

<b>6 March 2012</b>		<b>ITEM 5</b>
<b>Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>BID TO CLG FOR GRAYS TO BE A PILOT TOWN TEAM</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Cllr Andy Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b>	<b>Key Decision:</b>	
Grays Riverside	No	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> None		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Steve Cox - Assistant Chief Executive		
<b>This report is</b> Public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To gain Cabinet approval for the submission of a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for funding to pilot Town Team in Grays		

**Comment [s]:** PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the date of the meeting (in font 16, not capitals)

**Comment [s]:** Please leave this for completion by Democratic Services

**Comment [s]:** Please enter details of any Wards and Communities affected by the report. If this section is not applicable, you should enter "none".

**Comment [s]:** Yes/No/Not Applicable – a 'Key Decision' is generally one affecting more than 2 wards or above £50,000 expenditure – see Guideline 2.7

**Comment [sj]:** Please state the Head of Service's name and job title

**Comment [sj]:** Please state Director's name and job title

**Comment [sj]:** State whether your report is Public or Exempt. If Exempt (i.e. not to be given to the public or discussed in public), you should provide the reason for the this. For information, this is set out in the Constitution under Access Rule 12 – see Guideline 2.8

**Comment [sj]:** Briefly set out the purpose of your report

**Comment [sj]:** Please provide a summary of the key points in your report

**Comment [s]:** The recommendations should be set out in bold in the form of the decision that the decision-maker is being asked to make - See para. 5.2 of the report writing guidelines

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Mary Portas Review of the High Street published in December 2011 included a range of recommendations to "breathe economic and community life back in to our high streets". A key recommendation was the formation of Town Teams to provide a "visionary, strategic and strong management team for high streets" made up from key stakeholders in town centres.

The Department for Communities and Local Government have issued an invitation to bid for funding to test the approach. Successful applicants will receive up to £100,000 to implement and evaluate a range of the Mary Portas proposals. This report recommends that Thurrock Council submit a bid for funding to test the Town Team approach in Grays. Bids must be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> March.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Agree to the development of a "Town Team" funding bid for Grays in partnership with local stakeholders based on the approach set out in this report.**

- 1.2 **Agree to delegate the approval and submission of the bid documents to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive.**
- 1.3 **Agree to provide match funding to the bid through the allocation of existing S.106 monies (currently available to the value of £100,000) for use in Grays Town Centre to develop the town team and its work.**

**In the event of an unsuccessful bid:**

- 1.4 **Agree to continue work with stakeholders and developed a phased approach to Town Centre Management in Grays from within existing resources. Including the development of a Grays Loyalty Card with Grays Shopping Centre and a cross council working group to look at town centre issues.**

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1 In 2011 Mary Portas was asked by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to conduct an independent review in to the state of High Streets and Town Centres. “The Portas Review: An independent review in to the future of our High Streets” was published in December 2011 and contained 28 recommendations aimed at maintaining and strengthening the role of Town Centres. These recommendations point to roles for central government, local government, business and communities. Whilst recognising the changing nature of retailing including the growth of internet and mobile shopping the report states the importance of re-imagining high streets and breathing economic and community life back in to them by re-establishing them as destinations for a variety of roles including socialising, culture, health, well being, creativity and learning.
- 2.2 One of the primary recommendations is to put in place “Town Teams” with a visionary, strategic, and strong operational management team. Local areas should decide on the form of the team but the report suggests representation to include key landlords, large and small shopkeepers, council representatives with specific knowledge of planning and development, the mayor or MP, other local businesses and service providers, and local residents. The Town Team is intended to enable stakeholders to come together to provide strong visionary, strategic, and operational management, possibly including inheriting powers to try new ways of working on the High Street.
- 2.3 In February 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued “Portas Pilots Prospectus: an invitation to become a Town Team” which invites applications to pilot the Town Team approach. The Successful applicants will receive up to £100,000 (average of £80,000 per pilot) to pilot the approach. There will be 12 pilots around the country aimed at testing the approach in different types of town centre and in different circumstances. Applications must be submitted by 30 March to include a video on YouTube. The purpose of the pilots is to test the Portas approach and to provide an opportunity for local partnerships to develop and share knowledge about the effectiveness of various options for High Street improvement.

Comment [s]: You should briefly explain why the report is on the agenda - See para. 5.3 and 5.4 of the report writing guidelines.

