

# 2014

## Future High Streets Forum



**Good leadership:  
Great High Streets  
May 2014**

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## Executive Summary

Task and Finish Group One has a broad membership drawn from the parties represented on the Future High Streets Forum, including retailers, industry bodies, local government and subject experts. The Group has a remit to review and understand leadership on the High Street using the existing Portas Pilot Towns, and the Group Terms of Reference reflect this.

After four study visits to Portas Pilot Towns, the Group gathered information on planning; strategies and tactics that have worked well; activities which have not worked, availability of funding streams; and the make-up of the wider Town Team Partners. This had led us to recommend a model for good leadership and local visioning that contains appropriate steps to establish strong partnerships, with a focus on local delivery. This model could be promoted as a template for Town Teams and beyond to follow, with the understanding that this is a framework still requiring strong leadership at the local level to be truly successful and sustainable.

The key elements of the model are:

**1. Establish a local partnership to drive change**

- Establishing a Town Baseline as a snapshot of current standards and performance
- Develop a shared vision for the town (drawing on a unique sense of place)

**2. Develop a Town Strategy and associated Action Plan with defined benefits for the Town and clear timetables for delivery**

- The local partnership should aim to work closely with the local authority to help shape a Local Plan

**3. Local groups deliver the Action Plan, reporting to the leadership of the local partnership**

- Sustainable funding and appropriate resource is required for this to be effective

**4. Conduct a regular and systematic review of the Action Plan and Town Strategy**

**5. Draw insights from the above review; celebrate successes with an effective communication plan**

- Use insights to challenge and renew the original vision and Town Strategy

By implementing the model above, local centres of all scales can benefit from a semi-structured yet nationally coherent approach to develop strong partnerships, with clear, informed decision-making processes delivering schemes for the community, by the community.

## Membership of Task and Finish Group One

<b>Jason Cotta (Chair)</b>	-	<b>Costa Coffee – UK Retail</b>
Alana Renner	-	Post Office
Diane Savory	-	Gloucester Local Enterprise Partnership
Hugh McKendrick	-	Boots UK & Business in The Community
Ivor Wells	-	Local Government Association
James Hulme	-	Co-Operative Group
Jane Rexworthy	-	NSA for Retail
Joe Harrison	-	National Market Traders Federation
Dr. Julie Grail	-	British BIDs
Martin Blackwell	-	Association of Town & City Management
Cllr Mike Haines	-	Local Government Association
Peter O’Connell	-	Federation of Small Businesses
Policy Official	-	Department for Communities and Local Government
Policy Official	-	Department for Communities and Local Government

## **Methodology**

The group met to ensure that there was a shared understanding of our task – to review the issue of leadership on the High Street. Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed, and it was confirmed that study visits to Portas Pilot would help develop our understanding of the role of leadership. Locations were selected by Department for Communities and Local Government, who have knowledge of Pilots showing signs of success, strong leadership and engagement.

Bedminster, Dartford, Rotherham and Sydenham were selected for study visits. Each Portas Pilot is recognised as generally being successful but each has something different to offer in terms of town type, organisational structure and action plan priorities. Each study visit focused on answering a series of questions, including:

### **Vision & Leadership**

- Who is providing leadership and direction for the Pilot?
- How engaged is the Pilot with support from ATCM and BITC?

### **The Plan**

- What, if any, medium and long terms plans are in place for the Pilot?
- How do these reflect your vision for the future of the town?

### **Your People**

- Who are the key stakeholders and what is their level of engagement?
- What structure and functional “way of working” have you established?

### **Available Funding**

- What are the main funding sources for the group?
- Have you identified other funding streams to support and sustain future activity?

### **Communication**

- What are the key successes achieved to date?
- How do you reach out to local business and other key stakeholder groups?
- Are there any areas of concern to be flagged?

