

**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016  
**Report of:** Executive Member for Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure

**Report Title**

**Town Centres – Update on Activity, Achievements to Date and Future Work Programme**

**Summary**

This report provides an update on the activities taking place in Altrincham, Sale, Stretford, Partington and Urmston centres since the previous report to Scrutiny Committee in November 2015.

**Recommendation(s)**

To note the contents of the report.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Martin Ledson

Extension: 4137

Background Papers: N/A

Financial Impact:	Not applicable
Legal Impact:	Not applicable
Human Resources Impact:	Not applicable
Asset Management Impact:	Not applicable
E-Government Impact:	Not applicable
Risk Management Impact:	Not applicable
Health and Safety Impact:	Not applicable

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Trafford's main town centres as defined in the Trafford Core Strategy – Altrincham, Sale, Stretford, Urmston and Partington, a key local centre, provide five unique centres which complement each other, offering the people of Trafford a range of facilities and services right on their doorstep. Supporting and regenerating the town centres is a major priority and focus for the Council as they are an important part of the social and economic fabric of the borough. They provide employment, retail, leisure and other essential services to meet the needs of local communities.
- 1.2 The Council has taken a strategic and coordinated approach to the sustainability and regeneration of the town centres in partnership with local stakeholders and residents. This includes: The Stretford Masterplan and Movement and Public Realm Study; the Sale and Urmston Improvement Plans, the Altrincham Strategy; and upcoming Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Plan. This report provides a comprehensive update on recent and future activity in each of the borough's town centres.
- 1.3 As part of the commitment to improving and regenerating Trafford's main town centres, Trafford Council has recently invested in a new Town Centres Team to provide an overarching town centre management function (business support, inward investment, facilitating development etc.) with a remit that covers Altrincham, Sale, Stretford, Partington and Urmston town centres.
- 1.4 **Performance Monitoring**  
The current average vacancy rate of 12.5% has shown a significant decrease compared to the same period in 2015 (i.e. 15.7%) and improved performance has been shown in all of the town centres, with Sale's vacancy rate falling by almost half. The overall vacancy rate for the Borough remains considerably lower than the North West average of 16.1%.

Stretford's high vacancy rate is still a concern, but this has fallen over the past 12 months. Costa Coffee opened in May 2016 and units are under development for Aldi (opening 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016) and JD Sports (opening early July 2016) which combined together have brought the vacancy rate down by over 2%, and should stimulate increased footfall in Stretford Mall. The Manager of the Mall has reported positive discussions with a number of potential occupiers, therefore further openings are expected.

	Vacancy Rate (%) June 15	Vacancy Rate (%) June 16
Altrincham	17.0	14.3
Sale	11.6	6.8
Stretford	33.8	28.1
Urmston	6.6	5.7
Partington	n/a	0
	<b>15.7</b>	<b>12.4</b>

## 1.5 **Town Centres Loan Scheme**

To date, 24 Town Centres Loan Scheme applications have been approved across Trafford, with a pipeline of other potential projects being developed for a variety of retail and leisure uses.

Applications that have been approved to date are summarised in Appendix 1. Over £220,000 has been awarded in loans leveraging almost £900,000 of private sector investment and creating approximately 90 jobs. A review of the scheme is underway to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, continues to operate effectively and to look at ways of providing enhanced support to applicants.

## 2. **STRETFORD**

### 2.1 **Stretford Masterplan Development**

The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan (approved by the Executive in January 2014) sets out a bold vision for delivering transformational change and sets out a route to securing a sustainable economic future for the town centre with lasting improvements to its vibrancy.

Over the last 8 months activity has taken place in a number of areas to deliver the objectives of the Masterplan. The Stretford Working Group and Panel have continued to meet to oversee the delivery of the Masterplan and co-ordinate activity across the town centre. The Group, chaired by the Executive Member for Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure, is a Council Member and officer body established to oversee the Masterplan and make recommendations to the Executive for decisions on proposals for its delivery. The Stretford Panel, which includes both business and community representatives from Stretford, has been established to support the delivery of the Masterplan and act as a consultative body to the Working Group.

