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**Report to:** Overview & Scrutiny (Regeneration & Environmental Services)

**Date of Report:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016

**Subject:** Monitoring Update on Town Centres

**Report of:** Head of Investment & Employment      **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** No    **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** No

**Exempt/Confidential:** No

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**Purpose/Summary**

In line with the Cabinet decision of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015, to provide a periodic update on implementation of the recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Cross-Cutting Working Group on Town Centres.

**Recommendations**

That this report is noted.

**How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		/	
2	Jobs and Prosperity	/		
3	Environmental Sustainability	/		
4	Health and Well-Being	/		
5	Children and Young People		/	
6	Creating Safe Communities		/	
7	Creating Inclusive Communities		/	
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		/	

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

To comply with a decision of Cabinet for an update report.

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Equality</b>	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:**

Not applicable.

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

The Head of Corporate Resources has been consulted and has no comments to make on this report as there are no direct financial consequences as a result of it. (FD 4357/16)

The Head of Regulation and Compliance has been consulted and has no comments on this report (LD 3640/16)

**Are there any other options available for consideration?**

Not applicable.

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet/Cabinet Member Meeting

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## Introduction

1. On 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015, Cabinet resolved to accept the Final Report of the Town Centres Working Group Final Report.
2. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Built Environment which provided details of the response of the Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Tourism to the recommendations of the Town Centres Working Group Final Report.
3. It was resolved that the comments of the Cabinet Member– Regeneration and Tourism be approved and reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills).
4. The Final Report recommended all its recommendations were monitored and brought back to Overview & Scrutiny every six months. The report below addresses all the recommendations made by the Working Group. Relevant officers have collaborated in the preparation of each response. A number of responsibilities have changed due to the Senior Management Review.
5. The report states where actions have been completed or are now redundant following other actions.

## Monitoring Update

**(1) That the Director of Built Environment be requested to review the Town Centre Strategies in order that there is a co-ordinated and systematic approach to Town Centre Development that links into other strategies across the Council.**

Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regeneration & Housing.

The town centre frameworks for Bootle and Southport have been drafted and presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October. Whilst Cabinet approved the recommendations for both Frameworks the Southport Development Framework decision has been 'called in'. This will be addressed by the Overview and Scrutiny as a separate agenda item.

Work is progressing on bringing activity forward for Bootle town centre.

The Crosby Development Strategy recommendations were agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November and activity continues to be progressed. An SPD is in development.

**(2) That the Director of Street Scene be requested to produce individual cleansing programmes for each commercial centre across the Borough, recognising that one size doesn't always fit all.**

This request now sits within the remit of the Head of Locality Services Provision. Individual cleansing programmes for commercial centres were produced in 2015 by the Cleansing Services Section within Locality Services Provision. The commercial centres concerned include Bootle, Litherland, Netherton, Formby, Maghull, Crosby Village, Waterloo, Birkdale Village, Ainsdale Village and Southport. These programmes include Street Cleansing activities (both method and frequency) as well as Litter Bin, Graffiti Removal and 'Special Event' functions. The cleansing programmes have now been in operation for over twelve months, and have proved to be successful in presenting such high-traffic areas to a good standard of cleanliness. The relevant plans are available to share with all interested parties and stakeholders as required. Regular consultation is undertaken and feedback received from public, elected members, business owners and visitors. This information is used to review the frequency and effectiveness of the prescribed actions undertaken in each area.

**(3) That the Director of Built Environment, as part of any future Parking Review, be requested to investigate the possibility of undertaking a more focused and robust approach to a cost/benefit analysis. The Parking Review has now been completed.**

Agreed. Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regulation & Compliance.

