

District and Local Centres Strategy 2007-2012



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Regeneration and Heritage Section
Environment and Economy Directorate
April 2007

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1.0 Introduction

REGENERATION

The Council has focussed an important part of its regeneration activities on developing and improving the Borough's eight District Centres. This work is guided by the District Centres' Strategy original approved in January 2001.

The District Centres Strategy is advanced through District Centre Partnerships in each of the eight District Centres driving forward individual Action plans which interpret the Strategy at a local level.

In addition the Council carried out a detailed review of the Local Centres and subsequently approved the Local Centres Strategy in March 2004.

Whilst the Strategies and Action Plans have provided a comprehensive and strong focus for activity and investment, the achievements and initiatives throughout the District and Local Centres are broad ranging and have only been possible with the close co-operation of many Council officers working in a variety of Service areas, together with the active involvement and support of local ward councillors.

REVIEW

The opportunity has been taken to comprehensively review actions and achievements since 2001 and more importantly to provide the framework for the next 5 years.

The review process provides an opportunity to look backwards – at what has been achieved and how it has been achieved – but more importantly to use this experience to look forward. It is appropriate to re-examine the original aims and objectives in the light of experience gained, the changing policy and strategic context, and current trends and good practices.

2.0 Background

DISTRICT CENTRES STRATEGY.

In January 2001 the Council approved the first 'Strategy for the District Centres in Stockport'. The Strategy was introduced in recognition of the economic, social and environmental importance of the District Centres and in the light of pressures such as out of town developments, severely affecting these centres at the time.

The District Centres have an important and broad ranging role at the heart of the local communities:

- In excess of 3000 local jobs in District Centres
- Home to some 1100 retail/service business in District Centres
- Supports local economy
- Tourism potential
- Hubs of communities
- Broad range of services
- Focus for leisure activities
- Focus for social interaction
- Sustainable centres
- Easily Accessible
- Gateways

The District Centres Strategy uses as its base a number of themed generic objectives detailed below. Underpinning the strategy is a key objective:

'To work with local stakeholders to ensure that the District Centres retain a viable and vital role within the economic, social and environmental fabric of the borough.'

Involvement with local stakeholders has largely been achieved through the establishment of District Centre Partnerships in each centre. The generic themed objectives have been applied and interpreted across all the centres by way of individual District Centre Action Plans.

The District Centres' Strategy was established to:

- Act as a strategy and management plan to aid the delivery of each centre's vision of vitality and viability
- Inform and relate to UDP and development control policies
- Act as a developmental document to guide future development
- Act as a baseline document to guide District Centres Partnerships

The District Centres' Strategy was reviewed in 2003 (although only minor amendments were considered necessary) and annual reports have been produced in January 2004, January 2005 and March 2006.

LOCAL CENTRES STRATEGY.

The Local Centres Strategy was formally adopted in 2004 and included an initial Action Plan for six priority Local Centres.

Action Plans and Partnerships have been established for the Heatons Neighbourhood Centre (comprising Moor Top and Shaw Road) and for Gatley, and a range of environmental and promotional works have been carried out in a number of these centres across the Borough.

The Local Centres' Strategy was incorporated within the District Centres Reviews in January 2005 and March 2006

CORPORATE STRATEGY CONTEXT

The District and Local Centre Strategies were developed within a framework of local, sub regional, regional and national strategies, policies and good practice existing at the time.

Since its adoption in 2001 the District Centres' Strategy has been incorporated into and the work constitutes key priorities in a number of corporate and strategic policies and programmes:

- The Community Strategy
- Stockport Council's Priorities 2006--2009
- Stockport Unitary Development Plan
- The Economic Development Strategy 2002-12
- Local Transport Plan and SEMMMS
- Crime and Disorder Strategy
- Conservation Strategy 2004-7
- Visitor Strategy 2007

Achievements

Whilst the Strategies and Action Plans have provided a comprehensive and strong focus for activity and investment, the achievements and initiatives throughout the District and Local Centres are broad ranging and have only been possible with the close co-operation of many Council officers working in a variety of service areas, together with the active involvement and support of local ward councillors.

Using the generic themed objectives of the District Centres' as a guide, the following section sets out a flavour of the range of projects and initiatives which have been developed and implemented across both the District and Local Centres since the inception of the original District Centres' Strategy in 2001.

OBJECTIVE 1

TO WORK WITH THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OVERALL BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT WITHIN CENTRES.

The continued success of the local business community is recognised as being crucial to the future success of the District Centres. Initiatives carried out include:

- a range of bespoke training and development programmes specifically for small retail businesses developed by the Council
- local traders' involvement in the REN (Retail Enterprise Network) international twinning project developed with local partners.