## **Common Themes from the Study Visits**

Four common themes emerged from our study visits relating to the eventual perceived success of each Portas Pilot. These were:

- Local Authority engagement
- Sustainable funding
- Establishing and communicating the vision
- Entrepreneurial spirit

### **Local Authority engagement**

In successful Pilots, there is clear and demonstrable ownership and often tangible support from the Local Authority. Where the wellbeing of the town centre is at the forefront of local government policy, results are often seen sooner than elsewhere. This is due to their license to act and support local groups delivering local action plans. They can also take a holistic view of Town Team objectives and try to link them into wider development aims for the area to generate increased return on investment benefits; this includes linking Town Team work into existing local, neighbourhood and regional plans and ensuring work complements shared objectives.

It should also be noted that some Town Teams were often sceptical of engaging with the Local Authority, often based only on preconceptions. Close partnership working between Town Teams and local government is clearly an essential ingredient for successful, sustainable town centres.

### **Sustainable Funding**

Whilst the Department for Communities and Local Government grant to Portas Pilots has provided great seed capital and successful towns have gone on to realise money from other sources, it has also ironically blinded many groups to longer term, systemic planning, which would have a much greater impact on making the town a better place to live, work and visit. Several Portas Pilots are beginning to consider their legacy, but not all are in a position to do so yet.

### **Establishing and Communicating a Shared Local Vision.**

Whilst all the towns visited have undertaken something close to the good practice detailed above and in the model on page nine, none have done so entirely. These towns are hindered by the current lack of defining and measuring success and a means of sharing learning and

successes from Pilots to allow other towns to replicate similar initiatives.

