

# TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

## Forward Planning Briefing Document



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## Mission Statement

**Creating a prosperous town centre partnership utilising most effectively all shared resources, ideas and commitment that unite and benefit all stakeholders, but recognising that the unique character of individual towns demands local, rather than generic, solutions.**

## Executive Summary

The management of town centres is the management of rapid change. There are over 500 partnership schemes across the UK, which aim to revitalise local retail activity and regenerate traditional commercial centres. Experience illustrates that some towns have grasped the opportunity of managing this 'change' is an inevitable and necessary condition, whilst in others inaction has been accompanied by stagnation and complacency. The management of any Town Centre requires a more co-ordinate pro-active partnership approach designed to promote the vitality and viability of a centre and maintaining its key role as the heart of its community.

It can be seen that having a Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) is a suitable way forward and would benefit not only the local council but also the town centre and all its users.

## Introduction

It is recognised that Town Centre Management plays a critical role towards the prosperity and well being of the whole community. In order to grow and ensure continued economic success, the development of town centre companies or partnerships across the country reflects the increasingly diverse range of activities that town centre management has become involved in.

A partnership between the public and private sectors brings together a wide-range of key interests, with key stakeholders having a significant involvement benefiting the trading environment and public realm.

## The Service

### - What does it involve?

The role of Town Centre Management is to maintain, improve and develop the quality, vitality and viability of a town centre for all users.

Communication plays a major part of the role creating links between the town centre businesses, the local Council, and other agencies in developing new initiatives and priorities which assist in forming an overall Town Centre Strategy.

Regular meetings with stakeholders need to take place to establish a working relationship partnership which will provide opportunities to move forward Town Centre strategies.

A town centre news-letter is one way of ensuring communication and to keep all businesses informed of major projects and initiatives.

Town centre management also assists with the provision of information to visitors, potential investors and all interested groups in the town centre.

It is essential to take ownership and ensure that any developments for betterment or commercial opportunities for The Town Centre are assessed and actioned.

Comprehensive audits and improvement plans of the town centre facilities, including public and private services, outlets and premises and a review of the standard of services provided need to be conducted on a regular basis with this information disseminated to all stakeholders.

Town centre events, shown to increase footfall, such as the Christmas Lights switch on, French and Farmers markets are run by the Town Centre Management team to provide marketing opportunities, and attractions and activities to residents and visitors to the town centre.

Planned and advertised events has shown to be a lucrative form of joint income generation with more companies wanting to have a temporary event in the town centre. The use and development of this concept could enable the management and the staging of the events being more productive.

Another area for consideration is the forming of specific areas within the town centre for events to take place and could be considered as part of a town square approach to events.

One of the problems in this area is the use of this income as it does contravene some of the local acts as the town centre real estate or paving can be deemed public property.

This would not be such a contentious issue if the events and finances are managed by an arms length management company.

### - Who is involved?

The Town Centre Management team is inherently held within the local councils structure but it has been noted that this does put undue strain on resources and with the variable needs of Town centre management some issues being not covered to a suitable degree, for example consultation.

The use of an independent body has the following advantages:

1. The leverage of revenue from events;
2. The use of the revenue for the benefit of the town centre;
3. A better management of service providers for the town centre;
4. A central point for the management of events and the licensing of these events;
5. Regulated costs which are fixed, and would include all on costs of premises and staff;
6. Agreed Service level agreements and accountability;
7. The ability to leverage in more income from events; and
8. The use of this income to enhance the town centre and deliver some of the statutory requirements currently being funded by the local council (i.e. Street cleaning, maintenance and waste disposal).

## Stakeholders and Partnerships

The success of town centre management is based upon partnership working with a variety of stakeholders.

## The Way Forward

The way forward would be to implement under the new Town centre management company the formation of a ***Business Improvement District (BID)***.