**(4) That the Director of Built Environment be requested to investigate the work that has been undertaken by Maghull Community Enterprise in designing and opening a Pop-up Shop known as "The Emporium" with a view to designing a Sefton Model for Pop-up Shops in order that other Town Centres across the Borough could adopt a similar approach.**

Incentives to improve Sefton's principle and secondary centres have been offered in recent years:

- High Street Innovation Fund went to Crosby (£17,000), Maghull (£17,000), Southport (£49,000) and Waterloo (£17,000)
- As part of the Portas Pilots, Crosby, Maghull, Southport and Waterloo formed Town Teams, and all four were allocated £10,000 to help support the high street.
- The Council's Capital Fund has made further investments totalling £300,000 for non-Town Team projects in Marian Square, Linacre Rd, Ainsdale, Birkdale

The achievement of Maghull Community Enterprise in promoting pop-up shops is noted. Proposals we are aware of include::

- Pop-Up Shops in Southport BID through Southport Cultural Forum Ltd
- A "Strand By Me" Pop-Up Shop in Bootle Strand Shopping Centre hosted by Sefton CVS for local organisations
- In September/October 2015 Elandi (Bootle Strand owners) ran a 'Win a Shop' competition, with a prize of a retail unit in the centre, including free rent, rates and services charges. InvestSefton agreed to participate in the judging, and support the winning business if they needed help. A Business Growth Manager liaised with the Strand management and gave feedback on entries along with other judges including businesses in the centre. There was also the offer of

InvestSefton support for the winning business over a year, although this was not taken up.

- InvestSefton's Business Development Manager attended a meeting with Councillor McKinley to explore how it could support the development of a pop up shop in Maghull Square. The pop-up shop had already opened and it was occupied by 3-4 female led businesses. InvestSefton advised that one of our partner organisations (Women's Organisation) could be brought in to see how they could provide business support to these newly formed businesses.

It is important that these investments are evaluated so that the social and economic return is understood before financial commitments are entered into.

**(5) That the Director of Built Environment, as resources allow, assign appropriate Officers to the Town Teams across the Borough in order that those Officers may offer support and guidance in promoting and improving Town Centres, assets and tourist attractions associated with individual Town Centres across the Borough as a possible income generator.**

The Council currently employs two Locality Managers to track and support town centres. In addition, the Capital Fund has paid for three consultancy studies to inform investment plans for Bootle, Crosby and Southport. There are however significant budget constraints which may make for hard choices in future years.

**(6) That the Director of Built Environment (Regeneration) in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services (Neighbourhoods) be requested to engage with local businesses, the Community, Voluntary and Faith sectors to encourage the development of the Borough's Town Centres with a view to evidencing engagement with those groups to develop a proposed work programme that is effective and inclusive.**

The three Town Centre Strategy/Frameworks prepared a consultation and engagement plan and worked with the Council's Public Engagement and Consultation Panel. The consultants undertook an analysis during the preparation of the report.

**(7) That an Officer and Member Working Group be established consisting of Officers from Built Environment (Regeneration) and Corporate Services (Neighbourhoods) and Members along with any other relevant Officers to take the task of Town Centre Development forward.**

The Cabinet Member will consider the need for a stakeholder group.

**(8) That the Director of Built Environment be requested to draft clear criteria to support Community Social Enterprise that reduce bureaucracy and create a greater understanding and empathy towards local business to include a consideration of rate rebates for social enterprises equivalent to registered charities when additional social value and support for community development can be clearly demonstrated.**

The Council has adopted a Procurement Strategy which aims to support local businesses and SME's specifically by making it easier to do business with the Council. In addition, an extensive range of discounts on business rates may be applied for, which community and social enterprise may be eligible for – see answer to recommendation 10.

**(9) That through the investment strategies for Bootle, Crosby and Southport, the Director of Built Environment be requested to contact the Town Centres and suggest that they conduct a mapping exercise of landlords in each of their Town Centres, using the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Tourism Capital Fund.**

Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regeneration & Housing. The Council periodically commissions Town Centre Health Assessments which include Goad maps and other information. Members may consult these Health Assessments. New Assessments were completed in 2015 – see answer to Q1. It should be noted that the Capital Fund is now fully committed.

**(10) That the Director of Corporate Services be requested to investigate the possibility of landlords using the empty rate relief regime provided this leads to enterprise development, job creation and longer term economic and social value.**

Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Corporate Support. A discretionary re-occupation relief scheme is already in place in Sefton from April 2014 as per attached report “Business Rates Reoccupation relief”



Business Rates  
Reoccupation Relief.pdf

Re- occupation relief is for businesses moving into previously empty retail premises between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 – consequently no relief if occupied after 31 March 2016.