- Key players in the AGORA retail focussed E.U. funded project, in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University and Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM). This pilot scheme strives to strengthen community involvement in town centre management, to protect and revitalise retail centres., through a programme of events and training to teach and empower those who have the most to benefit from an area's regeneration.
- Support and development of a number of local traders and business organisations
- Continued business involvement in the Partnerships

OBJECTIVE 2

TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST IN SECURING APPROPRIATE NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN DISTRICT CENTRES.

It was recognised that for District Centres to survive they need to modify their base and look to diversify the activities including leisure, housing and employment uses. Initiatives include:

- Production of site development briefs and initiating site assembly, including potential compulsory purchase orders (CPO's)
- 'Living over the shop' schemes
- Retail capacity studies
- Application of café design guide
- Securing new development.

OBJECTIVE 3

TO ENSURE THE DISTRICT CENTRES ARE **SAFE AND SECURE** PLACES FOR ALL VISITORS, USERS AND BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRE.

The Police are regular and key attendees at most of the established partnerships where issues of crime and anti-social behaviour are becomingly an increasingly dominant issue. To date a range of measures have been introduced to try to address crime and disorder in many centres:

- improved lighting throughout centres
- Installation of CCTV in key centres, including Edgeley, Marple, Adswold and Reddish
- the introduction of Rangers,
- removal of 'barriers' to and introduction of new forms of natural surveillance
- specific business crime related projects such as security grants and the 'Smart Water' scheme
- promotion of business watch schemes.

OBJECTIVE 4

TO WORK WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS AND AGENCIES TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST **ACCESS/ACCESSIBILITY** INTO AND THROUGH EACH DISTRICT CENTRE.

The District Centres and Local Centres Strategies have helped to secure significant funds through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the South East Manchester Multi Modal Study (SEMMMS). and with the close co-operation of Traffic Services, Transportation Policy and Highway Design sections, major significant investment has been secured for improvements across a large number of the centres including:

- Improved bus facilities
- Car park enhancement, improvements including provision for car park CCTV
- new and improved cycle routes
- improved pedestrian facilities including drop-kerbs and new and improved crossings
- junction improvements
- new lighting
- access studies to guide further investment

OBJECTIVE 5

TO STRIVE TO ENSURE THAT ALL DISTRICT CENTRES OFFER A HIGH QUALITY **ENVIRONMENT**.

In the development of the individual centre Action Plans a thorough 'state of the environment' analysis was carried out in each centre and a broad range of environmental improvement measures have been introduced to address local issues and enhance the quality of the environment across all District Centres and key local centres. These have included:

- improvements to the street furniture,
- landscaping improvement and public art works
- shop front improvements,
- lighting and gateway features,
- highway improvements and car parking improvements
- development of the Shop Smart scheme initiative
- pilot general maintenance and Cheadle Action team (CAT)

OBJECTIVE 6

TO MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP THE **DESIGN CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE** ASPECTS FOR EACH CENTRE, AS APPROPRIATE.

- This objective impacts upon different centres to lesser or greater degrees but the District Centre and Local Centres Strategies have been integrated closely with:
- Participation of key civic and conservation groups within the Partnership
- Development of joint heritage projects
- Development brief and design guides produced
- Public realm guide commissioned
- Input into Conservation Strategy and associated individual Conservation area studies including public consultation and new conservation area declarations
- Regular input to local civic society and local history group activities

OBJECTIVE 7

TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST IN THE OVERALL **PROMOTION AND MARKETING** OF ALL THE DISTRICT CENTRES.

Marketing and promotion of the centres is regarded as a key factor in drawing custom back into these areas and a number of schemes have been initiated:

- development of district centres', individual centre and local business web sites and appropriate links
- promotional leaflets and directories
- local fun days and festivals
- Jointly developed Christmas campaigns.

- support for trader led marketing plans including exploration of tourism/visitor potential
- District Centres included and highlighted in Borough wide marketing initiatives `A Taste of Stockport`

OBJECTIVE 8

TO SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE LOCAL AND DISTRICT CENTRE **PARTNERSHIPS** WITH KEY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN EACH CENTRE

Throughout the last five years there has been continued commitment to the establishment and development of the individual district centre partnerships. This encouragement of increased 'ownership' of issues by the local stakeholders has led to a significant increase in local private sector involvement, engagement and participation in local activities. In 2005 the Council received **an award from the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM)** for its partnership work in the District Centres.