- 2.4 A summary of the Portas Review and the potential scope of Town Teams is appended, it should be emphasised that the approach is not limited to the scope described in the appendix, there is a strong emphasis on innovation such as town centre loyalty cards to encourage the use of the town centre. There is also a strong emphasis on engagement with the report stating, “I want to see high streets where localism really delivers integrated action from all stakeholders”.
- 2.5 The role of the Town Team could touch on a range of local authority functions possible examples include;
1. **Planning:**
    - a) Policy (e.g. Neighbourhood Plans)
    - b) Development Control e.g.
      - i. Consultee on planning applications within the town centre
      - ii. Relaxation of planning powers (e.g. Local Development Order).
      - iii. Tightening of planning controls (e.g. article 4 directions can be used to limit permitted development rights)
  2. **Parking**
  3. **Highways and Transportation**
  4. **Business Rates**
  5. **Land assets**
  6. **Budgets** e.g.
    - a) S.106 for the town centre (some or all)
    - b) Dedicated budget for the Town Team
    - c) Part of departmental budgets identified for spend within the town centre
  7. **Licensing**
  8. **Public protection**
- 2.6 The Portas Review suggests that powers and, by implication, budgets could be delegated to the Town Team. There is a strong emphasis on maximising the ability of the team to try new approaches examples include the use of IT to establish a virtual online team to enable speed of communication and decision making. A further example is the development of a town centre loyalty card whereby people build up points when they purchase goods and services in the town centre which they can then use in the town centre.

### 3. **BID PROPOSAL**

- 3.1.1 The purpose for the funding stream is to test the Town Team approach, including:
- different ways of making it easier to do business in High Streets
  - ways of re-imagining High Streets as community hubs.
- 3.2 The bid documents require a range of information. Key elements are:
- a) The vision for the town centre
  - b) Support from stakeholders

**Comment [s]:** Other headings may be appropriate. The report should outline the reasoning that leads to its recommendations and **must** include:

1. a brief summary of options considered;
2. consultation outcomes
3. a risk assessment.
4. Whether the responsible cabinet members have been consulted/contributed to the report (NB professional and political advice must be clearly distinguished)

- See para.5.5 of the report writing guidelines.

- c) Potential for improvement
- d) Innovative solutions
- e) Identification of which Portas Review recommendations will be tested
- f) How much will it cost and what match funding is available.

3.3 Grays is the main District Centre in Thurrock and would therefore be appropriate for initial testing of the Town Team approach. If successful, the approach could be developed for other centres in the Borough. The planning framework for expansion at Lakeside and the formation of a regional town centre in the Lakeside Basin requires measures to secure the future viability and vitality of other town centres in Thurrock. A collaborative approach involving stakeholders with an interest in the future of Grays offers strong potential for securing the long term future of the town centre.

3.4 There are 5 main areas identified under the Town Teams approach that the Grays bid should develop and test (see appendix 1). The Regeneration Team have identified a range of initial ideas that will be considered as part of the bid development process. These will be reviewed with key stakeholders and potential Town Team members before the final bid approach is agreed. This list may be supplemented by other appropriate initiatives identified through stakeholder discussions.

#### 3.4.1 Clear Planning and Management/ What the High Street Should be

The existing vision for Grays is that it will become the cultural and administrative centre for Thurrock supported by modern educational facilities and an expansion of local retailing that will complement the retail offer provided by the Lakeside Basin.

The initial proposal for the Grays bid will focus on further developing this vision and specifically the details of the local retail and community offer using innovative engagement techniques.

#### 3.4.2 Town Team

Many towns bidding to be pilots already have Town Team in place. As there is not a Town Team in place the main the focus of the Grays application will be on testing the development of a new Town Team.

The initial proposal is to set up a focussed Town Team which will be supported by a wider Grays forum or network. To support this the team are:

- Contacting key stakeholders to discuss the concept of the bid
- Writing to all Grays business and community groups to invite letters of support for the bid and identify interest in the Team and Network
- Investigating innovative methods of virtual networks and web based teams and communications
- Developing a process of engagement to establish the scope of purpose, roles and functions of the Town Team and Network

- Investigating the potential to use the town centre as a pilot or trial for the Community Engagement Strategy principles on reducing bureaucracy and devolved budgets.

