



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Regeneration

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Planning and Prosperity

DATE: 9 June 2016

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Regeneration

WARD/S AFFECTED: Shear Brow Wensley Fold

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Petition on Night Time Economy, Blackburn Town Centre

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

the Council has received the following coordinated petition calling for improvements to the Night time economy in Blackburn from patrons of Bar Ibiza, Zybar, The Sun, Sam's Bar and The Adelphi.

Where has Blackburn's Night Life Gone"

" As we all know, we used to have a great night life, coaches full of people used to come from other towns to enjoy our pubs, bars and nightclubs. We used to have a number of clubs like Utopia, Jazzy Kecks and Liquid and Envy, Bentleys and Never Never land. With your help we can bring the night life back to where it once was by signing the petition with your name, address or email and signature. This will then get passed onto Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council . "

This report sets out the background to this issue, the gaps in the leisure, food and drink and night time offer and the Council's strategic role, partnership working and regeneration initiatives to address these gaps and help encourage private sector investment.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Notes the Petition
- Notes the update from the Director of Planning and Prosperity on the Council's wider work to create the conditions to encourage more investment in the day and night time economy for food and drink operators, restaurants, leisure and night time offer to attract a range of customers wanting to spend leisure time in the town centre.
- Notes the Council's support for physical regeneration projects including the Cathedral Quarter Development, Northgate Townscape Heritage project, Waves site,
- Notes the Council's direct support for activities and events working in partnership with the BID and other partners and operators to support the development of an early evening and night time economy in Blackburn town centre.

- Notes the Council's investment in research to evidence demand to encourage new operators to the town centre

3. BACKGROUND

Blackburn town centre's night time economy has suffered from a lack of investment over the last 20 years. This is coupled with the development of the Vue cinema and leisure complex sited on the edge of the town centre which generates much of the evening footfall but doesn't benefit the core town centre. This is the direct opposite of the night time economy in Darwen town centre which is thriving and has benefitted from considerable investment from the private sector and which is still growing.

The retail offer in the town centre has improved dramatically in the last 5 years with The Mall investment in 2011 with footfall holding up well in the retail core and an increase in the catchment demonstrated with more shoppers now coming in from Preston, Chorley and Ribble Valley. The successful vote and 5 year investment programme of the Blackburn BID from 2013 has supported and developed a professional marketing campaign, coordination of town centre stakeholders' efforts and delivery of a strong events programme to support the retail offer.

However, there are still some key gaps in the food and drink/restaurant and leisure offer demonstrated by previous and current research. This means that the town centre hasn't developed in a similar way to other town centres and has an 'unbalanced' offer. This puts Blackburn town centre at a disadvantage against nearby towns as well as out of town retail and leisure complexes such as Middlebrook in Bolton and the Trafford Centre. In addition nearby town centres such as Bolton have recently attracted investment in a cinema and food offer, known as 'The Vaults' and Preston with the soon to be developed new markets Quarter with a Light Cinema.

In response, the Council has been committed to deliver the town centre strategy, investing in growth projects like Cathedral Quarter, supporting a branded town centre hotel and building units attractive to national operators. In addition, new planned investments such as the Blakey Moor Townscape Heritage project around King George's Hall and the development of the Waves and markets site offer new opportunities for leisure use.

King George's Hall in turn has worked with partners to improve and extend the programme to attract a wider audience and the new Leisure Centre means that the town centre offer is widening attracting more people early evening who are shopping, working or studying here demonstrating further demand. In addition, the Council's Blackburn is Open initiative, including support for the Bureau in St John's Church, Holy Trinity Church and Night at the Museum has helped to support events and activity which encourage people into the town centre in the evening for cultural events to diversify the offer and attract different audiences including young people.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

As shown in other successful town and city centres, a diverse and broad food and drink and leisure offer that appeals across all demographics and cultures is vital to the vitality and vibrancy of a town and city centre. To achieve this is critical to the future success of Blackburn Town Centre. Below is a summary of the plans and initiatives being put in place and implemented to work to achieve this

- Delivering Blackburn town centre strategy and the Plan for Prosperity to improve the town centre offer and enable the town centre to grow and widen choice in relation to leisure, food and drink, evening activity and entertainment.