Ratepayers may apply where occupation was between 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016, up to 30 September 2016 - 6 months after the end of the financial year to which the relief relates

New build empty property rates - property must be wholly or mainly comprised of new structures that are completed after 1st October 2013 and before 30th September 2016. Relief is for 18 months which includes the initial 3 or 6 month exemption period and is awarded subject to state aid de minimis regulations.



201404125 Business  
Rates - New Build Empr

More information is available on the ratepayer's bills and also on Sefton Council website using the following link <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/business/business-rates>.

In February 2015 a Section 69 discretionary rate relief scheme was reviewed at Cabinet Member briefing meeting – see attached report:



20150220 S69 relief  
report.docx

Since 1 April 2014 a number of Sefton's business ratepayers have benefited from the new powers to allow rate relief on certain empty properties. In the last three financial years, reliefs granted to date comprise:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Totals to date	No. of ratepayers assisted
New Build Relief	0	103,348	64,988	168,336	3
Re-occupation Relief	27,541	77,202	55,127	159,872	15
S69 Relief	0	5,067	0	5,067	1

**(11) That the Director of Corporate Services be requested to ensure that Charity Shops continue to be inspected prior to awarding relief and reviewed from time to time to ensure that relief criteria are met, with any abuse reported being investigated and appropriate action taken accordingly.**

Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Corporate Support. All Charity Shops are inspected prior to the award of mandatory charitable rate relief. We are also committed to an annual review of all cases where mandatory charitable rate relief has been awarded, including charity shops, to ensure that the relief criteria is met.

**(12) That the Director of Built Environment be requested to investigate the possibility of using the lampposts outside the Bootle Strand Shopping Centre as advertising space and a possible income generator and if this proves to be successful, adopt a similar principle, wherever possible, throughout the Borough.**

Following the recent management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regeneration & Housing. We can, subject to payment, and approvals for Planning Permission and Highways Traffic/Safety assessments. We can implement illuminated advertising signs in these areas. But installing such signs in conservation areas may not be approved.

We have contracts in place with Bommel UK and Premier Postings for illuminated advertising on the highway, the potential challenges are the type of column currently in place may need to be replaced with a heavy duty street lighting column

**(13) That the Working Group welcomes that the Director of Built Environment intends to consult and seek local community representation in relation to any proposal to draft an investment strategy that impacts on that local community.**

See answer to recommendation 6.

**(14) That, in the spirit of the One Council vision, all Directors and Heads of Service be requested to consider how their individual Departments actions impact on Town Centre development and how the development or decline then impacts on local residents and citizens.**

Heads of Service consult widely when preparing Town Centre initiatives, and co-ordinating their implementation. For example, all relevant Council services are included within the underpinning Baseline Service Level Agreement between the Council and the Southport BID company.

**(15) That the Working Group seeks reassurance from the Council that the regeneration of the Borough's Town Centres should not be delayed or blocked due to any unnecessary internal procedures within the Council by adopting local protocols that seek to support local community activities in a positive and supportive way.**

Examples of such "unnecessary internal procedures" are needed for this recommendation to be actioned.

**(16) That investment and operational planning be more closely aligned through the Director of Built Environment.**

Again, examples of lack of integration are needed. The co-ordination of short-term maintenance and medium-term development appears to be working well.

**(17) That the Director of Built Environment, as resources allow, be requested to submit a quarterly progress report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) detailing the proactive work being done to promote and create vibrant Town Centres across the Borough.**

Following the Senior Management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regeneration & Housing, who will co-ordinate the input of other Heads of Service. An Annual Report to Overview & Scrutiny, and forwarded with views to Cabinet Member – Regeneration, is more appropriate, and as resources allow.

**(18) That the Director of Built Environment, as resources allow, be requested to submit a six monthly performance monitoring report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services), setting out progress made against each recommendation of this Final Report.**



This report. Following the recent management restructure, responsibility for this issue now rests with the Head of Regeneration & Housing, who will co-ordinate the input of other Heads of Service.

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