### 3.4.3 Getting the Basics Right

The Council's ability to respond effectively to the priorities identified by a Town Team will be fundamental to the success of any new approach to Grays. To support this the initial proposals are to:

- Set up an operational cross Council group that can review and respond to the Town Team as a trial for micro-level area working
- Identify clear responsibility and contacts for dealing with operational problems
- Secure funding from S106 and Regeneration Income and other external funding sources to fund Town Centre Management
- Investigate a process for devolving appropriate powers to a Town Team if required following engagement and visioning work

### 3.4.4 Community Involvement

Innovative approaches to community engagement have been identified as a key part of the bid development. There is likely to be an increase in footfall in Grays from the new Campus. This brings opportunities to bring together existing and new town centre users in a cohesive way. Initial proposals include:

- Allocation of £50,000 of existing S106 funding to a participatory budget exercise for improvements in the Town Centre
- Development of a programme of innovative community consultation and empowerment activities. This would be supported by community mapping and information sharing to regularly gather wider feedback on Grays

### 3.4.5 Re-Imagining the High Street

The review identifies a range of initiatives that can be used to reinvigorate town centres and encourages new innovative ideas to address local issues. Proposals that are under investigation for the bid include:

- The extension of the new Grays Shopping Centre loyalty card scheme and website to the high street
- Development of a mobile explorer App for the town and places of interest in Grays
- Review the opportunities for community asset use

3.5 Resources

The Council currently holds £100,000 of S.106 money which can be used for Grays Town Centre. This has been identified as potential match funding the pilot bid amount. The staff resources to support the application can be met from existing core funded posts and regeneration funding streams.

The proposals will be costed and the bid will include activities up to the value of £100,000.

- 3.6 There is a very high level of competition for the funding and only 12 areas will be successful. If unsuccessful a number of the initiatives being considered can be taken forward using a phased approach over a longer time frame from within existing resources

4. **CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 4.1 A programme of meetings will be developed to consult business and community stakeholders on the bid proposals.
- 4.2 The principles of community engagement will be embedded into the bid and a range of consultation and engagement activities carried out as part of the pilot.
- 4.3 This report is also being considered by Planning Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 5.1 This proposal supports all five priorities within the Community Strategy
- 5.2 The Thurrock Economic Development Strategy identifies Grays as one of five economic hubs where regeneration is to be focussed.
- 5.3 Policy CSSP2 of the Adopted Thurrock Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (LDF) identifies Grays as one of five economic hubs where regeneration will be focussed including retail, business services, recreation and leisure, public services, and flagship developments such as the Thurrock Learning Campus and Community Business Centre.
- 5.4 Policy CSTP7 of the LDF identifies the focus for regeneration in Grays Town Centre as substantial growth in retail, culture, administrative and education facilities and the need to address the long term future and viability of Grays and other town centres as part of wider proposals for creating a regional town centre at Lakeside. Policy CSTP8 provides for a wide range of measures to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing town centres.
- 5.5 The Town Team approach could make a significant contribution to the long term future of town centres in the Borough and the Council's priorities for regeneration.

**Comment [j]:** This should include any consultation with Ward Members and Shadow Portfolio Holders, as well as any public or statutory consultation

**Comment [a]:** Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Report Writing Guidelines

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Funké Nana**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652 451**  
**fnana@thurrock.gov.uk**

The submission of the bid will require staff time which will be funded from core departmental budgets, existing regeneration funding and a commitment that S.106 funds available for Grays Town Centre be used to support the Town Team approach set out in the bid.

In the longer term a Town Team may have a strong influence on budgetary decisions depending on how the team is formed and the scope of its remit. These issues will need to be reported to members for consideration when they arise.

6.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Alison Stuart**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652 040**  
**astuart@thurrock.gov.uk**

The submission of the bid raises no significant issues.

In the longer term a Town Team may have a strong influence on decision making and the guidance identifies the potential for the team inheriting relevant powers depending on how the team is formed and the scope of its remit. These issues will need to be reported to members for consideration when they arise.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
 Telephone and email: **sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk**  
**01375 652472**

The submission of the bid raises no significant issues. The development of the Town Team approach will require appropriate engagement with Thurrock's communities to ensure that diversity and equalities are properly integrated in to the approach.

6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None

Comment [sj]: This section should always be completed – if they are dealt with fully in another part of the report, they also need a brief cross reference here. The names and job titles of the officers providing the implications should be provided in full – see Guideline 6.1 and please note Democratic Services Deadlines and ensure that officers providing implications are given 5 clear working days to work on the report. Authors can write implications but they must be signed off by the appropriate officers

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.2

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.3

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.4

**7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 This report outline the approach being developed for a Grays Town Centre Town Team bid. It seeks approval for the principle of submitting the bid and, in view of the short timescales, the final bid submission being approved by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive.

Comment [sj]: This should inform the recommendations in the report

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 8. If any Papers are to be placed in the Members room that relate to this report, you should also list them here

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

- The Portas Review: An independent review in to the future of our High Streets
- Portas Pilots Prospectus: an invitation to become a Town Team

Comment [sj]: List the Appendices referred to in the Report

Comment [sj]: Insert the full contact details of the author of the report

**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- **Appendix 1 Mary Portas Review: A summary**

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