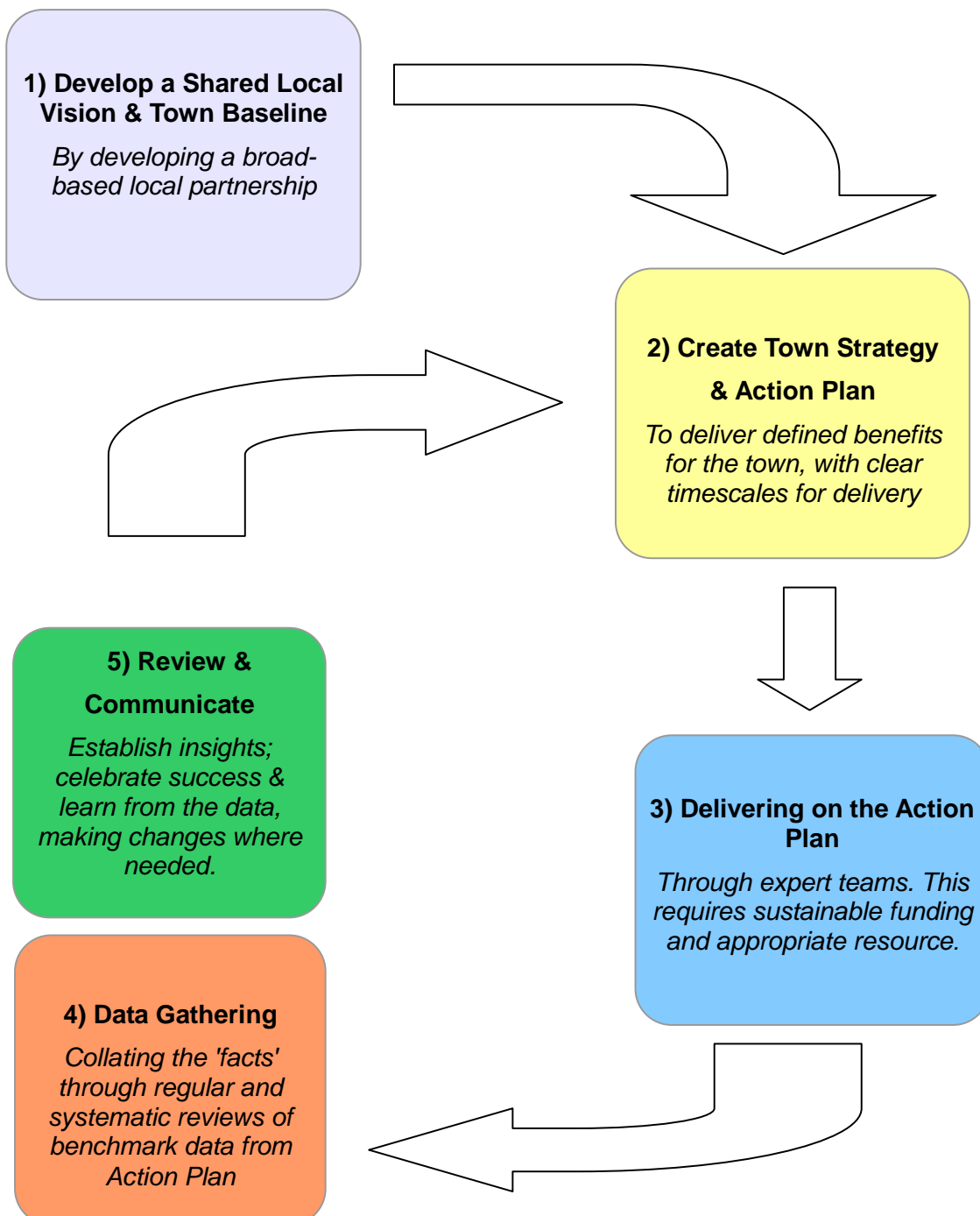
### **Entrepreneurial Spirit**

Great examples of Portas Pilots and Town Teams often focus on a community hub, a pop-up shop or a new market. This entrepreneurial spirit is an essential component of any Town Team as it allows the group to expand in new, exciting and locally relevant directions. A policy environment where this entrepreneurialism is encouraged and facilitated is required to underpin this, again showcasing the important role of local and national government.



## The Plan-Do-Review Model for Town Centres

Below and in the following pages, we have laid out a model for good leadership for High Streets and town centres, which has been informed by our visits and discussions. It is based on the “Plan–Do–Check–Act“ cycle, which many will be familiar with. It is a four–step model for carrying out change and should be repeated regularly for continuous improvement. Successful locations often enjoy a rhythm and direction to their work; the structure below will help Portas Pilots, Town Teams and generally Town Centre Management across England and the UK maintain and build on the wellbeing of their local centre.



Box One	A Shared Vision
<b>Snapshot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and define a local partnership to support the socio-cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of the town</li> <li>• Appoint a Leader to oversee the local partnership</li> <li>• Local partnership to develop a shared vision and a town baseline for the next 5 to 10 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Detail</b>	<p><b>Form a Local Partnership:</b> Our visits show that successful towns need strong partnerships, with a strong communicator with time and energy to devote to the cause acting a leader. There are three broad stakeholder groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local Authority, blue light services, transport authorities and Councillors, or any other group with the remit to act in this area;</li> <li>2. Those with a commercial interest in improving town centres; business owners of all sizes, market traders, property owners and agents, shopping centre operators;</li> <li>3. Local community groups; people who identify with the town and want to make it a better place to live, shop and relax.</li> </ol> <p><b>Establish Town Baseline:</b> This sets out the 'personality' of the town and provides a health check or snapshot of the current situation. It may include indicators on vacancy and footfall rates, public realm surveys, local business, consumer and community perceptions, the quality of public transport links and so on. Many indicators are simple to map, as laid out in the Successful Town Centres report.</p> <p><b>Develop a shared local Vision:</b> A shared vision binds partners together with a common goal. The visioning process can take a longer term perspective and should be developed through talking to interested parties and developing communal themes, areas and projects for the town. Themes that should be focused on include broad topics such as accessibility (physical, digital), safety, and local identity/uniqueness.</p> <p>This document would develop in consultation with the Local Authority Strategic Plan, and would focus on improving the medium to long term socio cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of the town. It should focus on the appropriate use of space and how will it improve the dwell time for people visiting the town.</p>