- Support new and existing larger employers to invest, grow and locate in the town centre to increase and broaden demand for retail, food and drink, leisure and night time operators
- Investing in the Cathedral Quarter development - encouraging investment and new operators through the provision of new high quality units and public space. This includes the provision of a new branded 60 bed hotel bringing business and leisure visitors into the town centre for overnight stays.
- Continuing investment in the town's infrastructure including Pennine Reach, the new Blackburn Bus Station and Freckleton Street link Road improving access, opening up new development sites and reducing journey times across the borough.
- Encouraging and supporting the town to attract major evening events such as the Hive Awards, Countryside Comes To Town, Secret Garden, Cathedral Flower Festival Black Tie Dinner, Lancashire Tourism Awards 2016, Blackburn College Art Show etc.
- Working to bring forward further major mixed use development that would support evening and leisure economy including the former Markets site, former Waves site and Blakey Moor Building.
- Working with partners like Blackburn BID to deliver events, marketing, safe & secure and environmental initiatives to promote the town centre offer, attract in new visitors and ensure the customer experience is good.
- Planned £3 million Townscape Heritage project, to improve and develop the cultural quarter around King Georges Hall, including remodelling of Blakey Moor Terrace to attract daytime and evening restaurant operators.
- Strategic acquisition of the former Baroque public house, to prevent loss of a town centre evening venue. Planned renovation of the property to ensure commercial viability going forward and to attract a high quality food/drink operator.
- Maximise the attraction and availability of our key assets including coordinated promotion and improved programming including King Georges Hall and Blackburn Museum who re now hosting Night at the Museum events.
- Supporting the re-use of vacant Churches to provide new cultural venues and exciting programme of cultural events – St Johns Church and Holy Trinity.
- Business support (including small grants and business rates incentives) to attract new operators such as Café Northcote, Sir Charles Napier CIC and Q-Ale Micro Bar.
- Invested in research and marketing materials to demonstrate customer demand and future growth to help attract investment and new F&B operators.
- Encouraging the development of the evening economy through a more positive approach to Planning – eg. permission for Thwaites beer garden and change of use to allow a Micro Bar at 65 King William Street.
- Proactive approach to development and planning policy to encourage more town centre living.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Blackburn Town Centre Strategy 2013 – 2020, the Corporate Plan and the LSP's Plan for Prosperity all support the development of a successful, vibrant and health town centre. The Retail Groups Vision and Future Demand Study 2015 demonstrates the evidence base for investment and direction for future development and this will be developed into a Supplementary Planning Document

later in the year to bring to the Executive Board for future review and adoption.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Townscape Heritage initiative is a £3 million Heritage Lottery (HLF) and Council funded project with the stage 2 bid submitted in February after approval by Executive Board. A final approval decision from the HLF Board is expected in June.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This is an ordinary petition as defined in the Council's constitution as being one signed by at least 6 people and submitted by people who live, work or study in the Borough. Part 7 of the Constitution outlines the possible mechanisms for petitions and this report and response is one such type of valid response.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The importance of the success of the town centre as an economic driver and focus for the residents, visitors, businesses, employment and services is a corporate priority articulated via the Corporate Plan and the LSP's Prosperity Plan. Resources across the Council in the Planning and Prosperity Department including the Growth Team, Environment and Leisure and Localities and Prevention Departments are working together with partners such as the BID to maximise resources and effort towards town centre development and prosperity.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

The town centre strategy 2013-2025 and the LSP's Plan for Prosperity both support strategic interventions to broaden the leisure and cultural offer of the town centre. Research by the Retail Group and Colliers in 2015 on future demand and future strategy for the Northgate area both strongly identified the lack of a food and drink and leisure offer as a weakness in the town centre offer and supported the Council's efforts to encourage new investment. Evidence of need and demand has come through business and public consultation over the last 10 years and strategies and investment plans have been developed to address this such as Cathedral Quarter Development, 12 point plan, investment in leisure and cultural buildings including Blackburn Leisure Centre and Blackburn Library and the Blakey Moor Townscape Heritage Project.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| VERSION: | 0.01 |
|-----------------|------|

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| CONTACT OFFICER: | Clare Turner |
|-------------------------|--------------|

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| DATE: | 1/6/2016 |
|--------------|----------|

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| BACKGROUND PAPER: | Blackburn Town Centre Strategy 2013 – 2020; LSP Plan for Prosperity |
|--------------------------|---|