A review of the district centre partnerships carried out in 2004 using the `toolkit` developed by the IDEA (Improvement and Development Agency) found that:

- The key participants value all the partnerships as an effective and meaningful method of cross-communication between the participants.
- A degree of uncertainty and suspicion of the individual participant bodies marked the establishment period of each partnership, but in all cases the operation of the partnership has reduced or eliminated those fears.
- Partnership members' felt that their awareness and knowledge of other participants had improved and

potential/actual barriers broken down. In all cases, information flows between the participants had improved. The participation of Council Members was particularly welcomed and appreciated by stakeholders.

- There was a general view that Council Member/officer input was essential, and without it, in a number of cases, the partnerships would be ill developed.
- All partnerships felt that there had been specific improvements or enhancements carried out within 'their' centre as a result of the partnerships' existence.
- Business and trader participation in the partnership was considered vital by every partnership, although participation could be patchy in some centres.

Key lessons learnt from the Partnership review:

- Partnerships are valuable and valued
- They have to be 'inclusive'
- In the early, and developing stages, Council involvement is particularly important
- The District Centre experience is transferable (and has already been transferred to some local centres).

Through these partnerships the Council works closely with a range of local stakeholders and stakeholder groups – including Traders and Business Associations and this has been welcomed as an important step to improving links. It has led to improved understanding among all of the partners of the issues involved in regenerating the centres and a willingness to work together to resolve them.

In addition the established District Centre Partnerships have helped to serve as very useful and ready made consultation networks for other Council services particularly those where wider consultation may be a new dimension to the normal ways of working. Examples of issues include recent changes to Licensing and car parking enforcement.

OBJECTIVE 9

TO ACT TO MAXIMISE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SECURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISTRICT CENTRES

The District Centre Strategy has been important in helping to prioritise and direct resources, to maximise match funding, and to secure a range of additional funds these include:

- SMBC funding - both directly through the district and local centres and indirectly through joint work with other sections of the Council
- Other public funding – SRB, LTP and SEMMMS-
- Private sector business contributions
- 'Planning Gain' negotiations
- Contributions from Civic Society and other voluntary and special interest organisations.

SUMMARY

The District Centre Strategy was pioneering in its work and has been successful in not only meeting its own key aims and objectives but also in highlighting the role and importance of the District Centres at a broader and more strategic level. The work over the five years since the inception of the Strategy in 2001 has seen the work influencing and assisting in the

delivery of the services of a number of Council departments and partner organisations.

The Council has approached this work in a co-ordinated and comprehensive way. Each District Centre and four of the Local Centres now have some form of local partnership, including traders and other businesses, local groups, councillors and other agencies. These have proved to be an invaluable method of communication and discussion on all matters relating to the development within and about the centre.

A consistent measure of the vitality and viability of the District Centres has been through the number of vacant premises in each Centre. This data is collected every 3 months and the table below illustrates that over the 5 year period the rate has reduced slightly, despite fluctuations in each centre the trend is reducing.

District Centre - Vacancy Schedule			
		2001	Jan 07
Bramhall	Vacant premises	7	8
	% Vacant premises	6%	4.3%
Cheadle	Vacant premises	16	13
	% Vacant premises	9%	8.0%
Cheadle Hulme	Vacant premises	6	6
	% Vacant premises	7%	4.2%
Edgeley	Vacant premises	27	27
	% Vacant premises	20%	23.7%
Hazel Grove	Vacant premises	29	20
	% Vacant premises	15%	12.0%
Marple	Vacant premises	6	13
	% Vacant premises	4%	6.5%
Reddish	Vacant premises	2	4
	% Vacant premises	3%	5.0%
Romiley	Vacant premises	11	11
	% Vacant premises	10%	9.9
TOTALS	Vacant premises	104	102
	% Vacant premises	10	8.5%
	Total Business Premises	1039	1199

Priorities

The Council has recognised that, notwithstanding the retail hierarchy classification of the centres, continued commitment to all of the District and Local Centres remains important and valid as:

- All of the District and Local Centres continue to face a significant threat from the major supermarkets and a variety of sources, including the growth in other shopping trends: such as out of town and internet shopping.
- All play an important role in supporting the local resident population and workforce.
- All are identified in the UDP review and other corporate policies and strategies with a strong commitment to their continued viability.

Whilst the existing hierarchy will act as a guide, a broader assessment of each centre is necessary in order to determine the levels of intervention required. It is clear that all of the District and Local Centres perform, within their own hierarchical category, a valuable role both as centres of retail and services and as a community focus and it is therefore important that they receive appropriate levels of support, investment and intervention in accordance with their specific need.

It is clear that there is considerable variability in the vitality and viability of the centres, with some centres remaining very healthy and other centres illustrating the effects of decline, including high levels of vacant properties and a deteriorating

environment. Equally the developmental maturity and capacities of the current local stakeholder Partnerships varies from centre to centre. Any assessment should therefore reflect this broad range of differences.