<b>Delivery</b>	<p>The Local Authority, in the interests of the social, economic and environmental regeneration and wellbeing of the town, would facilitate the initial local partnership. This may be a pre-existing Neighbourhood Forum, Business Area, Town Team, Town Centre Partnership or BID.</p> <p>The local partnership would produce the vision and baseline documents using existing tools and techniques (for example, the Portas Principles or the ATCM Personality Test). It is important that Local Authorities are able to engage with, and rely on, local community and business input for support.</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<p>Business Improvement Districts currently provide a good model for developing local, strategic five-year plans with a series of deliverables attached. These are naturally focused on specifically local business needs. Town Teams, Portas Pilots and Community Interest Companies are beginning to weave social and community interests into their strategic planning, and as such have the potential to provide good practice examples. <u>Rotherham</u> is an excellent example of a local authority, local land-owners and the business community coming together to develop their high street.</p>
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATCM Town Centre Personality Test – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Beyond Retail: Redefining the Shape &amp; Purpose of Town Centres – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• British Bids – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• LEP Strategy Documents / Local Authority Local Plans</li> <li>• Localism Act (2011) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Productive Local Economies: creating resilient places (CLES, 2010) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Successful Town Centres – developing effective strategies (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• The Portas Review (2011) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Towards Place Governance (PPS, 2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> </ul>

Box Two	Town Strategy & Action Plan
<b>Snapshot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Town Strategy to establish why and how the town will respond to the needs of the 24hr economy, digital opportunities, and its role as a socio-cultural hub</li> <li>• Produce an associated Action Plan outlining what is to be delivered and the impact measures.</li> <li>• Publish timescales for delivery (typically 0 to 5 years)</li> </ul>
<b>Detail</b>	<p>The <b>Town Strategy</b> is a natural next step to follow a newly created vision. The Town Strategy should be formed in consultation with the Local Plan if already in place, or to help shape a Local Plan if not. This ensures the Strategy does not clash with established planning and development goals and can therefore be supported whole-heartedly. An effective business plan needs to be developed, endorsed and funded by the local partnership, ensuring that projects remain 'true' to the vision and are achievable, both in the short and medium term. The best strategies help the town to retain a competitive edge by embracing its unique identity, combined with improved management of the public realm (clean, safe, accessible) and projects that enhance key aspects of the location (signage, parking, customer care, inward investment).</p> <p>From this an <b>Action Plan</b> should be developed to add detail and momentum to specific projects in order to deliver them. Each should have clear benefits for the town and associated measures to track success. These may include footfall levels, occupancy, jobs created/retained, local perception data (such as place pride, feelings of safety).</p> <p>We have seen good examples covering topics such as developing a 24-hour economy (or at least an evening leisure offer), the opportunities of becoming a 'digital High Street', and the importance of supporting the wellbeing of the local community by becoming a socio-cultural hub alongside its economic function.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>The Town Strategy &amp; Action Plan should be developed and owned by the local partnership and delivered in conjunction with the broad range of stakeholders represented (including the local authority).</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<p>The seven High Street Renewal Fund winners show what can be achieved through clear action plans and objectives. Ipswich have had tremendous success to date in re-orientating their town centre to create a 'natural' pedestrian route between their shopping district and waterfront, complimented by a range of events, public realm work such as signage, and</p>

	promotional activity.
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century High Streets: What next for Britain's Town Centres? (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li><li>• High Street Renewal Fund (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li><li>• Successful Town Centres – developing effective strategies (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li></ul>