A joint meeting of the Working Group and the Panel on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016 discussed the detailed design works for the Phase 1 public realm scheme and the 2016/17 Stretford Delivery Plan.

### 2.2 **Movement and Public Realm Improvements**

Gillespies/WSP completed the Stretford Movement and Public Realm Study in December 2015. The final study proposes a series of integrated public realm and movement improvement projects for the Town Centre that aim to encourage inward investment and greater economic confidence, stimulate community pride and rejuvenate failing areas of the town centre.

Within the funding available for 2016/17, delivery of the first phase of public realm improvements at the A56/Edge Lane Gateway, including removing three of the four subways, has now been identified. Detailed design work commenced in March 2016 and will take into account all responses received in the public consultation to date; there will be further consultation as this work progresses. The phase one improvement works are scheduled to start on site by early 2017 and will be funded by the Local Growth Fund monies secured via Transport for Greater Manchester.

### **2.3 Stretford Mall**

Regular meetings have continued with the managing agents (and co-owners) M&M Asset Management and their retail consultants Barker Proudlove, to discuss future plans and how the Mall can link effectively with other development activity proposed in the town centre.

Costa Coffee opened in May 2016 and three hours free parking was introduced in June 2016. Aldi and JD Sports are both scheduled to open in the Mall in early July 2016. Topaz Dance opened a new dance studio at 12-18 King Street outside the Mall's Chester Road entrance in April 2016.

A £30,000 investment by the owners of Stretford Mall was made to the indoor market area and 16 new units were completed late 2015. These units offer flexible and affordable accommodation focused on the requirements of start-up businesses. A number of businesses have opened up in these units including a smoothie bar, a gadget shop, a florists and a shop selling pet accessories.

### **2.4 Stretford Public Hall**

The Council vacated the building in 2014 and completed its disposal to the Friends of Stretford Public Hall in March 2015. The Friends Group are currently bringing the building back into active use for a range of community, social and commercial uses. The Hall is currently being utilised to provide space for artists' studios and shared office space.

In May 2016, the Friends Group launched a co-ownership shares offer to help finance essential urgent repairs to the building. Later in the year the Friends Group intend to make a Community Share Offer to finance further improvements, including equipping the main auditorium for large events and to act as leverage to secure funding from other sources such as Power to Change booster grants which can match up to £100,000 of funding from community shares.

The Council will continue to work with the Friends Group to support the successful delivery of their proposals.

## **3. SALE**

### **3.1 Sale Town Centre Improvement Plan**

One of the key actions for the new Town Centres Team is to lead the development of the strategic framework for Sale town centre. The Team has been reviewing and updating the Sale Improvement Plan that was produced in draft form in early 2015, building on the work carried out as part of the Sale Town Centre Road Map. The Plan will assist the Council and key stakeholders to identify and realise the opportunities which exist within the town centre over the next 5 years to secure the successful regeneration of Sale town centre and provide a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination. The objectives of the Plan are:

- 1) To bring forward sustainable development and encourage private sector investment, including residential development.
- 2) To improve the overall quality of the town centre and improve its retail, leisure and services offer, particularly the evening economy.
- 3) To reduce the percentage of vacant properties within the town centre and develop unused, under-used or derelict properties for a mix of uses.
- 4) To promote the town centre shopping and leisure offer and increase footfall, dwell time and spend.
- 5) To create a strong sense of place within the town centre and improve key town centre gateways.
- 6) To provide clear signage throughout Sale town centre and improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility through the area.
- 7) To promote the commercial offering in Sale.
- 8) To encourage town centre businesses and other stakeholders to work together to deliver change.

A number of new potential development sites have arisen since the Plan was originally drafted, such as the former Magistrates Court, the Square Shopping Centre and land at 9/13 Washway Road, which has recently been demolished. A survey of the town centre has been carried out to identify buildings in poor condition and the demographic and performance data are being updated. Due to falling vacancy rate in the retail core, there will be greater focus on actively managing the quality and mix of retail and improving the A56 corridor.

