

## **AGM Agenda Item 2**

### **Annual Report of the activities of the Harrow Town Centre Forum**

#### **1 Overview**

- This report covers the period from July 2005 to present.
- The Forum has met three times, and the Executive on several occasions, in order to progress the fulfilment of it's commitment to the Service Level Agreement with Harrow Council.
- With the first Harrow Town Centre Management Strategy (2002-2005) having been implemented, the new Harrow Town Centre Management Strategy (2006 – 2008) ready for adoption, and a sound financial position, the Forum is in a strong position to drive further improvements and attract investment to enhance the vitality and viability of Harrow town.

#### **2 Activities**

The activities of the Forum have again fallen into the categories below:

- Promotions and events
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Improving access
- Advice on best practice and legislation
- Monitoring the town in the face of competition
- Consultation and information sharing
- Broadening the partnership and raising additional funding
- Appointing and directing the work of the Town Centre Manager

Some of the key activities in each of the categories follow:

##### **2.1 Promotions and events**

- The highlights of the year included two visits of a French market to St Ann's Road on (7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March). Large numbers of the public, many new to the town, were once again able to enjoy the delights of French food, wine and gifts.
- On the 5<sup>th</sup> November, the Festival of Light Celebration drew crowds to the stage in St Ann's Road opposite the Rat and Parrot PH.
- Santa's visit with six live reindeer to St Ann's Road on the first Sunday in December again proved very popular with the public.
- A Town Centre leaflet was produced in conjunction with St George's and St Ann's shopping centres. 95,000 of these were distributed to households and businesses in the Borough with the August edition of 'Harrow People'. The balance of the 120,000 print run is available in libraries and guest accommodation.
- Bus back advertising, expanded to include 40 bus backs covering a larger area of west London, was used in November to raise public awareness of Harrow as a destination during the run up to Christmas. The '250 reasons to visit Harrow this Christmas' theme was also incorporated into an advert on the rear page of the December issue of 'Harrow People' to maintain the town's branding.

## **AGM Agenda Item 2**

- The Forum again acted as a major sponsor of the Harrow Arts Festival. The street festival day on July 8<sup>th</sup> included street entertainment in St Ann's Road, and Station Road opposite Debenhams. Both shopping centres participated in the event, with St George's hosting the Sangeet College tabla ensemble, Elevate, Elevate Extension and Sapnay School of Dance dance groups, whilst St Ann's provided the venue for artists from Harrow Visual Arts Forum to set up their easels and interact with the public.
- The activity area in St Ann's Road has been regularly used for a children's ride, and a variety of community events including displays by Divine Youth Association, Shopmobility, Harrow Womens' Aid and Harrow Voluntary Youth Forum. It has also been utilised for providing information on Defra, Good Going Cycle promotion, Trading Standards, and Harrow Association for the Disabled (Action for the Blind)
- The Police Recruitment Bus, Carers Week and Company of Cyclists have also visited the town, setting up in St Ann's Road near the Rat and Parrot PH.
- The Forum again acted as a sponsor of events during the October Black History Month.
- The Harrow Council web site continues to display several pages promoting the town centre, with links to the two shopping centres, and a page on Shopmobility. Events and press releases relating to the town have regularly appeared.
- A link to the Tourism 'Visit Harrow' web site has been created. This now includes a downloadable version of the Town Centre Leaflet.

### **2.2 Reducing crime and the fear of crime**

- The part-time Business Crime Reduction Co-ordinator, reporting jointly to the Crime Reduction Manager and the Town Centre Manager, has made significant progress with setting up the Harrow Business Against Crime partnership (HBAC). The Partnership now has a Board and Steering Group, headed up by myself, and has secured funding for the next 3 years. Marks and Spencer have kindly provided an office.
- The Forum has continued to support Harrow Council's flagship CCTV scheme.
- Safer Neighbourhood policing was introduced to Greenhill Ward the previous year. Sergeant Kate Rogers leads a team of 2 PC's and 2 PCSO's policing Greenhill ward, which includes Harrow town. In addition, one PC is dedicated to working in the town.
- Welcome changes brought about in July 2004 by the London Local Authorities Act 2004 have continued to be used to ensure a reduction in the number of street traders in the town, particularly in the run up to Christmas.
- The Police and Trading Standards officers, now assisted by Immigration Officers, have continued to undertake operations involving the seizure and prosecution of illegal DVD sellers. Film of some of these operations has featured in news coverage on national TV channels. Despite these actions, it is an uphill struggle to eliminate the national problem of counterfeit DVD's being sold on the streets.

## **AGM Agenda Item 2**

### **2.3 Improving access**

- The resurrection of the vehicle permit scheme, backed up with lockable bollards at the junction with Havelock Place, has continued to deter unauthorised vehicles from the St Ann's Road pedestrian area.
- Work to improve the safety, cleanliness and appearance of Queens House car park has continued throughout the year.
- Areas of paving in the town continue to be re-laid to improve appearance and reduce the risk of trip hazards.
- Businesses have continued to co-operate by not displaying free-standing advertising boards ('A' boards) and goods on the highway at selected busy locations (St Ann's Road, College Road and Station Road – part)
- The Forum, through the attendance of the Town Centre Manager and other practical help, continues to support the work of Harrow Shopmobility in providing a service to enable those with mobility difficulties to access the town.
- Consultants on behalf of Harrow Council have developed an interactive traffic model for the town, which can be used to predict traffic patterns in response to future demand and proposed development.

