



Report of the West North West Leeds Area Manager

Report to Inner West Area Committee

Date: 9th December 2009

Subject: Town Centre Manager Update

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call in Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

This report provides Members with an update on the Town Centre Manager's progress, priorities and work programme and proposals for revitalising Armley town.

1.0 Purpose of This Report

This report is to update Members on progress to date, next steps and proposals for revitalising Armley town.

2.0 Background Information

The Town Centre Manager has been in post for just over one year now. In this time a number of initiatives, activities and a Business Forum have been established. This report will provide a summary of these and progress made.

3.0 Annual Review

3.1 Alert Boxes

The Alertboxes, as reported at previous Area Committee meetings, have been a great success. The additional funding, secured at the October Area Committee for additional boxes, will complete Town Street and part of Branch Road. It has been reported to the Town Centre Manager by a number of different retailers that they are being asked by people in their establishments if they have the Alertbox. This is a good indication that word is getting around that there is a community safety system in place in local retail establishments and it is hoped that this will make people think twice about committing a crime.

3.2 Business Mentoring

Through Leeds Ahead the Town Centre Manager has offered a number of businesses the opportunity of having a business mentor. This mentor is someone who has been successful in the market sector such as retail and is willing to offer free mentoring as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. There are two businesses in Armley who have taken advantage of this scheme and are actively working with their mentors to improve their business. In partnership with Business Link training opportunities will be sought to help support local businesses.

3.3 Business Forum

The Town Centre Manager continues to run these forums although attendance is low. It is part of the Town Centre Manager's objectives to increase the number of attendees, because they have an active role to play and say in how their town centre is run. More guest speakers will be invited to meetings, to increase the attractiveness of attendance.

3.4 Action Days

The Town Centre Manager co-ordinates six weekly action days, which have been very successful. Multi-agency partners have come together to consider local issues affecting Armley Town Street. The key objectives being to create a cleaner, safer Armley to live and work in. Currently partners are working to resolve issues relating to people going through retailers bins and tipping the contents out onto the floor. This is a regular occurrence and has become a major problem for the traders who have business premises on Town Street. An action plan has been put in place to address this issue.

3.5 Armley Shop Local Campaign

Eversheds Solicitors have approved the legality of the reward card scheme. This work was done Pro Bono as part of their partnership with Leeds Ahead. The Town Centre Manager has spent the last month encouraging shops to sign up to the reward card; there are now enough businesses on board to roll out the scheme in Armley. This will be the first one of its type in this part of the country and is unique in its simplicity. The

Town Centre Manager intends to hold a large press launch, it is anticipated that this will be a considerable boost to Armley and gain much needed positive publicity.

3.6 Campaigns

The Keep Armley Tidy campaign will run in the early part of the new year. This campaign will run in conjunction with the local schools. The idea behind this scheme is to raise awareness and educate young people and local residents, through a multi-agency approach, on the impact of littering their local neighbourhoods, to engender a sense of civic pride and respect for their surroundings. A logo has been designed and will be displayed in prominent places as a reminder.

3.7 Empty Shop Units

The Town Centre Manager would like to see some of the empty units used by multi agency partners to enable improved accessibility to members of the public and provide a presence on Town Street. The feasibility of this, along with funding is currently being investigated.

3.8 Day to day

The Town Centre has established good working relationships with the businesses in and around Armley. They are visited at least once a week and actively seek out the Town Centre Manager if they have any issues. A good relationship has been built with the onsite Contractor, who is delivering the Town and District Centre scheme. The Town Centre Manager regularly speaks to the Contractor regarding any issues affecting the businesses, and likewise issues concerning the Contractor.

The continued development of relationships and support for local businesses is vital to the future prosperity of Town Street. It is important that we try to help sustain the businesses currently on Town Street whilst attracting new enterprises into the area, to fill the empty units.

3.9 Future Developments

On the completion of the Town and District Centre scheme, the Town Centre Manager will promote a marketing strategy for the area to promote the revitalization of Armley. In addition to utilising the new facilities, such as the new heritage lighting, to erect promotional banners, and hanging baskets through sponsorship arrangements.

Work to improve the moor will also impact positively on the marketing of Armley, and will enable a variety of events to be held on this space.

4.0 The Role of the Town Centre Manager, local Partners and Business

By working together Town Centre Managers, local partners, businesses and residents can improve their district centres and respond to the current economic downturn by:

- **increasing commitment** to maintaining the attractiveness of the district centre and ensuring that visitors have positive experiences by working jointly to enhance the cleaning, security initiatives, planting, and art installations.

- **bringing together stakeholders with marketing budgets** to ensure consistent, targeted and positive messages to increase awareness of what the district centre has to offer.
- **thinking more about the district centre** as a destination for UK visitors.
- **managing vacant retail premises** – innovative examples show how town centre partnerships are facilitating new cultural or educational uses in vacant retail premises. Elsewhere, vacant units are being used for promotional posters or maps; while other centres are developing initiatives to enable local businesses or start-ups to be supported in these types of premises. Larger centres are looking at recruiting international retailers who now find the UK more affordable.
- **increasing activities** by encouraging community use of the streets, i.e street performers, venues and local businesses
- **bringing businesses together** to ensure they are fully aware of what is happening in the district centre and to pool ideas on what can be done to support the centre and local businesses.
- **working closely with local media** – such as running awards with local papers so readers can nominate shops, restaurants and bars that offer excellent customer service.
- **understanding** what is going on elsewhere.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Business priorities for the next twelve months include:

- Invigoration of the Business Forum, and identification of training and business opportunities.
- Helping to enhance current events held in Armley and continue to seek new opportunities.
- Implement Armley's marketing campaign, and launch 'Keep Armley Tidy'.
- Implement the reward card scheme and continue to promote the shop local message.
- Fill the empty shop units.
- Continue to deliver Action Days, and address local issues.
- Monitor and evaluate Alert Boxes.
- Increase footfall.

6.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 6.1 An amount of £5,000 was allocated from the Inner West Well-Being funds for marketing and events. To date £4,122 has been spent on marketing literature and events. Further resources will be sought from partners and businesses; however future actions must take into account resources available.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The Town Centre Manager has widened the scope of the role over the last year. The forthcoming year will see the Town Centre Manager embed the initiatives and events that have been developed over the last twelve months, continue to maintain and develop local relationships and maximize on local and future developments to enhance Armley district centre.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to note and comment upon this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Inner West Area Committee: April 2009.