Since the original strategy was approved in 2001 the regeneration section has played a key role in developing and supporting the local stakeholder Partnerships, in developing Action Plans and in co-ordinating activity and managing the effective use of resources. However whilst it is proposed that all centres are afforded some level of intervention the finite nature of current resources will mean that more intensive support will necessarily need to be prioritised. It is considered that the following should therefore be considered in determining levels of regeneration led support:

- Current condition/ health/ vitality of the centre;
- Levels of recent / planned investment;
- Related Council priorities ;
- Emerging trends/opportunities;
- the recommendations of the Roger Tym and Partners study forming part of the UDP review ;
- Partnership developmental stage;

DISTRICT CENTRES

It is important that we retain involvement in all District Centres at a level to reflect the needs of the individual centres but at the same time explore alternative and more diverse arrangements as Forward Strategies for a number of the more established and healthier Centres. These could include

Business Improvement Districts, enhanced private / voluntary sector roles, or diversifying the offer of some centres through enhanced promotion in the context of the new Visitor strategy.

Freeing up some of the District Centres support resources currently focussed on some of the healthier centres and centres with more well established Partnerships would enable a greater focus to be placed on some of the other centres.

In particular those centres performing less well or facing particular issues and those demonstrating a spiral of decline or where more intensive support is still required in order to ensure that the potential of local business and partner organisations is fully materialised.

It is felt that some District Centres are at a stage where they are now able to focus and move forward on a more self sustaining basis without the need for the intensive support of the Council and in these centres new and alternative resources such as private or voluntary sector led associations could take a more substantial lead role.

In these centres it is proposed that the LA plays a less interventional role but continues to support any alternative developmental arrangements/ organisations e.g. BIDs, niche tourism development. However such a process will need to be carefully managed to ensure an effective continued Local Authority input.

In considering the above the following levels of support are recommended for the District Centres:

- ***Support continued at current level***

Edgeley
Hazel Grove
Reddish
Romiley

- ***Support as part of a managed Forward Strategy process***

Bramhall
Cheadle
Cheadle Hulme
Marple

LOCAL CENTRES

Such an approach to the District Centres should free up a degree of resources to help respond to both the increasing pressures to intensify efforts, involvement, and support in a number of the Borough's Local Centres as well as to respond to other Council priorities as these emerge.

As with the previous Local Centres Strategy and Action Plan, the approach advocated is to initially focus on a limited number of priority centres in response to local needs and pressures and developmental requirements.

Continued or new support in the following centres is proposed:

- Offerton
- Woodley
- Great Moor
- Heald Green
- Gatley *
- Moor Top/Shaw Road (The Heatons Neighbourhood Centre) *

**Whilst relatively healthy centres, Partnership development in both centres is still at a relatively early developmental stage and for this reason it is proposed to continue existing levels of support for the immediate future.*

In addition to the above centres it is also proposed to retain a watching brief to monitor Local Centres where significant investment has recently taken place as part of other wider regeneration projects and programmes such as SRB and Neighbourhood Renewal, for example, at Adswood and Brinnington.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

STRATEGY

Each of the 8 District Centres and 25 Local Centres are unique in many ways. They differ in terms of size and range of services offered, and they serve differing communities. They are very different in terms of their appearance, layout, form and general environmental condition, and they have varying levels of accessibility.

Each centre has its own individual pressures, needs and problems, and individual action plans will seek to clarify and specify issues and the extent to which the general objectives in the strategy can be applied to assist in its development and regeneration. Each centre will need differing applications of resource and effort, but all will need to involve full discussion with local stakeholders.

The strategy below outlines a series of common objectives which can be followed by local stakeholders in partnership with the Council to secure the continuation and enhancement of individual centres.

KEY OBJECTIVES

ATTRACTIONS - SERVING LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS - SECURING A RANGE OF ATTRACTIONS

New and broad ranging attractions are needed to meet actual and potential demand.

Key Aims:

- To consider policy application and restriction of centres to more closely reflect current trends and needs
- To encourage and assist in securing appropriate new development opportunities within centres.
- Increased vitality of the retail area
- Attract a greater diversity of retailers and service providers
- Greater diversity of the evening economy where appropriate

Over recent years the significant changing shopping and leisure trends have impacted across all our centres to varying degrees. The reduction in demand for retail - especially traditional shops (A1 use) and traditional size shop units –has

led to units filled by less traditional and broad ranging retail and service outlets.

It is important that centres continue to offer a range of goods and services to meet ever changing needs and demands of the communities which they serve. There is a need to investigate the value of diversifying activities and introducing new uses within the Centres where current land uses no longer appear viable or desirable.