<b>Box Three</b>	<b>Delivering Action</b>
<b>Snapshot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plan is delivered through expert teams</li> <li>• Local Authority commitment to invest in regeneration for growth</li> <li>• Sustainable funding &amp; appropriate resources are required to be effective</li> </ul>
<b>Detail</b>	<p>Every location should have a local partnership helping to drive, coordinate and deliver projects to make town and city centres desirable and competitive places. This mechanism for coordinated action is fundamental if any change is to be sustainable and effective.</p> <p>We have seen locally-developed initiatives working across centres of varying scales. What they have in common is their effectiveness in promoting the vitality and viability of their centre, and maintaining its key role as a social, community space offering local answers to local questions; they each add to the physical and emotional wellbeing of their town.</p> <p>There are a range of supporting schemes and tools already in place to help delivery. These include programmes developed and run by the Association Of Town &amp; City Management, Business in The Community, National Market Traders Federation, as well as regular advice from the Department for Communities and Local Government.</p> <p>Delivery is resource dependent; initial seed funding may be required and sustainable funding will need to be a priority. Existing BIDs, Town Teams and Town Centre Partnerships have shown they can build consensus across multiple stakeholders and bring scarce resources together in a focused manner, including volunteer time. Local Authorities can help by reviewing their planning processes to promote a more appropriate business mix, or by bringing forward investment detailed in their Local Plans.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>Action Plans will be delivered by local groups with the necessary skills, with the local partnership monitoring progress if they are not directly involved in delivery.</p> <p>Funding can come from a range of sources, and it is up the each town to make their own choice on a suitable model. Impartial advice is widely available.</p> <p>Business Improvement Districts have a track record of delivery and can generate substantial amounts of extra investment for an area. Non-profit and Community Interest Companies can claim charitable status, while other locations run contribution-based partnerships (although these may not be as sustainable as the aforementioned options). Local Authority funding, through</p>

	<p>various channels, can support projects or a Town Centre Manager to help coordinate action. Central and Local Government budgets could be brought forward or reallocated to prioritise town centre development.</p>
<p><b>Examples</b></p>	<p>There is evidence of delivery within every Local Authority, BID, Portas Pilot and Town Centre Partnership throughout the UK. Southwold in Norfolk has gone through a comprehensive branding exercise; Margate has developed night markets; Market Rasen delivered its market into an award winning example; while Rotherham has enjoyed success with its comprehensive Action Plan to revitalise vacant units and promote its shopping area. Liverpool and Birmingham both attained Purple Flags for excellence in creating a safe, friendly evening and night time economy; each of these successes is based in understanding the local area and working in partnership across the town centre.</p>
<p><b>References</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Firm Basis (2012) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• ATCM Purple Flag Place – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• High Street Renewal Fund (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Old Croydon Town Portas Pilot Business Plan – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• Successful Town Centres – developing effective strategies (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• The Deloitte Consumer Review: Reinventing the role of the High Street – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• The Portas Review (2011) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• High streets at the heart of our communities: the Government's response to the Mary Portas Review - <a href="#">available here</a></li> <li>• The future of high streets: progress since the Portas Review - <a href="#">available here</a></li> </ul>

<b>Box Four</b>	<b>Data Gathering</b>
<b>Snapshot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an annual review of the 'facts' to determine what benefit was realised</li> <li>• Qualitative and quantitative data needed for a full picture</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>Each town will conduct an annual review of certain key indicators. These indicators can be drawn from the Retail Pathfinder project “Successful Town Centres” developed by ATCM, BIS and the GFirst LEP. This stage is simply about gathering data that was identified as part of the Town Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Successful Town Teams, BIDs and Town Centre Partnerships not only deliver against a shared vision, but also track their success to be able to showcase their projects and develop them for future years.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>The local partnership is responsible for identifying benchmark data and sourcing it, whether this is from a third party or collected first hand.</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<p>Annex B of the Retail Pathfinder study lists eight locations that took part in the study, including Gloucester, Liverpool and York. Each was easily able to monitor the same twenty indicators, and these have subsequently been promoted to Town Teams as good practice. Business Improvement Districts regularly monitor their progress and the best make habit of benchmarking themselves.</p>
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful Town Centres – developing effective strategies (2013) – <a href="#">available here</a></li> </ul>