A Business Improvement District is a partnership between the local business community and the Local Authority that develops and delivers added value services that benefit the trading environment and the public realm. It is funded through a levy approved by ballot, enabling stakeholders to invest this money to achieve common goals. To become a BID, an area is identified and proposals agreed which should include delivery guarantees, performance indicators and management structures. BID proposals are voted on by all non-domestic ratepayers who will be responsible for paying the BID levy. A successful BID must meet two tests. More than 50% of votes cast must be in favour of the BID and the positive vote must represent more than 50% of the rateable value of the voters cast. A BID's mandate is for a maximum of 5 years. To continue beyond this term, a mandate must be re-affirmed, based on a further proposal.

There are many types of partnerships throughout the country which reinforces the needs and unique character of towns and cities. However, the formations of informal partnerships have proven to be both reliable and resilient.

It is important to ensure that the partnership comprises of the key 'movers and shakers' in the town. They need to be able to make decisions and act quickly without seeking permission for their actions if the partnership is to be as effective as possible.

Effective partnerships recognise that the town's stakeholders are not confined to local government and retailers. Representatives from different service sectors such

as, transport, education, health, police, evening economy etc. play an important role, providing assistance in kind, to add vitality to the town centre and providing an important insight into the special needs of specific user groups.

Town Centre Management has to develop good working relationships with these sectors. Other sectors, such as the police, education, evening economy etc. should also be encouraged to be part of a partnership with shared goals and vision.

With regard to the formal arrangements

- ❑ There must be clear terms of reference and working objectives that define its responsibilities and relationships with different working groups and forums.
- ❑ The company must also take responsibility for funding and helping to attract inward investment
- ❑ Develop a business plan and actions plans defining its objectives arising from the strategy and vision.
- ❑ It is important that it establishes a number of benchmarks or key performance indicators to determine how the town centre evolves over time.

Once the concept is established and delivering the outcomes of the business plan, it should look to introduce a Business Improvement District to establish a more sustainable funding base and inclusion of more businesses in the town centre. There are currently 29 Business Improvement Districts in England, with many more planned for other towns and cities, including the introduction of 6 Scottish pilot towns. BID's are designed to be private sector lead but for Local Authorities to be an equal partner in developing sustainable communities. It will also enable the management of the trading environment/public space in a proactive and planned way allowing to gain and retain competitive advantage over the managed environment of shopping centres and other local and regional centres.

### The Business Plan 2007

RSWP would develop this briefing document into a feasibility study and produce a draft business plan in one month.

### Further Developments Tested by other Authorities

Street trading and the continental Café (Evening scene) these are some of the schemes currently in operation

**Waltham Forest** - introduced a scheme in early 2000 which allowed the licensing of shop restaurants and café forecourts for street trading. This scheme particularly allows the use of pavements for display of shop goods and services, or the placing of tables and chairs for use by customers.

The recent £14 million to regenerate Walthamstow Centre has driven innovation and diversity of use of the Town Centre resources. In order to encourage a range of measures to promote the vitality of the centre, they looked at more effective ways of using highway land, encouraging more markets and extended leisure activities.

- Areas were designated, mainly shopping streets, with some exceptions, for the purpose of licensed forecourt trading.
- Provided access guidelines are complied with, the maximum width of any licensed area shall be the width of the shop premises.
- The depth of any licensed area shall be no more than 50% of the paved area and not less than 0.75 metres. Where any licenses are granted, the approved area shall be marked by the Council which is visibly acceptable.
- All structures (table and chairs) should be easily removed to enable cleaning and maintenance of the highway.
- All structures to be removed at the end of the trading day.
- Any permanent structure to remain will require planning consent.

**Newcastle** - Pavement cafés are very popular in Newcastle, which have helped to maximise the use of public spaces, add vitality and life to areas and help the local economy.

Guidelines have been published by Newcastle City Council, which I have scaled down for ease of reference.