Varying needs and opportunities exist within the District and Local Centres and the Council can assist in the process of encouraging new investment, new business formation and new development.

We will also support in appropriate cases, uses that extend the traditional roles and hours of operation of the Centre, particularly the leisure/evening economy, where these are consistent with neighbourhood amenity.

The Council can act as 'enabler' by utilising its own land holdings, by pro-active promotion and marketing and by using its statutory planning powers via the Unitary Development Plan and development control processes. As planning authority the council will maximise flexibility in permitting "mixed use" of premises and actively promote the move towards living over shops and change of use of shops where appropriate to make existing centres more viable.

In exceptional circumstances the use of its compulsory purchase powers may be called upon to ensure the proper planning of an area.

ACCESSIBILITY - GETTING TO AND AROUND THE CENTRES – EASE OF ACCESS FOR ALL

Accessibility measures are necessary in order to secure the new attractions, and to improve the centre for existing and future users.

Key Aims:

- Improved accessibility and linkages and reduced traffic congestion
- Enhanced pedestrian safety
- Car parking
- Access, circulation and public transport

Justification

Ease of access is important in terms of convenience and for both the economic and environmental sustainability of Centres. This will include access for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and mobility impaired people as well as car parking. The provision and maintenance of access for all users will be vital to ongoing viability, and the Council will co-ordinate its own activities as the Highway Authority with those of public transport operators, the Passenger Transport Executive and, where appropriate, the Highway Agency.

The Council is committed to managing the Borough's traffic problems better and ensuring that public transport access and interchange in Centres is improved.

The authority shall consider the allocation of resources from the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan and other highway funds to implement appropriate improvements to

District and Local Centres including lighting, car parking, highway and pedestrian and streetscene improvements, and other measures to alleviate any adverse impacts of local traffic including air quality.

Where appropriate, developers will be asked to contribute to the provision of better access by sustainable modes, in addition to financing compensatory works on the highways as identified by the traffic impact assessment of their proposals.

AMENITIES - CREATING CENTRES WHICH ARE ATTRACTIVE, SAFE AND WELCOMING

Amenity measures are necessary in order to secure the new attractions, and to improve the centre for existing and future users.

Key Aims

Urban design, public realm and maintenance

- Improved environmental condition, appearance and maintenance of the centres
- Improved condition, and appearance of the shops and vacant units

Design, conservation and heritage

- Maintain and develop the conservation and heritage aspects for each centre, as appropriate.
- Protect and enhance buildings and structures of local and historical interest

Community safety

- Work with key partners to ensure that the centres are safe and secure places for all users

- explore opportunities for increased CCTV coverage
- Introduce /implement appropriate security enhancement initiatives
- Work with key partners to address the attendant problems and perpetrators of crime/nuisance in the centres.

Justification

The physical environment of the many centres varies considerably in terms of overall streetscape quality and perceptions of personal safety but all should be attractive and pleasant places in which to shop and to visit. They can be important gateways and centres to communities and have a key role in establishing an overall impression of the appearance and quality of an area.

Environmental conditions can be improved through a number of measures. These include not only new or one-off physical and environmental improvements to public areas but also improvements to the appearance of shops and businesses. Application of limited resources at key points can secure major improvements, and also encourage private investment.

A number of Centres are located close to, or within Conservation Areas, and have listed buildings within their boundaries. Other centres have important or key, buildings or groups of buildings that contribute to the heritage/streetscape and individuality of the centre. We will ensure that the important local conservation and heritage aspect of each centre is given appropriate attention and that these aspects of the centre are fully utilised to promote the uniqueness of each centre.

Community safety is a major concern to residents and businesses, and the ability within the Centres to conduct business, shop and visit safely is a major priority.

Together with the police, other local agencies and the private sector, the authority will help to develop initiatives and measures to reduce crime and disorder and reduce levels of anti-social behaviour. These might include business security schemes, 'business' or 'shop watch' initiatives and ensuring that new buildings and other spaces are developed or improved to improve security and well-being and to 'design out crime'. Expansion of CCTV coverage will be considered as resources and priorities allow.

Throughout the centres, careful and sensitive stewardship together with robust and targeted maintenance will be crucial and require the full commitment and involvement of both the private and public sectors. This could be achieved through strong partnerships and integrated working, combining and maximising community, private and public sector resources and identifying clear ownerships, duties and responsibilities.