The Town Centre Partnership will be asked to comment on the Plan and the Framework will become part of the work plan to be led by the new Town Centres Team, supported by the Economic Growth Team.

### 3.2 Work with Sale Town Partnership

The Sale Town Partnership is a not for profit group that helps to tackle everyday issues that affect the area and to promote Sale. The Sale Town Partnership Action Plan sets out the following vision for the town centre:

**“To ensure that Sale is a prosperous and vibrant town that offers a diverse range of activities in an attractive, clean and safe environment for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike”**

The overall objective of the Partnership is to ‘ensure that Sale is a prosperous and vibrant town that offers a diverse range of activities in an attractive, clean and safe environment for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike’. The Partnership works to do this through promoting and raising the profile of Sale as a place to shop, relax and enjoy; creating an environment to be proud of and a safe and secure town centre.

Events are one of the ways in which the Partnership aims to increase footfall to the Town Centre, including Farmers’ markets, Christmas and Summer. The Sale Festival “Celebrate” took place on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016 with audiences of over 300. The event included: a farmers market along School Road; live entertainment from local community groups in the Square; and Sale Cruising Club’s Boat Parade.

### **3.3 The Square Shopping Centre**

Discussions are ongoing with MAR Properties in relation to their new proposals to develop residential, retail and commercial uses on the site, together with improved public realm.

### **3.4 Trafford Magistrates' Court, Sale**

Sale Magistrates Court and Altrincham County Court has now closed as the site has now been declared surplus by the Ministry of Justice, with the majority of functions to transfer to Manchester City Centre in summer 2016. The Council is in dialogue with the Courts and Tribunal Service and the Homes and Communities Agency regarding the disposal of the site, and potential uses.

## **4. URMSTON**

### **4.1 Urmston Town Centre Improvement Plan**

The Town Centres Team is reviewing and updating the Urmston Improvement Plan that was produced in draft form in early 2015, to build on the strategic work carried out as part of the Urmston Town Centre Road Map. This will be largely focused on the areas outside of Eden Square, and a number of new potential development opportunities have arisen since the plan was originally drafted, such as the Market site and Victoria Parade. A survey of the town centre has been carried out to identify buildings in poor condition and the background/ profile data is being brought up to date.

The Plan will assist the Council and key stakeholders to identify and realise the opportunities which exist within the town centre over the next 5 years to secure the successful regeneration of Urmston town centre and provide a prosperous, vibrant, attractive and safe destination. The objectives of the Plan are:

- 1) To encourage private sector investment that realises the full potential of Urmston town centre.
- 2) To improve the overall quality of the town centre and improve its retail, leisure and services offer, particularly the evening economy.
- 3) To maintain the percentage of vacant properties within the town centre below the regional average and develop unused, under-used or derelict properties for a mix of uses.
- 4) To promote the town centre shopping and leisure offer and increase footfall, dwell time and spend.
- 5) To create a strong sense of place within the town centre and improve key town centre gateways.
- 6) To encourage town centre businesses and other stakeholders to work together to deliver change.

The Town Centre Partnership will be asked to comment on the Plan and the framework will become part of the work plan to be picked up by the new Town Centres Team, supported by the Economic Growth Team

### **4.2 Work with the Urmston Partnership**

The Urmston Partnership is a non-profit, self-funding organisation formed to actively engage in improving Urmston and in promote the town as a place to visit. The Urmston Town Centre Partnership Action Plan 2015-16 sets out the following vision for the town centre:

**“To achieve a prosperous and vibrant town centre offering a diverse range of activities in an attractive, clean and safe environment for the enjoyment of the local community, businesses and visitors alike”**

The Partnership focuses on promoting the existing businesses in the town, encouraging new businesses and planning events and activities to increase footfall in the town centre. It involves local businesses (including major retailers and independents) developers and landowners, residents, community groups, schools, representatives from Trafford Council and other statutory organisations.

