

Report of Armley Town Centre Manager

Report to Inner West Area Committee

Date: 15th February 2012

Subject: Armley Town Centre Manager - Update

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Armley | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. Economic growth / Prosperity
2. ASB In the town
3. Problems with littering
4. Events
5. Christmas lights
6. Empty Units
7. Forum

Recommendations

The Area Committee is asked to note the information set out in this update report and comment on any issues they feel may require attention.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report will give members an understanding of what has been achieved and issues still facing the town. This report seeks to inform all members of the positive actions and good things happening in the town of Armley.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Since the appointment of the Town Centre Manager (TCM) nearly three years ago there have been many successes. Armley has changed in a number of ways, some good, some not so. Although trading conditions still remain critical retail occupancy still is much higher than the UK average. As a town that had really no dialogue with retailers the TCM has established good working relationships within the town. However as most Members will be aware there is a great deal of apathy from retailers and the TCM has struggled to get retailers to engage and get involved in more significant ways. The Alertbox scheme was and still is a big success and continues to give retailers an excellent deterrent against ASB and shop theft. On the back of this started the shop watch scheme that the police wanted to run in conjunction with the Alertbox.

3 Main issues

3.1 Economic growth / Prosperity

Armley is without doubt bucking the trend of many towns in the country. It has had a number of new shops open in the town over the past year. Retailers have said that business for them is still very quiet and that foot fall to Town Street is still low. Some retailers are seeing trading conditions as good and they are slightly more optimistic. Other issues for Town Street is the retail offering, there is a distinct lack of variety of shops for local shoppers, however Town Street does have a number of international food retailers which seem to be very popular.

3.2 ASB in the town

The police are aware of Town Street ASB issues that continue. These are mainly street drinking and gatherings of people who just by their presence cause people to avoid coming to Town Street.

3.3 Problems with littering

This is an ongoing issue; the TCM is working with Environmental Services and the Environmental Sub Group to tackle the issue of littering. The TCM has sent letters reminding retailers that it would be in their and Town Street's interest if they would keep outside their shops clean and tidy. Some retailers do this where as others clearly do not.

3.4 Events

Armley is now becoming known for its regularly held events. The teddy bears picnic's have been extremely well attended and continue to grow in popularity. You have a very good mix of families with young children and older people enjoying the different

entertainment. For them it's a great free day out that lasts most of the afternoon. Although this year a number of events had to be cancelled due to budget constraints.

3.5 Christmas lights switch on

The Christmas Light switch on, given the time period, Members will agree was a great success. Footfall was very good and retailers who did stay open longer reported excellent trade though out the day and into the evening.

3.6 Empty units

As mentioned previously Armley continues to buck the trend of towns with high empty retail space. Currently empty units in Armley, including Branch Road, stands at 5. Down again from 6 since the last update.

3.7 Forum

The forums do continue but very little is gained in terms of retailers wanting to get involved in any promotional activities for the town, however useful intelligence does come from the forums, especially in relation to criminal and ASB activities, which the TCM takes back to Tasking meetings.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Not applicable

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The work of the TCM aims to improve the vitality and viability of Armley Town Centre for all sections of the community.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Not applicable

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 The TCM has very little help in terms of man power to organise events and other activities. He does receive some administration support from Area Management, however given the lack of a team he manages to achieve a great deal.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The TCM post and associated events budget is solely funded by the Inner West Area Committee.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Not applicable

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The TCM role is now well established in Armley. It has secured a number of successes including new community events, reduced retail unit vacancy levels, retail crime and ASB, which have been a particular success through the Alertbox Scheme. The TCM continues to have excellent partnership working relationships with other agencies and departments both in and external of the council.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Area Committee is asked to note the information set out in this report and comment on the future priorities for the TCM to focus on.

7 Background documents

- Armley Town Centre Manager update, Inner west Area Committee: June 2011