Land and property ownership and the length and nature of leases frequently have a considerable impact on the success of improvements particularly where the conditions placed on leases and sub leases are not clear. The length of leases can also be a disincentive to investment and improvements or restrict development. Where opportunities exist the council will endeavour to intervene and identify responsibility and seek improvements through partnership working. Wherever possible the Council will seek to improve centres through negotiation however where necessary will endeavour to utilise

powers of enforcement including those under the Planning and Building and Environmental Health Acts.

ACTION - WORKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP - RESOURCING AND MONITORING THE STRATEGY
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The action measures describe ongoing or potential initiatives which will help to ensure implementation of the strategy. The overall theme of this objective is

- To work with local stakeholders to ensure that the centres continue to provide a viable and vital role within the economic, social and environmental fabric of the Borough.'

Key aims:

- To support appropriate local involvement / partnerships with key local stakeholders within the centres
- to support the development of 'trader networks' and business relations where appropriate.
- to work with the local business community to maintain and strengthen business performance and support and identify new opportunities
- to encourage and assist in the promotion and marketing of the centres and the local businesses to retain local shopping and to attract new visitors
- to identify, maximise and co-ordinate the application of resources to secure development and investment in the centres.
- monitor trends and activity within the centres to advise future decision making

Justification

Working with key stakeholders is the key objective. Indeed these Centres can only continue to effectively serve their local communities if their long term viability is maintained and developed. To achieve this all stakeholders must play their part. The Council for its part is fully committed to the retention of its District and Local Centres and believes that the objectives outlined – with the accompanying key aims and commentary – provide a basis for considering and securing the long term viability of the centres.

It is vital that the future of each District Centre is developed and implemented with the knowledge and support of the local stakeholders who are inextricably linked with the life of each District Centre. Stakeholders (including local traders, owners, tenants, shoppers, businesses, residents associations, local civic and other societies, police, transport operators and other service providers) inevitably are significant users, visitors, beneficiaries and investors in the Centre, and their commitment and support is crucial.

In addition all centres would benefit from improved links between businesses and traders themselves to facilitate closer working and to tackle issues affecting them all. The 'relationship' between shopkeepers and local residents also needs to be understood and improved. We will help form and support traders/business association or in the centres as appropriate.

It is recognised that the local traders and businesses are vital components of the Centres, and their success is crucial to the overall viability of the Centre. In terms of business support and training, they are an often overlooked and ignored section

of the business community. The Council together with the appropriate business support organisations will work with them to help identify and meet their business support and training needs either on an individual basis or as collective groups, networks or associations.

Whilst most of the Centres are relatively well used by the local populace there are further opportunities to promote and market local shops, goods and services throughout areas which the centres can serve – both within the Borough and areas beyond – in order to maximise activity and to fully exploit any potential niche opportunities. This will be done by production and distribution of appropriate marketing materials, signage, the internet, maximising the opportunities for local publicity within the press and other publications and via local events and activities.

Implementation and Key Performance Indicators

The implementation of the strategy will be carried out by a variety of Council departments and other agencies, guided by the overall objectives in this strategy, and guided by individual centre action plans, drawn up in consultation with the individual centre partnerships. The regeneration service has both a revenue and a capital budget, with a dedicated staff resource to help develop and co-ordinate actions and activities

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

KPI's to be regularly monitored will include the following:

- **Unit occupancy rate**
(a proxy for the health of the centre), and the target will be to maintain 91% occupation rates across the District and Local Centres.
- **Employment levels**
(baselines and monitoring will be determined).
- **Footfall figures**
(baseline and monitoring to be determined)
- **Local users opinion/survey** (Methodology and baselines to be developed from previous highway and other surveys material)"

DELIVERY & RESOURCES

Whilst there is considerable concern over the appearance, health and future of many of the borough's District and Local Centres it is also recognised that responsibility for addressing many of these issues requires more than just the Council's input . A much wider group of stakeholders including private landlords, tenants, traders, businesses the police and other agencies all need to commit to investing in the centres.

The Council and all stakeholders involved in the development and enhancement of the centres operate in a commercial world where the demands for resources are greater than the availability and so it is essential that what resources do exist are managed, targeted and co-ordinated in the most cost-effective manner. It is also vital that opportunities to attract funding from elsewhere are fully exploited.

The Council has limited resources with many and varied pressures across its many service areas. However the Council has made staff and other resource available to develop the centres, and this must be used to secure best value.

Whilst carefully and sensibly constructed bids for additional resources will continue to be considered by the Council it is recognised that the private sector must inevitably and rightly provide the major share of resources/investment in the Centre. The Authority for its part will ensure that funding through Government and other external agencies is maximised, including Lottery, Home Office and European Regional Development Funding.

Staff resources

Experience in delivering District Centres regeneration confirms that leading, driving and supporting the regeneration of local centres involves balancing of a range of often fiercely conflicting interests whilst ensuring the Council's interest are protected and maintained. The work is highly resource intensive, particularly in terms of officer time.

