

Annual Report of the activities of the Harrow Town Centre Forum July

1 Overview

- This report covers the period from July 2006 to 30th July 2007. The Forum has met three times during this period
- Following the departure of the Town Centre Manager in October 2006, and the removal of funding from Harrow Council, the amount of activities has been severely limited
- Given this situation, at the October 2006 meeting, the Forum agreed to undertake initial feasibility on the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) for the town centre.

2 Activities

As a result of the loss of the town centre manager and the removal of funding, the activities of the Forum have been considerably reduced. However, there has been noticeable development of the HBAC initiative and the “behind the scenes” feasibility work related to the BID. Some other events and actions have taken place, including:

2.1 Promotions and events

Bus back advertising, expanded to include 43 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 French market returned to St Ann’s Road on 16th to 17th March as part of British Tourism Week. Large numbers of the public, many new to the town, were once again able to enjoy the delights of French food, wine and gifts.

BBC London visited the town centre from 27th – 29th June 07 as part of their “On the Road” initiative.

2.2 Reducing crime and the fear of crime

Harrow Business Against Crime partnership (HBAC) continues to expand. HBAC now has 50 businesses signed up.

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.

2.3 Consultation and information sharing

The Forum meetings have again provided opportunities for Consultation and information sharing:

Consultants have started work on the Public Realm Strategy for the town centre. A Stakeholder event including Town Centre Forum members was held in February 2007 and a special meeting was held on 27th July to update the group. Consultation on the initial proposals took place from 25th June to the end of August 07 and included an exhibition at the St Ann’s Centre and then the Civic Centre from 25th June to 27th July.

Russell Barr has continued to update the Forum on work undertaken by Harrow Business Against Crime.

2.4 Broadening the partnership and raising additional funding

The loss of the town centre manager and the review of funding by the Council have meant that the partnership and funding issues have not been directly considered over the last year.

Instead, the focus has been on the potential of a BID for the town centre. The Forum has received two reports from the Council's Strategic Planning Unit on the BID development process. The initial report showed that there was potential for a BID in the Town Centre in terms of the possible income that could be generated. Officers from the Council have been speaking to businesses in the town centre to introduce the BID concept, begin to assess support for the proposals and identify town centre issues. The need to establish a Shadow Board and start to put in arrangements for a BID company are the key issues that need to be addressed in the short term.

I thank those core funders who have continued their financial support over this period.

3 Budget

A more detailed budget report appears elsewhere.

The reduced budget that is now available for the coming year will support the BID Development process and provide a small amount of funding for events in the town centre.

Stephen Kent
Chair