**Brighton** - operates a Highway Licensing scheme for shop displays and advertising boards.



Amongst the things licensed or controlled include: -

- Shop displays
- Advertising boards
- Tables and chairs
- Planters and pots
- Builders' materials
- Scaffolds, skips and hoardings

For control purposes the City is presently divided into two types of area: -

1. The 'Target Zones'

These are in the busiest areas of the City and presently consist of

- The Lanes
- North Lane
- George Street, Hove
- Rottingdean Village
- St. James Street area of Kemptown



All traders in these areas who want to put things on the Public Highway need to have a licence. These Licences specify where items can be placed and the maximum area that can be taken up.

Licensees have to display a green sticker in their door or window to show that they have a licence. The discs indicate where things are allowed to be placed.

On some sites metal studs or markings in paint help to show the limits of licensed areas or the positions of boards. The positions are based upon the best possible compromise between the needs and rights of all Highway users.

Regular visits by the Council's Licensing Officers take place in all these areas to check that traders have a licence and are operating under its conditions.

## 2. The Licensed Highway

All tables and chairs, and all skips, scaffolds, materials and hoardings on the Public Highway have to be licensed. Other shopkeepers' items can be permitted on an informal basis, with local conditions and common sense dictating where things may be put.

### Requirements to operate the Continental Café

#### - Principle Criteria for Licensing

- Licenses for 3 years or less agreed by the Council.
- Initial period of 6 month period and thereafter, upon renewal of 3 years, to assist the enforcement and monitoring of activities of any licensed trader.
- The days and times of trading may be specified by the Council and must be agreed in conjunction with planning consent and in consultation with the Economic Regeneration Department.
- License to comply with all other relevant legislation e.g. food safety, consumer protection etc.
- Licensees to be responsible for litter collection and disposal. The licensed area will also be required to be cleaned at the end of the trading day.
- Menu boards to remain within the licensed area only.



#### - Permissions

There are two types of permission which have to be obtained from the City Council:-

- Highway Permission under S.115 of the Highways Act 1980
- Planning Permission for the change of use of the highway to a Pavement Café.
- Change of Licencing to allow the sale of alcohol within the specified locality

#### - Size and Layout

- The area should be directly in front of and be visible from the premises applying.
- The need for other users should be taken into account. A clear pedestrian route should be maintained for those walking past. This would normally not be less than 2.0m wide.
- Under normal circumstances it should not exceed 20 tables, however each case on it's own merits.
- Supplemental lighting may be necessary.

### - **Boundary**

- Size and layout agreed to be adhered to.
- Boundary not to be defined by a barrier, fence or rope. Brass studs will be applied by the Council.
- All activities contained within the agreed boundary.

### - **Furniture**

- High quality Pavement Café furniture will be necessary. Council would reserve the right to reject in appropriate furniture (definitely not plastic).
- Furniture colour should be attractive, but not too bright, garish or highly reflective.
- Use of parasols will have to be specified as part of the design, along with location, material and colour.
- Limited advertising of the premises will be permitted on parasols.

### - **Service**

- A waiting service must be available at all times for customers. Customers should not be expected to use the normal premises for ordering or collecting food and drink.
- Table menus should be available. Menu boards to remain in the demise of the premises.



### - **Litter/Cleaning**

- The licensee will be responsible for the cleanliness of the designated area. The area to be kept clean and litter free. Litter picking of surrounding areas should be carried out regularly.
- Litter/refuse bins should be provided within the area. A commercial emptying service to be made available.
- The area should be regularly swept and at the end of each trading session the area should be carefully washed down.
- Failure to comply will result in the Council carrying out the necessary cleaning operation for which the licensee will be charged. Repeated failure to comply may jeopardise renewal of the permission.

### - **Indicative Fees and Charges**

- The first years setup subscription fee of £950 upon application.
- The permission will be renewable annually at a cost of £300.
- A weekly rental of £20 per site (or) £5 per square metre whichever is the greater.
- The fee for the issue of a license is £50 with £20 payable at renewal at 3 year intervals.