

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 27TH MARCH 2012

title: PORTAS PILOTS

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive information regarding a bid proposal for Clitheroe Town Centre following the Government's proposals to establish 12 Portas Pilots in UK town centres.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions - In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, it also recognises the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough. The work of the regeneration section seeks to promote this.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities - Delivery of services to all
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Portas Review (www.communities.gov.uk/portasreview) published in December 2011, is a report by retail expert and television personality Mary Portas into the future of town centres. The document makes a number of recommendations aimed at identifying what government, local authorities, businesses and communities could do together to promote the development of new models of prosperous and diverse high streets. The Portas report recommended some ideas for reinvigorating town centres, such as encouraging potential entrepreneurs to take up market stalls, supporting imaginative use of empty units and forming Town Teams to run and promote town centres in a similar way to shopping malls are run.

2.2 The Government has stated that it will be responding in full to these in Spring 2012 and in the meantime announced that it is inviting bids to be one of 12 High Street Pilots to 'test proof of concept' and to 'put in place a Town Team' as a central part of any pilot bid.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council is already promoting many of the recommendations contained within the Portas Review along with project work with Clitheroe Chamber of Trade as well as the proposals to create Town Teams. Key elements in the selection of the Portas Pilots will be the strength of local support and the quality of the ideas put forward. The bid documentation states that each town centre could receive up to £100,000 in funding if the bids are successful and money could be used on projects to promote the towns and following discussions with Clitheroe Chamber of Trade representatives it is felt that this will be an excellent opportunity to further explore different ways of encouraging more people to visit Clitheroe town

centre, identify and highlight its potential for improvement and find innovative ideas and projects through a re-established and re-invigorated Clitheroe Town Team.

- 3.2 The Clitheroe Town Team was originally formed following approval of the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan by the RVBC Planning & Development Committee on 17 June 2010 to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful location. Ribble Valley Borough Council, Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership and Lancashire County Council as well as local businesses and the community such as Clitheroe Chamber of Trade and Clitheroe Civic Society have previously brought together key delivery skills – such as economic development, property, design and project management, as well as developing links with stakeholders outside of the group, including key landowners, developers and businesses that can assist in the delivery, monitoring, reviewing and development of the plan.
- 3.3 Clitheroe Chamber of Trade membership has grown steadily to around 130 from less than 60 in the last 2 years. The continuing growth of the Chamber has also led to stronger partnership working with RVBC in activities to promote visitors. The new website www.visitclitheroe.co.uk has been launched through a successful funding bid to Lancashire County Council's Revitalising Town Centres project. Following this, a new loyalty card scheme to promote shopping in the town centre is in development to be branded as 'Shop Clitheroe'.
- 3.4 The Clitheroe Food Festival, for example, which attracted thousands of visitors to the town centre in August 2011, was one such event as part of the early wins and following on from its success the next Clitheroe Food Festival is being staged on Saturday 4th August 2012 to showcase the best of Ribble Valley and Lancashire food and drink producers and currently the Clitheroe Shop Front project is underway, which is helping to create a fresh look around the shop fronts in the town by having creative window displays. All participating traders have received expert advice on how to improve and develop their appeal through Mary Portas Retail Master Class sessions and there will be additional support from local artists to unleash the potential of their window displays.
- 3.5 To be successful, bids will have to show they have the backing of local residents, traders, businesses and landowners and importantly, they will have to show they can test ideas, be innovative and could be used elsewhere in the country and much of the partnership working that has taken place so far with local stakeholders as outlined in this report are examples of these. The Clitheroe Town Centre bid currently being prepared will highlight the many positive aspects for Clitheroe, as well as it's reputation for partnership working and the opportunities that lie ahead for it's long term economic success.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background Information: -

The Portas Review: www.communities.gov.uk/portasreview

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.