<b>Box Five</b>	<b>Review &amp; Communicate</b>
<b>Snapshot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue with key stakeholders establishes insight</li> <li>• Revise the Town Strategy and Action Plans where required</li> <li>• Communicate and celebrate successes</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>In order to improve the vitality of a town, it is good practice to review data and draw conclusions, altering the Town Strategy and Action Plans where required. This means projects continue to contribute to the wellbeing of the town, community and businesses. The conclusions drawn may challenge the action plan, and in some cases may even challenge the original vision. Should this happen, the processes described above can be repeated.</p> <p>Successful towns we visited have in place substantial mechanisms for regular, good quality two way communications, including websites &amp; update newsletters. Feedback from local community and business groups is achieved through regular forums and face-to-face meetings, and the outcomes further shape the development of these.</p> <p>Communication is key throughout this partnership process, along with an open invitation for anyone to get involved – a Town Team member said “the main thing that an effective Town Team needs is comfy shoes and plenty of shoe leather”. This does suggest that resources such as community spirited volunteer labour, whilst very welcome and to be encouraged, cannot be sustained over the long term. Town Teams should not underestimate the need to invest in a skilled communication resource.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>Reviewing the 'facts' can be done internally by the local partnership or through an external, independent body, although both methods would involve talking to key stakeholders. Transparency is important to maintain trust and a feeling of wider involvement. The ATCM, BITC and LGA can all offer support to towns regarding good practice or picking up on lessons learned from the data. We are recommending the creation of an online portal to share good practices.</p> <p>The local partnership body should have a clear communications plan in place. The better examples we have seen include clear guidance when speaking to different groups (partners, local community, and the media both national and regional).</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<p>Several Portas Pilots and Town Teams have successful communication schemes with both their local community and local press. Market Rasen (local newsletter) and Rotherham (the Rotherham Voice) are two examples.</p>

	Plenty of positive local press clippings can be found online, and many are increasingly taking to social media.
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Market Rasen Business Improvement Group – <a href="#">website here</a></li></ul>

## **Case Studies from Town Team visits**

*(Conducted by Task and Finish Group One)*

### **Bedminster**

This Portas Pilot is a suburb to the south of Bristol city centre, primarily built around now defunct manufacturing business with a clutch of shopping streets. The area has a high population density with mainly terraced housing.

Key stakeholders include local community leaders and two pre-existing Trade Associations, and substantial involvement in time and funds from larger businesses including Asda, Tesco, Boots, and the Co-op. The City Council are vocal supporters of the Portas Pilot and its drive to achieve a BID

Funding for them came from the initial Department for Communities and Local Government grant (£100,000) plus an additional £70,000 raised by the Portas Pilot from a range of sources including the Local Authority, local businesses and the arts. The successful BID ballot was delivered in March 2013, raising a further £80,000 per year.

#### **What's gone well?**

Bristol City Council set up a Neighbourhood Partnership area across the City with a remit to bring together local services and support communities; the Portas Pilot group grew from this and as a result the group had a pre-existing structure to use when their application was successful.

The main objective was to create a BID to ensure long-term stability and funding, and as mentioned above this was successfully delivered in March 2013. The Local Authority worked closely with the Portas Pilot to ensure services in the area were joined up to deliver a well-rounded multi-departmental strategy to improving local wellbeing. Street art (such as the 'bug trail') and improving the public realm are key projects and both provide concrete examples of the positive impact Town Teams and Portas Pilots can have to increase perceptions of quality and pride.

## **Challenges**

This is the first Pilot to become a BID; now local businesses are financially as well as emotionally involved with their town centre, this should drive further engagement and be complementary to the current volunteer energy and activity. At this stage the town's successes have been driven in large part by the energy and commitment of one or two charismatic local volunteers, it could be problematic if they no longer had the time to devote to the town.

