

To: BELLSHILL LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP	Subject: BELLSHILL TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN UPDATE	
From: HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION		
Date: 1 August 2013	Ref: SP/03/12/SP	

Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks to inform the Partnership and Committee of the Bellshill Town Centre Action Plan.

2. Bellshill Town Centre Framework and Action Plan

2.1 The Council is now developing new frameworks and action plans for all of its town centres. The new frameworks will look to address issues including development opportunities; town centre activity; accessibility and movement; design, quality and character; town centre management; business support and marketing and promotion. A guidance note which sets out the process for preparing these Frameworks can be viewed at www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/towncentres.

2.2 The first round of consultation to develop the new Bellshill Town Centre Framework with a wide range of stakeholders including councillors, council services, partners, local businesses has been completed. Surveys were delivered to all the businesses in the town centre and to Bellshill Academy. The business surveys were also available to complete at the Bellshill town centre page of the Council's website (www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/Bellshill). During April / May Standpoint machines were located in the Sir Matt Busby Sports Complex, Bellshill Community Health Centre, the First Stop Shop and the Cultural Centre. These enabled individuals to use a touch screen to complete a customer perception survey.

2.3 Workshops for Councillors, council officers, partners, businesses and community groups took place in May / June 2013. A drop-in event also took place over 4 days during May in the Cultural Centre where officers were available to speak with town centre users and businesses. The comments and views from the consultation will form the basis for the new framework and action plan.

2.4 The information gathered is being analysed and a further round of consultation on the findings will take place in August / September 2013.

3. Capital Budget

3.1 The Council agreed its Capital Programme for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 in March 2013. A capital bid for Town Centres has been approved for a five year period from 2013/14 – 2017/18 for the delivery of future capital projects in each town centre. No funding has been allocated for Bellshill Town Centre. Consequently the new Framework and Action Plan for Bellshill will need to identify opportunities for external funding.

4. National Review of Town Centres

4.1 Malcolm Fraser's External Advisory Group reported to the Scottish Government on 4th July with key recommendations for re-energising Scotland's town centres. The review - guided by the principles of Diversity, Empowerment and Pragmatism, identified "Leadership and Collaboration" as the key. Their recommendations were made under 6 themes:-

- Town Centre Living
- Vibrant Local Economies
- Enterprising Communities
- Accessible Public Services
- Digital Towns
- Proactive Planning.

Underpinning all of this is the key principle of "Town Centres First" – which is already included in the draft Scottish Planning Policy currently out to consultation.

4.2 It includes a number of proposals to help breathe new life into town centres.

- A 'town centre first' principle whereby public bodies will consider how they can support town centres before considering development elsewhere
- Working with housing providers to bring empty town centre properties back into use as affordable housing
- A town centre focus to review current business rates incentivisation schemes
- A recommendation that public bodies should consider the impact of proposals to relocate services out of town centres
- Broadening the appeal of town centres with a mix of leisure, public facilities and homes

Officers will be addressing the points made in the emerging Town Centre Action Plans. The report is on-line at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/7250>

5. Town Centre Activities

5.1 **Vacancy Rate:** The Local Data Company has an average UK shop vacancy rate average of 14.1% (May 2013) whereas the British Retail Consortium suggests the national UK town centre vacancy rate was 10.9% in January 2013. Bellshill is under this national average rate at 9.6%.

Town Centre	Total no. of available units	Total no. of active businesses	New businesses	Businesses closed	Void Units (% vacancy rate)
Bellshill	145	131	0	1	14 (9.6%)

5.2 **Footfall:** Bellshill is sitting at -25.8% this quarter. This is due to 3 counters being out of action for a period. The figures will in due course even out.

Town Centre	April 2013	May 2013	June 2013	End of Q1	% comparison Q1 2012/13 & Q1 2013/14
Bellshill	368,089	398,589	389,844	1,156,522	- 25.8%

5.3 Bellshill Events

TCA is holding a Health and Wellbeing Day under the 'Better Bellshill' brand in Bellshill Town Centre on the 9th of August 2013.

The next Town Centre Forum will take place on the 30th July 2013 at 5.30pm at the YMCA.

6 Business Improvement Districts

- 6.1 As reported at the last meeting, the Council has been considering the potential for establishing Business Improvement Districts (BID) in North Lanarkshire's town centres. A BID is a defined area within which a levy is generated from all non domestic ratepayers and used to provide services additional to local authority baseline services. After an awareness raising exercise with North Lanarkshire TC businesses, it was established that there is a lack of private sector interest in establishing a BID despite the willingness of the Council to engage appropriately with any emerging BID. It is difficult to envisage any further useful action that could be taken at this point. Therefore BIDs in North Lanarkshire will be kept under review but no further action is currently planned.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Local Area Partnership note progress made on the projects and initiatives contained within the Bellshill Town Centre Action Plan.



SHIRLEY LINTON
HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION

Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Shirley Penman on 01236 632 633 (13 June 2013)