The Partnerships and Communities Team supports the organisation of an annual schedule of events including Spring, Halloween, Christmas and a food festival. A Spring Fayre took place on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016 which included a market in Eden Square. The market was a mixture of craft and food stalls and was delivered as part of a wider fun day with a funfair on Golden Hill Park and an open day from the Friends of Goldenhill Park.

#### **4.3 Urmston Market**

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016 a monthly Artisan Market was launched on the former outdoor market site. The market will be held on the first Saturday of the month and is run by The Market Company, an independent market specialist who host similar events in Wilmslow, Northwich and Buxton. The Market Company already have a strong following for their events and the first market was very popular with both Urmston community and people travelling from outside the town to attend.

### **5. ALTRINCHAM**

#### **5.1 Background and Vision**

Businesses in Altrincham town centre have established a new Business Improvement District (BID) to generate the resources needed to develop and improve Altrincham town centre over the next 5 years. Subsequently, Altrincham Forward carried out a review of its role and remit and the Board approved various recommendations in December 2015.

Altrincham Forward set out the Vision for Altrincham “to be a unique, attractive and bustling modern market town”. It has been a catalyst for reducing vacancy levels and supporting key regeneration projects that have brought significant investment, such as the Altrincham Market scheme, new Transport Interchange, new Hospital, and the public realm improvement works. Alongside this, a package of business support, events, marketing and communications activity have helped to promote the town.

The result of the review is that Altrincham Forward does have a key role to play in the future of the town but has re-focused as an overarching strategic body to ensure the sustainable growth and diversification of the town. It will complement the delivery role of the new Business Improvement District and will also play a significant role in advising and supporting the BID Company, the work of the Council and other key stakeholders. Following the review, the Board membership has remained the same to ensure continuity.

## 5.2 **Business Improvement District (BID)**

Altrincham BID went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and is being led by an Interim Board, on which the Council has a seat. An Executive Finance Committee and two Advisory Groups (Marketing & Events, Business & Finance) have also been established to support the Interim Board in advising and making recommendations on operational and service delivery issues and to oversee performance monitoring. The BID will have a budget of c£1.4 million over five years to deliver the improvements as set out in the Altrincham BID Business Plan. The BID Levy bills were sent out in early March 2016 and the BID received its first tranche of funding in May 2016.

The BID Manager started on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016 with part-time marketing and communications support being provided on a freelance basis. The Town Centres Team continues to provide support to the BID Company. The BID office is located on The Downs.

An AGM is to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016 to ratify the BID Board and the Advisory Groups and to celebrate the establishment of the BID with all its member businesses.

## 5.3 **Public Realm Works**

Phase 2a works started on Stamford New Road at the end of May 2016 and are scheduled to be completed in November 2016. A temporary one way traffic management system will be in place on Stamford New Road between Cross Street and Regent Road junctions until the works are complete. Pedestrian and business access will be maintained throughout the works period. Additional works to Altrincham Interchange are currently being undertaken including widening of taxi turning area, repositioning of pedestrian barriers, and installation of a gateway totem feature at the clock tower crossing.

## 5.4 **Developments Update**

- **Stamford Quarter** – The first phase of refurbishment works is due for completion in summer 2016. Negotiations are currently ongoing for the next phase of works which could potentially start in early 2017. This phase is likely to include works to the remaining frontages in Stamford Square. Refurbishment works are ongoing for new tenants occupying three of the units and plans for refurbishment of the former McDonalds unit are underway.
- **Clarendon House, Stamford New Road - Conversion to Residential Use** - Discussions are ongoing regarding the phasing of works and start on site date.



