needed to be further promoted. In the 2017 annual review of the OTC Strategy particular emphasis was given to promoting Ormskirk as a destination and fully utilising the new Discover Ormskirk website over the coming year.
- 3.5 Through the use of the budget intended to help deliver the actions contained within the OTC Strategy officers are attempting to pump prime activities and events and make them more sustainable.
- 3.6 One way to aid promotion whilst also creating an income generation stream is to design, produce and sell place branded products. Whilst officers do not believe that this process will generate *significant* amounts of revenue in the short term, this along with other initiatives has the potential to help the sustainability of activities whilst also promoting the town, its wider assets, and the Discover Ormskirk website.
- 3.7 Officers have conducted initial research and believe that there is a gap in the market which has the potential to generate an income. Numerous locations of a similar size to Ormskirk across the country have 'souvenirs', giftware and place products available. Through the use of a pilot we hope to test the market for the types of products that sell well whilst also promoting the Ormskirk brand.
- 3.8 Chapel Gallery recently had a suite of products produced for their Festival of Tales program which had higher than expected sales numbers and a further batch of products is now having to be ordered.
- 3.9 Ormskirk and other locations have 'non-official' products created by larger companies to capture the market who are seeking out these items. Some examples include art prints, mugs, coasters, greeting cards, and Christmas decorations.
- 3.10 Having conducted initial market research and having spoken to retailers in the town centre officers believe that there is a potential market for Ormskirk branded products. However, as the only real way to know demand is to enter the market. We propose to set up a pilot for this process to test demand with a limited range of products designed to take advantage of the Christmas gift audience and coincide with our Ormskirk lights switch on event.

#### **4.0 CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The Discover Ormskirk website has been launched and is currently being utilised to promote businesses and events suited to visitors in Ormskirk and around West Lancashire.
- 4.2 Discover Ormskirk's Facebook page has a good following which gives us an insight into our Target Market.
  - 40% of followers are in Ormskirk
  - 84% of followers are Female
  - 77% are aged 25 - 54

- 4.3 Research has shown that women tend to purchase souvenirs more frequently than men, with souvenirs being more psychologically important to many women tourists.
- 4.4 Some initial branded products have already been launched and have proved popular. In particular, the Ormskirk tote bag purchased for the branding launch has been very popular and a number of people have asked where they can purchase one.
- 4.5 Officers believe that through the sale of goods the branding and town would benefit from a wider reach. Branded products would enable this as recipients could receive gifted items, or visitors may purchase items themselves to take home. They would also enable locals to show pride in their town.
- 4.6 Ormskirk has recently joined Visit Liverpool, as agreed by Cabinet in February. This will enable new opportunities and possible access to the cruise ship market.
- 4.7 As the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy is being delivered it has become clear that Ormskirk is becoming more of a destination. Recent research conducted by Springboard in partnership with the Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University and Cardiff University, which investigated the footfall of a number of towns across the country, has created new signature types and they have classified Ormskirk as a 'speciality town' which typically means:
- Offers something unique and special
  - Ormskirk's main anchor is not retail but is strongly related to other specialist activities in addition to the basic retail offer (e.g heritage/market)
  - The town attracts visitors but serves the local population
  - People generally have a longer dwell time
  - Management and marketing should be focused on protecting and promoting identity and positioning.
- 4.8 This evidence supports the proposal to launch Discover Ormskirk branded products and to help promote Ormskirk as a brand and visitor destination.
- Some of the key items that could be sold include: Greeting Cards at Christmas time
  - A selection of different bags
  - Tea towels / oven gloves
  - Locally sourced products

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Subject to Cabinet approval a small selection of products will be purchased, using existing budgets and sold at the Ormskirk Christmas Gingerbread Market and through interested retailers in time for the festive season to initially test the market.
- 5.2 Following this, further work will continue in engaging more local retailers to discuss their interest and possible future products. Ideally each retailer would sell a different Christmas card (and other products) so that each design would be exclusive to a particular retailer with the aim of encouraging people to visit numerous retailers in the town. All these initial products would be branded 'Discover Ormskirk'. There will also be an opportunity to explore with the Chapel Gallery as to how their gallery branded goods, and artist designed Ormskirk products, can be sold more widely in addition to the shop in the Gallery itself.
- 5.3 If approval is given it will be necessary to explore on what basis the retailers sell the products.

- 5.4 All goods sold must comply with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 which protects consumers against defective or misdescribed goods and affords them statutory rights and remedies for breaches. Consumers have a right to return faulty goods and get a refund or replacement or repair. This is especially important if/when online selling is undertaken. Consumers have 30 days, from receipt, to reject good that do not meet the statutory requirements. Consumer Contracts Regulations also come in to play when selling online. Consumers have 14 days, from receipt, to cancel the order for unwanted goods (selected products are exempt). The consumer must cover the cost for returning unwanted goods, unless agreed otherwise or faulty. A full refund, including basic delivery costs must be offered.
- 5.5 Payment processes and an online shop would need to be investigated and could be added on to the current Discover Ormskirk website. However, it is believed this is feasible. Discussions are already being held through the Council's Income Management Review with BTLS which should support the proposals.
- 5.6 In the future it may be possible to roll out branded products to other areas of the Borough depending on the success of this initial initiative.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS**

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this particular report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. However, by implementing these products and encouraging businesses to be involved, there are additional benefits which include income generation, increased awareness of Ormskirk town centre, and the economic impact this would in turn generate.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The financial cost of the initial products relating to Ormskirk will be met utilising the existing budget for OTC Strategy.
- 7.2 If this is taken forward there is a potential to generate an income to offset the cost of the Council's investment in improving and keep the town centre vibrant, as well as making this initiative self sustaining. An initial pilot will ensure that we test the market in a small way before extending the scheme any further.
- 7.3 New arrangements would need to be made regarding taking payments, both in person and online, and how these payments come into the Council. Appropriate arrangements to ensure financial probity and any necessary legal agreements will be put in place following the initial market testing

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 There is the opportunity to promote Ormskirk town centre and enhance the branding of the town. There is also an opportunity to create a limited revenue stream for related or other Council initiatives. However if no action is taken at this time there is a risk that the opportunity to generate income and promote the town and its branding could be missed. There is also a risk that the products we create and sell are not popular and the initial investment to purchase items is lost. This risk will be minimised by testing the market over the Christmas period.
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## Background Documents

Research by Anderson and Littrell (1993 & 1996) re shopping behaviours [[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249701268\\_Souvenirs\\_What\\_and\\_Why\\_We\\_Buy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249701268_Souvenirs_What_and_Why_We_Buy)]

## 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- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)