In order to facilitate, co-ordinate, drive and deliver initiatives that address these issues; in order to engage and negotiate with landlords, traders & businesses and outside agencies and ensure regular and systematic monitoring, staff resources will be particularly necessary. The speed and progress of the implementation of this initiative will be driven by availability of that resource, and the reality of resource availability will determine the scale of the improvement.

Amongst the measures necessary to help each centre will be the preparation of individual action plans. An essential factor will be the availability of individuals in the preparation of these plans and the co-ordination of stakeholders, improvements and initiatives. Staffs also are needed to be able to respond

to and exploit opportunities as they arise and encourage inward investment.

Funding sources

The responsibility for the health and viability of Local Centres lies in the hands of a number of agencies and individuals. The very complex nature of these areas also dictates that to be successful the majority of initiatives and measures not only require 'partnership' working but also partnership funding.

The authority will aim to offer it's support wherever it can through consideration of bids from its own capital match funding, the allocation, targeting and co-ordination of mainstream council revenue, the brokering of funding agreements and identifying, processing and drawing down any grant aid/external funding. The following is a list of several of these potential sources:

- **Stockport Partnership**

Stockport Partnership has recently explored external funding issues for Local centres as part of the Regeneration Funding Framework. This has looked at current external programmes and future directions as well as exploring issues around capacity to bid for, manage, match fund and deliver Stockport's Regeneration priorities. Several local centres lie within the priority areas.

- **North West Development Agency (NWDA)**

The NWDA have recently expressed an interest in supporting economic regeneration in the wards that are classed as being in the 20% most deprived wards. This could offer opportunities for some local centres as they are within these wards and could therefore benefit from any investment.

- **Local Transport Plan (LTP) and South East Manchester Multi Modal Study (SEMMMS)**

Both LTP and SEMMMS have already had a significant impact on the borough's District Centres (plus a number of Local Centres) funding and delivering in excess of £750,000 of transport related improvements over the past 18 months.

- **Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council**

The local authority has responsibility over an ever increasingly diverse and competing portfolio that is constantly demanding new and innovative ways to best target finite resources. Although Local Centres is one of many competing areas that are seeking funding, wherever appropriate bids will be developed and submitted to support initiatives, measures and projects. Mainstream services operate on publicly owned land within each local centre; from litter clearance to carriageway repairs, from street lighting to horticultural features. By developing and establishing working partnerships and relationships with local stakeholders these services can be targeted in more effective ways.

- **Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP)**

SSP is made up of a number of partners with the aim of

making Stockport a safer more welcoming town. SSP issue grants to help reduce crime and disorder through central government funding. Where opportunities prevail, bids will be made seeking funding through the Partnership.

- **Other sources of funding**

Through effective partnerships the council will continue to seek funding in support of Local Centres through a variety of mechanisms and as opportunities arise.

New development

It is widely recognised that developers have a social responsibility within the areas they operate and there are now mechanisms and measures that exist to enable this to be realised. Through these mechanisms resources can be targeted to help support local initiatives.

Private sector

Private owners of buildings and land have a financial responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of their property and consequently bring significant investment into each centre. However, with difficult trading conditions some owners are not in a position to fund improvements without some form of help. Where benefits can be identified, private sector funding can also be secured through sponsorship or match funding contributions – either from individual businesses or through traders associations, civic societies and local groups.

Consultation

The achievements and initiatives throughout the District and Local Centres have only been possible with the close co-operation of many Council officers working in a variety of Service areas, together with the active involvement and support of local ward councillors and partner organisations. It is important that all those involved were included and actively participated in the review process.

This was achieved by way of:

- Scoping report agreed with Executive Member Regeneration
- Executive Committee agreement to process
- Scrutiny Working Party established and consulted
- Open report /forum / presentation at Area Committees
- Internal officer workshops
- Stakeholders consultation
- Scrutiny Working Party consulted
- First draft to Scrutiny Committee
- Area Committee
- Final Draft to Executive

