

# Item 7

**Key Decision**

**Report to Cabinet**

**27 September 2007**

**Report of Assistant Chief Executive**

**Portfolio: Social Regeneration and Partnership, Learning & Employment**

## **Commissioning of an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre**

### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The role and function of town centres have changed significantly over recent years and this is likely to continue. The town centres in Sedgefield are in direct competition with larger established town centres that are located close by. There is also increasing competition from Internet providers, and significant competition from out of town centres such as Teesside Park. As a consequence the traditional services provided by smaller town centres are in decline.
- 1.2 A Member and Officer workshop (the future role of town centres, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006) highlighted that Spennymoor's future success must be built around a clear identity and sense of place. And that new thinking about the future role of our town centres, with serious thought given to the mix of development types.
- 1.3 It is necessary to appoint external assistance to provide a comprehensive regeneration framework that challenges current uses and provides action for future investment and activity in the town centre.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is therefore to seek Cabinet approval for the appointment of consultants to undertake a Master Planning exercise to form an Area Action Plan to be adopted as part of the Borough Council's Local Development Framework.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
  - a) Endorse the Area Action Plan brief
  - b) Approve the commissioning of suitably experienced consultants to produce an Area Action Plan to meet the requirements of the brief.

### **3. COMMISSIONING AN AREA ACTION PLAN FOR SPENNYMOOR TOWN CENTRE**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 With a population of nearly 19,000, Spennymoor is the second largest town in the Borough. Its shopping precinct offers a mix of traditional brick buildings, predominantly along the High Street and a 1970's shopping precinct known as Festival Walk.
- 3.2 Changes in shopping habits including the rise of out of town shopping complexes such as the Metro Centre and Teesside Park and the reduced purchasing power of local residents brought about by factory closures, had reduced the vitality and the viability of the town centre.
- 3.3 Various intervention programmes, as set out below, have been implemented. However the Council recognises that there is a need to continue supporting its town centres and have reflected this in its Corporate Plan 2007/8.
- 3.4 There is currently no document to guide regeneration of the town centres and no internal capacity within the Council to produce this document. It is therefore critical to appoint external assistance to provide information to enable the Council to move forward in supporting its town centres.

#### **Previous Intervention**

- 3.5 The opportunity to access SRB5 resource enabled a joint Town Centre Study to be commissioned for the Borough's town shopping centres, Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe. EDAW were commissioned in February 2000 to undertake the town centre study.
- 3.6 Following the completion of the Town Centre Study, the Borough council in partnership with the Town Centre forums secured Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) resources to appoint a Town Centre Manager from 2001 to 2006 who was able to implement the core elements of the study's action plan.
- 3.7 The Town Centre Improvement Programme was developed to address major environmental improvements and was successful in attracting Single Programme funding for works to; improve the gateways; upgrade High Street; support shop front improvements; and improve pedestrian links.
- 3.8 The original Town Centre Improvement Programme is largely complete. Sedgefield Borough Council have continued to financially support the shop front grant improvement scheme through the Regeneration Services Mainstream Capital Programme.

### **Current Position**

- 3.9 In spite of the public realm improvements, an evaluation of the programme showed continuing concern for the lack of variety and quality of shops, particularly in some areas of the town.
- 3.10 Spennymoor has a major Greenfield housing allocation and has had a number of brownfield housing sites approved.
- 3.11 Town Centre are recognised as a priority for the Council and this has recently been reflected in the changes to the Corporate Plan.

### **Corporate Policy Implications**

- 3.12 This Area Action Plan will provide a framework for action which will support the following Council priorities:

#### Corporate Plan: Prosperous Borough

Aim: Improved business and employment opportunities

Objective: Enhance the vitality of town centres

#### Community Strategy:

PO1 to promote a strong and sustainable business base

PO2 to develop the Borough's unique cultural and tourism attractions

AO1 to improve the design and environmental quality of our towns and villages

AO2 to ensure the efficient use of our resources

AO5 to develop and maximise the leisure and cultural facilities in the Borough

SO4 to promote safer neighbourhoods

## **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Sedgefield Borough Council is fully funding this commission and will be seeking to allocate £75,000.
- 4.2 This funding will come from monies received through the Government's Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI), Enabling Capital Investment, A framework for this fundings use was considered by Cabinet 13 September 2007.
- 4.3 The Council's Contract Procedure Rule 11, Selective Tendering – Select Lists, applies.
- 4.4 Commissioning of this Area Action Plan has manageable implications on officer resources.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 All consultation will be undertaken, in accordance with the statutory consultation procedures as prescribed by The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Further details can be found in the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (June 2006).
- 5.2 As part of the methodology the brief requires a phased approach and gives clear instruction to include opportunities for public exhibition and a stakeholder workshop.
- 5.3 Key stakeholders include:
- SBC Members
  - SBC Strategy & Regeneration
  - SBC Forward Planning
  - Festival Walk Owners
  - Local Business

## **6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 In the preparation of the Area Action Plans full account will be taken of matters that will impact on the delivery against the preferred option.
- 6.2 There are no other significant material considerations arising from the planned recommended actions.

## **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There has been no previous scrutiny consultations or engagement with regard to this matter.
- 7.2 The Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be engaged as appropriate following agreement of this report.

## **8. LIST OF APPENDICES**

- A. Spennymoor Area Action Plan Consultancy Brief
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**Wards:** Spennymoor  
Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange

**Key Decision Validation:** Significant Impact on two wards:

- Spennymoor
- Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange

### **Background Papers**

The only previous report to Council, in respect of funding for this work, is *Utilising Local Authority Business Growth Initiative Funds*.

The Area Action Plan brief highlights various documents and policies that need to be considered by the successful tender. All these documents have some bearing on the expectations for our town centres at local, regional and national level.

Policy documents that need to be considered as part of the study are:

- Sedgefield Borough Council Corporate Plan (2007/2008)
- Sedgefield Borough Council Local Development Framework
- Sedgefield Borough Council Community Strategy (2004-2014)
- Sedgefield Borough Council Community Strategy Action Plan (2007/2008)
- Sedgefield Borough Council Economic Strategy (2007)
- Sedgefield Borough Council Open Space Needs Assessment (2007)
  
- County Durham Economic Strategy
  
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Regional Economic Strategy
- Regional Housing Strategy
  
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres
- Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) England Regulations 2004

Other Documents to consider are:

- Spennymoor & Newton Aycliffe Town Centre Study, September 2000, EDAW
- Spennymoor Town Centre Improvement Evaluation Final Report, ERS
- Baseline Information for Major Centres, May 2004, County Durham Economic Partnership
- Baseline Information for Major Centres – Update, September 2006, County Durham Economic Partnership
- Town Centre Retail Gap Study, May 2007, Sedgefield Borough Council
- Annual Centres Survey, SBC Planning (identifies town centre land use)
- Housing Led Town Centre Growth – Disposable Income Study, County Durham Economic Partnership

- The Future Role of Town Centres In the Borough of Sedgefield – May 2007, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Student Consultancy Project

### Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>