### **2.4 Advice on Best Practice and legislation**

- In July, the Chair of the Multi Agency Forum Against Racial Harassment gave a talk on the outcome of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, including the recommendation for third party reporting.
- At the same meeting, the Group Manager, Library Services outlined changes to the service, including the introduction of Sunday opening at Gayton Road library.
- The adoption of Café Culture Guidance was reported by the Senior Professional, Strategic Planning
- In April, the Forum received a report from a senior Trading Standards Officer on the actions taken to try to reduce the number of illegal DVD sellers.
- The Group Manager, Community Safety Services, presented a summary of the recently introduced Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act.
- Copies of the ATCM's quarterly 'Forum' magazine have been made available to Forum members.

### **2.5 Monitoring the town in the face of competition**

- In January, the Forum received a report by the Senior Professional, Strategic Planning on the draft Retail Capacity Study being undertaken by Donaldsons. The final report, including appendices, has been made available to all Forum members.

### **2.6 Consultation and information sharing**

- The Forum meetings have again provided considerable opportunities for consultation and information sharing:
- A draft of the second Harrow Town Centre Management Strategy (2006 – 2008) was developed by the Town Centre Manager in conjunction with the Forum. It

## **AGM Agenda Item 2**

was agreed in January as the basis of public consultation, which took place in May and June.

- A presentation on the Harrow on the Hill Station masterplan by the Director of Strategic Planning has featured at each Forum meeting. This has generated considerable interest and discussion.
- Following consultation on the Dandara application to develop the former Post Office site in College Road, the Forum sent a letter of objection to the Planning Department
- The Forum has received regular updates on the progress in setting up the Harrow Business Against Crime partnership, with several Forum members now directly involved through HBAC's Management Board and Steering group.
- The Forum received a presentation from Paul Clifford (Jacobs Babbie) on the interactive Town Centre Traffic Model developed by Jacobs Babbie. This model can be used to predict future traffic flows in the town, including those associated with new development.
- At its' meeting in April, following consultation by the Transportation section, the Forum agreed to support a proposal to make changes to parking restrictions in Bonnersfield Lane.
- The Town Centre Manager has regularly asked for suggestions, and discussed progress, on planned Town Centre Events.
- The Police have taken the opportunity to explain Safer Neighbourhood policing arrangements in the town to the Forum.

### **2.7 Broadening the partnership and raising additional funding**

- In 2003/2004, the Forum, through the Executive, made changes to the Constitution in an attempt to broaden the partnership and redress the failure to reach a quorum through absence of business representatives as reported in 2002/2003.
- For the second year running, meetings have been better attended, and none have been cancelled through failure to reach a quorum.
- However, once again, core funding income from business partners has fallen (from £18,167(2003) to £16,500 (2004) to £16,000 (2005) for financial year ended April).
- This is disappointing given the Councils increasing contribution over the same period (£ 39,110 (2003); £41,110 (2004); £43,150 (2005))
- Over the period of this report, the four barrow sites, activity area and market have continued to generate additional income for the Forum.
- The activity area has continued to be particularly successful, with income rising from £21,960 to £22,350 (financial year). (cf. Only £1,620 in 2002/2003). With high demand leading to the site being virtually fully let until the end of 2006, an increase in letting fees will be sought from commercial operators.
- The barrow sites have also generated a better return. All four have been let with regular tenants over the year. As a result, income has increased from £27,138 to £30,610 (financial year). With a reduction in the Rateable Value of each site from £5000 to £2900 following appeal and re-rating in April 2005, the prospects for continuing income generation are good. It is therefore planned to increase the rents in October/November 2006.

## **AGM Agenda Item 2**

- Additional income was raised through sponsorship of the two winter festive promotions and French market advert sponsorship by the two shopping centres.

### **2.8 Appointing and directing the work of the Town Centre Manager**

- The Forum has continued to direct the work of the Town Centre Manager.
- The Town Centre Manager has been responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the Harrow Town Centre Management Strategy 2003 – 2005 on behalf of the Forum
- This work will continue with the adoption and implementation of the new Harrow Town Centre Management Strategy 2006 - 2008
- Annual Performance Targets for the Town Centre Manager continue to be set and assessed by the Executive.
- In connection with the above duties, the Town Centre Manager sits on the Management Boards of Harrow Business Against Crime (HBAC) and Shopmobility

### **3 Budget**

- A more detailed budget report appears elsewhere.
- The Forum continues to benefit from Council funding in accordance with the Service Level Agreement; external funding (including ‘benefit in kind’) from 8 core funders and income from the barrow site, activity area and Greenhill Way market.
- Unspent funds totalling £73,004 are being carried forward into 2006/2007.

**Stephen Kent**  
Chair