Monitoring

MONITORING AND REVIEW

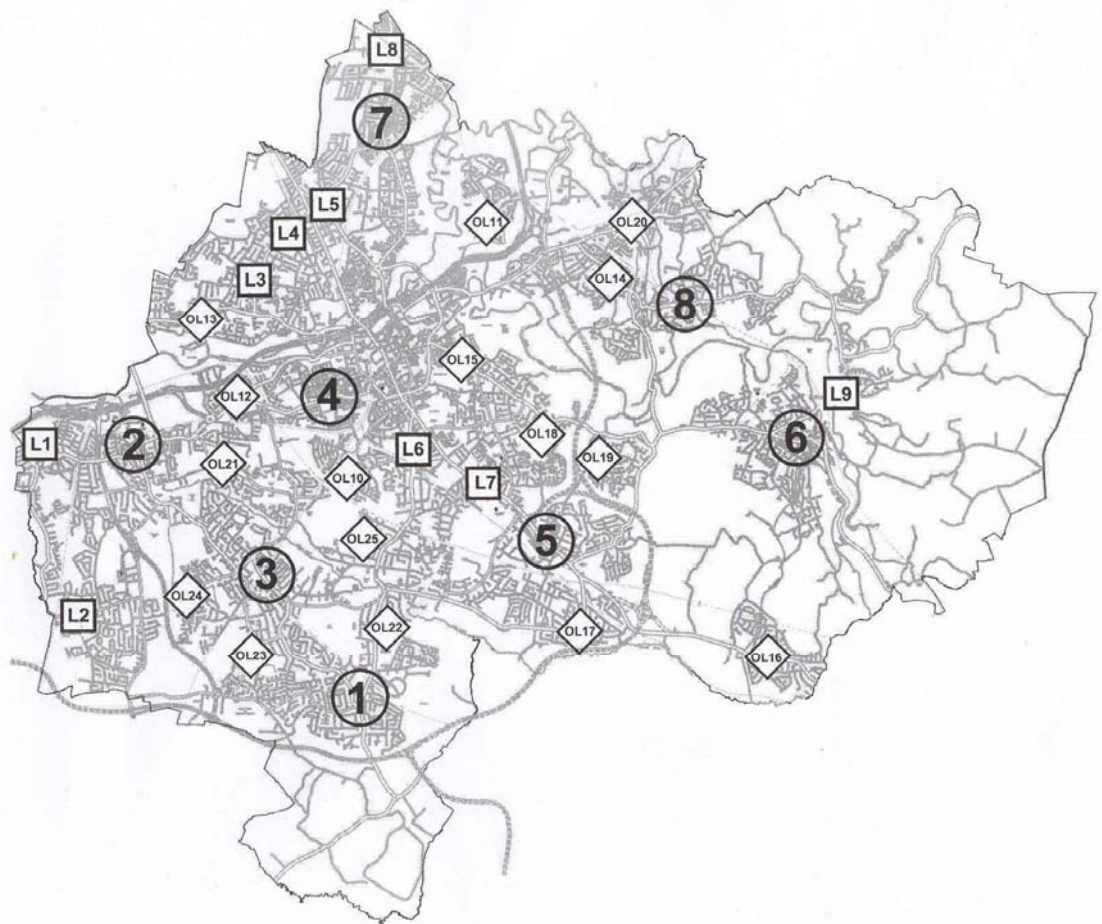
The District and Local Centres Strategy will be monitored in a number of ways:

- At the local level by Regeneration officers
- Through the Environment and Economy Strategic Plan
- At District and Local Centre Partnerships
- Annual Report to the Executive and Area Committees
- Public Perception questionnaire every 2 years.

The Strategy requires regularly monitoring and checking of the 'health' of each Centre and to identify those issues that raise problems. The Council will, within resource constraints, take a pro active role, lobbying central government in support of measures to help these areas.

The value of this strategy will be measured by the impact it has on the future of the borough's local centres. As such it is important that the Strategy is reviewed periodically both to assess this impact and ensure that it continues to respond to changing circumstances and new opportunities. For these reasons it is therefore recommended that this strategy is reviewed after a period of two years.

Appendix



District and Local Centres

- District Centres -
 1. Bramhall
 2. Cheadle
 3. Cheadle Hulme
 4. Edgeley
 5. Hazel Grove
 6. Marple
 7. Reddish
 8. Romiley

- Local Centres -
 - L1 Gatley
 - L2 Heald Green
 - L3 Moor Top Heaton Moor
 - L4 Shaw Road / Heaton Moor Road
 - L5 Heaton Chapel
 - L6 Davenport
 - L7 Great Moor
 - L8 North Reddish
 - L9 Marple Bridge

- ◇ Other Local Centres -
 - OL10 Adswold
 - OL11 Brimington
 - OL12 Cheadle Heath
 - OL13 Heaton Mersey
 - OL14 Berrycroft Lane
 - OL15 Hall Street
 - OL16 High Lane
 - OL17 Fiveways Parade
 - OL18 Offerton
 - OL19 Offertod Green
 - OL20 Woodley
 - OL21 Councillor Lane
 - OL22 Fir Road Bramhall
 - OL23 Smithy Green
 - OL24 Turves Road
 - OL25 North Park Road