

To: BELLSHILL LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP	Subject: BELLSHILL TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN UPDATE	
From: HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION		
Date: 16 January 2013	Ref: SP/03/12/SP	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to update the Partnership and Committee on progress with the Bellshill Town Centre Action Plan.

2. Bellshill Town Centre Framework and Action Plan

- 2.1 The Council continues work on Town Centre Frameworks and Action Plans for all town centres. A guidance note which sets out the process for preparing these Frameworks can be viewed at www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/towncentres.
- 2.2 The second stage of consultation for the new Bellshill Town Centre Framework was completed in October 2013. Following a workshop in August for local Members, the findings from the initial consultation were circulated to all businesses in the town centre for comments. The information was also displayed in the Library for a week long 'drop-in' in October to allow residents and visitors the opportunity to comment before the draft Framework and Action Plan was finalised. There was a poor response to this round of consultation.
- 2.3 A meeting for local Members, on the finalised draft Framework and Action Plan, took place on 12 December 2013. The finalise documents are due to go out for formal public consultation in the New Year.

3. Capital Budget

- 3.1 As previously reported, no funding was allocated to Bellshill in the Council's Capital Programme for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18. 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 Under the national review of town centres the Scottish Government has published its Action Plan in response to the External Advisory Group's publication 'Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres'. 'Town Centre Action Plan – the Scottish Government Response' was published in November 2013 and identifies 38 actions which aim to stimulate, encourage and support action across the wider public, private and community sectors.
- 4.2 The Action Plan endorses and supports the External Advisory Group recommendations presented under the six themes of: Town Centre Living, Vibrant Local Economies; Enterprising Communities; Proactive Planning; Digital Towns; and Accessible Public Services. Specific actions identified under these themes support partnership action at a local level which will be developed through the emerging Cumbernauld Town Centre Framework and Action Plan.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government report is available to view on line at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/11/6415/0>.

5 Town Centre Activities Update

5.1 FOOTFALL: The British Retail Consortium reported that UK Footfall in October was 2.9% lower than a year ago, down on the 2.4% fall in September. On a three-month rolling basis, this is the worst performance since the start of the year. High Streets reported the greatest fall, down 3.6%, with shopping centres recording the same 2.9% fall as they did in September. In Bellshill the figures recorded show:

Month	% Increase / Decrease
August	-6.55%
September	-6.54%
October	-4.70%

5.2 VACANCIES: In Scotland the British Retail Consortium vacancy rates rose to 11.1% in October; that shows a rise from 10.1% in July 2013. The Local Data Company average business vacancy rate in Town Centres is around 14.1%. For Bellshill the recorded figures show:

Month	Number of Business Units	Number of Vacant Units	% Vacant Units
August	145	15	10.3%
September	145	13	8.9%
October	145	14	9.6%

5.3 Town Centre Activities (TCA) is currently working with local retailers in Bellshill to offer support and sustainability for businesses within the town centre. TCA appointed an independent consultant to undertake initial mystery shopper visits to 30 independent retailers in October 2013. Following the consultant's report, TCA and the consultant ran two workshops in November 2013 covering topics such as visual merchandising, customer services and marketing. A 'follow up' workshop is to be held in January 2014.

5.4 On 28th November Bellshill Town Centre officially welcomed the start of the Christmas trading period with the Christmas Lights Switch-on.

Recommendations

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



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Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Shirley Penman on 01236 632633 (19 November 2013)