- **Old Hospital Site** – Demolition works are scheduled to start in October/November 2016 with completion by the end of February 2018. There are plans for hoardings around the site with information about the facilities at the new Health and Wellbeing Centre. There will be 100 underground parking spaces and five disabled spaces. Further targeted consultation will take place prior to the demolition works starting at the end of July 2016.
- **Altair** – Construction is due to start in summer 2016 with an 18 month development programme. ATS has relocated from their Oakfield Road location to enable the site to be developed. Further phases of construction will bring additional new homes plus high quality contemporary spaces suitable for bars, restaurants, retail outlets, office space and leisure uses.
- **Former Conservative Club, Greenwood Street** – A planning application was submitted in June 2016 for conversion of the ground floor to a restaurant and microbrewery/bar with an outside pavement café. It is proposed to convert the first floor apartment to a private dining and function room.
- **Altrincham Way** – Construction work on the redevelopment of this site at 74-84 George Street is due to start later in 2016 with a 15 month build period scheduled.
- **Stamford New Road - Former Dilli Restaurant and Victoria House** – The Novo Group are proposing to convert Victoria House and the upper floors of the former Dilli restaurant and 39 Stamford New Road to residential use.

## 5.5 Fab Lab

Altrincham Fab Lab opened on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 in the ground floor of Altrincham Library. A Fab Lab is a fully equipped fabrication workshop to stimulate the conversion from ideas and concepts into a manufactured prototype or product. The main beneficiaries of a Fab Lab are the local community of all ages who can use the facility for free. Entrepreneurs and businesses are also a key market for a Fab Lab to support product design, prototype development and manufacture. The Altrincham Fab Lab contains the standard tried and tested equipment found in other Fab Labs including: 3D printer, lasercutter, vinyl cutter, milling machines and electronics assembly.

The Advisory Board, on which the Council has a seat, has been established to guide and monitor the operation of the Fab Lab and includes local business and other key private sector stakeholders.

The Fab Lab has reported a growing number of public users and is also looking to grow the number of paying business users. A meeting took place on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016 with the Business Growth Hub to consider how the two organisations can link up to promote the facility. The official opening is planned for later in 2016.

## 5.6 Retail Skills Programme Development

In partnership with Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce and Trafford College, a 'Business Academy' was developed for Altrincham, called ABLE

(Altrincham Business Learning Exchange) offering free workshop sessions to start-up businesses and retailers to gain training on important aspects of setting up and running a business, to increase the chance of success and provide ongoing mentoring to avoid some of the common business pitfalls. Sessions were held monthly from September 2015-March 2016 including sessions on legal, finance, marketing and social media, hosted at Altrincham Forward. A number of Loan Scheme applicants benefitted from the sessions.

#### **5.7 Business Neighbourhood Plan**

A Business Neighbourhood Plan is being developed for Altrincham town centre by the Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Forum, a group of community volunteers, chaired by Tony Collier. The plan includes a vision, objectives, design principles, and land use planning and development management policies. After the different stages of the consultation process, residents and businesses will be given the opportunity to vote for or against the plan. If they vote for it, Trafford Council will adopt the plan and use it as the basis for their town centre planning decisions from up until 2030.

The final Stage 3 public consultation (also the Regulation 14 statutory consultation) was carried out between 16th January 2016 and 29th February 2016. The Plan is now being finalised and is due to be submitted to the Council at the end of June 2016. The Council will then check it meets the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and advertise the plan for six weeks to give the public a final opportunity to have their say. An independent inspector will be appointed to check the process has been carried out properly and determine whether a referendum can take place.

#### **5.8 Events**

The BID Marketing and Events Group is formulating an annual Events calendar and is currently concentrating on a Summer Music Festival and Christmas activities.

### **6. PARTINGTON**

#### **6.1 Environmental Works**

The environmental works are being progressed using the £20,000 allocation from the Town Centres Improvement Fund (which has been used to fund environmental improvements/public realm works and the Town Centres Loan Scheme in the other town centres) to help improve the centre of Partington. To date, only the tree planting element of the scheme has been carried out (c£5,000). Further elements that are proposed include:

- Purchase and installation of two new litter bins
- In-situ refurbishment of metal benches on the town park
- Purchase of plants for the Parish Council to plant in the relevant areas
- Design and purchase of a 'Welcome to Partington' sign

Discussions are to take place with Amey and Environmental Services about taking forward these elements. The Parish Council has also requested that a

living Christmas tree be planted using the funding. This option will be considered once further information is received from the Parish Council.

