

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**25 OCTOBER 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cook**

#### **STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE**

1. Summary

To seek approval for additional work and consultation focussing upon Stockton Town Centre.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:-

1. Authorise the commissioning of further work and consultation regarding Stockton Town Centre as detailed within the report.
2. A detailed presentation and report back to Cabinet following further work early in 2008.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To assist in the regeneration of Stockton Town Centre.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;

- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE**

**SUMMARY**

To seek approval for additional work and consultation focussing upon Stockton Town Centre.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:-

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**DETAIL**

Background

1. At Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 Gillespies' Riverside Sites Masterplan was agreed as a basis for a Stockton Town Centre Action Plan. This Action Plan was approved for consultation purposes, setting out the vision for the regeneration of Stockton Town Centre, the gateways into the centre and its adjoining riverside sites.
2. Since then significant progress has been made in shaping many of the regeneration aspirations for the centre. These can be summarised as follows:-
  - partnership working with Lathe Investments has resulted in the granting of planning permission for a new foodstore at the Southern Gateway,
  - property acquisition has commenced as part of site assembly for the Southern Gateway,
  - substantial investment has been made in improvements and a re-launch of the market,
  - plans and funding have been secured for the future re-use of the Shambles,
  - improvements to public realm have kickstarted the shaping of a Cultural Quarter in the town centre,
  - partnership working with the owner has resulted in the marketing of the Globe Theatre building,
  - discussions have taken place about the potential of a "World Mile Project" linking the town centre with housing regeneration taking place at Parkfield, and
  - liaison with Licensing and Planning regarding policies and provision of outdoor cafes.

3. Cabinet subsequently approved a report on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007 which sought to amend the Action Plan to reflect changed circumstances and comments received as part of an exhaustive consultation process undertaken. These amendments have now been incorporated into the Action Plan which will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.
4. One of the common themes throughout the comments received was a concern that there were not enough proposals for the regeneration of the High Street itself. Many were very supportive of the gateway and riverside proposals. People requested changes to the quality and mix of the retail offer in the High Street, as well as improvements to public realm and the markets

#### Stockton and Middlesbrough Retail Study

5. Consultants were jointly engaged in April 2007 to embark on a joint retail study for both Stockton and Middlesbrough Boroughs. The purpose of this study was for consultants to examine the potential for collaborative working to address future retail needs to be met through the Local Development Frameworks and various regeneration initiatives. Given that independent retail studies had previously been commissioned across the two Boroughs, a decision was taken to use the same two consultants (White Young Green at Middlesbrough and Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners at Stockton) in a joint manner.
6. Progress is now well advanced on this joint study with a final report expected by the end of November 2007. The study specifically examines the future need for additional retail growth across the 2 boroughs, advising on how potential growth should be accommodated and phased without adversely impacting on existing centres.
7. Findings to date from retail modelling based on the household surveys required to establish up to date shopping patterns, have revealed that Stockton Town Centre is some way behind Middlesbrough Town Centre in terms of comparison shopping and that this will continue. The reasons for this are numerous but the success of the nearby Teesside Retail Park should be highlighted as one of the main contributors towards the consistently high vacancy rate experienced in Stockton Town Centre (circa 22% over the past 5 years).
8. The study identifies limited future capacity for new comparison shopping in Stockton based largely on current market share, whereas Middlesbrough appears to have more capacity than available sites with which to accommodate future development. As a consequence, the extension to Middlesbrough Town Centre to include Canon Park is proposed through its Local Development Framework.
9. Conversely, significantly more growth for convenience retailing is identified in Stockton as opposed to Middlesbrough. This is due largely the number of foodstores in Stockton Borough. It is expected that this spare capacity will be met by the provision of new stores in Stockton and Billingham Town Centres in next few years.

#### Role for Stockton Town Centre

10. It is recognised that Middlesbrough is identified as a sub-regional Major Town Centre in the retail hierarchy established by the Tees Valley Structure Plan, whereas Stockton, whilst categorised as a Town Centre, lies in a tier below Middlesbrough's classification. To this effect, Middlesbrough should be allowed to grow and meet future demand for mainstream comparison shopping. Even if this was prevented and re-directed towards Stockton it is unlikely that demand amongst operators would exist in the short to medium term.
11. Stockton has a distinct role in the Tees Valley retail market and this needs to be built upon and expanded. The Town Centre and Riversides Sites Action Plan sets out many ambitious and exciting complementary regeneration initiatives designed to attract people to the wider town centre for non-retailing purposes ie capitalising on Stockton's excellent riverside

setting for events, leisure and urban living, however, it is considered that a further study is now needed to identify a series of measures that will refresh Stockton's retail offer, attractiveness to operators, shoppers and visitors alike and complete the continually improving "experience" of coming to Stockton Town Centre.

12. This refreshed vision will need to respect the roles of other centres in the Tees Valley, seeking to develop further a distinctive offer in a complementary rather than a competitive manner. A focus on retail specialism will be crucial if Stockton is to succeed in the future and to this effect it is proposed that an assessment of demand for retail space be undertaken with local letting agents as the first part of this study. It is essential to market test different forms of retailing if a new role alongside the "market town" offer is to be established. The market, the historic fabric of the centre and the increasing diversity of the centre are to be retained and interwoven into the study so that a sustainable, vibrant and exciting town centre experience can be supported. This will involve a detailed urban design assessment of the centre, a radical review of parking and other transport issues and an awareness of all the other proposals and initiatives set out in the Action Plan. A common theme throughout these proposals is one of improving the overall quality of development and the environment of these areas.

#### Consultants

13. Whilst it is recognised that a detailed brief will need to be prepared for what amounts to be a major piece of work, it should also be noted that there is previous work upon which to base a study. Clearly an excellent understanding of the local and sub-regional picture will assist in that process and rather than going for numerous quotations from consultants to undertake this study, it is proposed that given their previous involvements in earlier retail studies for Stockton as well as the current joint study with White Young Green, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) be appointed to undertake this study. NLP have displayed an excellent recognition and understanding of the local issues as well as the technical capacity work being undertaken. An agreement regarding the cost of the study will need to be achieved and value for money demonstrated as part of procurement.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. It is proposed that funding for the new study be found from within existing Development and Neighbourhood Services budgets.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no direct legal implications associated with this study.

#### RISK ASSESSMENT

16. A risk assessment will need to be undertaken once the study has been undertaken and is to be reported back to Cabinet for endorsement as an approved strategy for the Town Centre.

#### COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

17. **Economic Regeneration and Transport** – study will assist in delivery of key development project, "Revitalise the Borough's Town Centres".
18. **Community Safety** - In considering potential development opportunities for the Town Centre, the study will need to have regard to crime and perception of crime

#### EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

19. A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) of the new strategy arising from this study will be undertaken as part of the report back to Cabinet.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

20. The Cabinet Member for Development and Regeneration and the ward councillors have been consulted on this report.
21. Extensive consultation has previously been undertaken regarding regeneration initiatives in the Town Centre and this will need to be built upon as part of this consultancy. A brief will specify the extent to which the public and stakeholders will need to be consulted with as part of the study

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### Background Papers

Report to Cabinet 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007 – Stockton Town Centre and Riverside Sites Action Plan  
Stockton and Middlesbrough Retail Study Brief – March 2007

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Stockton Town Centre Ward:-  
Councillor Paul Kirton  
Councillor David Coleman

### Property

Any implications arising from the study for the Council's property will need to be considered when the study is reported back to Cabinet.