## **6.2 Partington District Centre**

The Council successfully acquired the former Co-op site at the District Centre with HCA funding from Peel on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and will be looking to bring it forward for residential development promptly.

## **7. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

7.1 The approach to securing funding for Christmas Lights in 2016 is to invite local residents and businesses to sponsor via crowdfunding campaigns led by local partnerships or community groups and also targeting a small number of key 'headline' sponsors. The crowd funding campaign will be aimed at generating sponsorship to cover the costs of the Christmas lights in Ashton on Mersey, Hale, Partington, Sale, Sale Moor, Stretford, Timperley and Urmston.

7.2 Discussions have taken place with the preferred local partnership / community groups, who have given their in principle agreement to participate in the campaigns. The Council will provide technical support, an information pack and accompanying marketing/PR materials.

7.3 Amey has agreed to appoint City Illuminations on retainer to install the festive lighting displays, subject to relevant funding raised by the crowd funding campaigns.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 The focus on Trafford's town centres has continued over the past 8 months. The recent establishment of a Town Centre team to focus on Altrincham, Sale, Stretford, Partington and Urmston, and the launch of Business Improvement District in Altrincham means that the progress is set to continue. The overall aim is for the town centres to meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, and reflect modern shopping and leisure trends.

8.2 The strategic approach will continue to develop and this will be complemented by the development of a proactive approach to identifying and attracting potential investors into the town centres. Over the coming months, the Town Centres Team will be developing an Investment Pack to promote the centres, identify investment opportunities and provide key data and demographic information, to support Trafford's Town Centres as a place to invest.

8.3 Trafford Council also recognises that district centres play an important part in local communities and this is recognised in the Trafford Local Plan. Opportunities to support the district centres will be taken forward on a case by case basis.

## APPENDIX 1 - APPROVED TOWN CENTRE LOANS

<b>Business</b>	<b>Town Centre</b>	<b>Status*</b>
Bell's Fitness - Boxing Gym	Altrincham	Opened Dec 2013
Vintage Angel - Vintage inspired and handmade giftware / Florist (2 businesses)	Altrincham	Opened Sep 2014
Shop4Supplements – Health and Nutritional Supplements	Altrincham	Opened Sep 2014
Angela Quayle Interiors Design	Altrincham	Opened Dec 2014
Velo Espresso – Café with cycling theme	Altrincham	Opened Oct 2014
Baby Bumkins – Children's Wear	Altrincham	Opened Jan 2015
Old Post Rooms - includes a number of different tenants and a café/tea room.	Altrincham	Opened Aug 2015
Fresh to Death – Café (Healthy Foods)	Altrincham	Opened Aug 2015
Ombak Furniture	Altrincham	Opened Sep 2015
Runway Pilates	Altrincham	Opened Sep 2015
Cheshire Beauty Sculpt – Beauty Salon	Altrincham	Opened Nov 2015
Idaho – Homeware and Gifts	Altrincham	Opened Sep 2015
The Craftsman – Bar	Altrincham	Opened Dec 2015.
Jameson and Partners – Estate and Investors Agency	Altrincham	Opened Jan 2016
Homebird Furniture and Home Accessories	Altrincham	Opened May 2016
Home Design Centre	Sale	To Open Apr 2016
Suya – Café and Grill	Stretford	Opened Jan 2014
Flexi-minder – Child minding service	Stretford	Opened Aug 2015
Luminer – Lighting and Chandeliers	Urmston	Opened Jan 2014
Cheeky Cherubs - Soft Play Area (Social Enterprise / Not for Profit)	Urmston	Opened Jul 2014
Anytime Fitness - Gym	Urmston	Opened Sep 2014
Prairie Schooner – Micro Pub	Urmston	Opened Oct 2014
Rose & Bumble	Urmston	Opened Nov 2015

\*The loans are ordered by alphabetically by name of town centre then by opening date.