## **Dartford**

An old and established sprawling High Street including two small shopping centres and a number of traditional shopping streets in a town previously supported by manufacturing employers.

Key stakeholders include a highly engaged Local Authority, a full-time Town Centre Manager, a well organised local business presence from independent traders to the shopping centre managers and national businesses, such as Wilkinson's. There is little community involvement however. The Pilot felt community views should be provided for them as opposed to something they should be actively seek out.

Funding is from the Department for Communities and Local Government grant and from the Local Authority as part of their public realm investment.

### **What's gone well?**

The Local Authority is a leading voice in helping identify issues and sourcing funding. They also recognised the grant as seed capital to kick-start activity. The Town Manager is at the centre of this effort to coordinate action and stakeholders, and is also overseeing a slow shift from a mostly commercial business plan to more wellbeing-centric vision.

The Pilot set up a 'Community Shop' in a vacant unit in the shopping centre, and it is being heavily used via a booking system with 10 to 15 groups using it on a regular basis. This continues to drive footfall into the town and provides a public-facing element for the Portas Pilot to communicate through.

The Portas Bursary start-up fund is particularly useful for young entrepreneurs, while links with the Art Council have allowed cultural activity to also promote footfall into Dartford. Moving the Thursday market from a location on the edge of town will provide animation on the high street throughout the week, and links with the shopping centre at Bluewater have provided skills training and mystery shopping to provide insight for local retailers.

### **Challenges**

Perhaps more could be done with the local community for the Pilot to become truly representative of the area. Funding as always is an issue, and while the Local Authority has been very supportive, a change in political fortunes may not provide as much support. There is also considerably more capacity for larger retailers to get involved (Boots and Sainsbury are both in the town).

## **Rotherham**

The town is long established and situated between the two shopping hubs of Sheffield and Leeds. The area has suffered from the loss of traditional manufacturing industries. Key stakeholders include leadership from the Retail Investment Team (made from key Council members and a full time Retail Investment Manager). NSAR are heavily involved with their “hub” acting as the heart of the Pilot's activity, while business involvement is growing although still mostly from independent traders.

Funding, in addition to the £100,000 Department for Communities and Local Government grant, includes £268,000 from the High Street Renewal Fund.

### **What's gone well?**

The Pilot, led by the Local Council, has been active in trying to improve their city centre. There is a clear plan for the city, well defined and financially supported by the Council that allows long term thinking and investment. For example, Council offices have moved from prime real estate in the city centre to a bespoke office on the edge. This freed up space to be developed by Tesco, as well as increased free parking very close to the existing high street.

Substantial sums have been spent on further public realm improvements including a new square, as well as public art installations all designed to improve the image of Rotherham.

The Local Authority should be commended for their brave approach too, as they borrowed money to back local developers and encourage them to take on particularly tough areas of the town such as old and often listed buildings. This was preceded by a detailed review of ownership of long term vacant buildings in the town centre, and then pursuing landlords to improve their properties and negotiate on rent in order to bring the space back into use, resulting in a wave of 'pop-up shops' now trading successfully and showing good signs of being able to make the transition into full trading concerns.

Communication has been excellent - local residents are kept up to date of activities undertaken and successes achieved via the quarterly Rotherham Voice publication.

### **Challenges**

All the money for the redevelopment of the town is currently coming from the Local Authority that have town centre regeneration as a key focus in their longer term plan. Although the political make-up of the town is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, there is a risk inherent in this one funding source and focus. Engagement with larger businesses is still lacking with disconnection between the engagement of those at the top and the empowerment of those at store level.



## **Sydenham**

A three high street town (Sydenham, Kirkdale, Forest Hill) with a successful Portas Pilot and a clear strategy and track record of results. The key stakeholders are the Local Authority, a full-time Town Centre Manager, a strong community and volunteer base (access to 600 members) and a strong breadth of civic societies. Business involvement is however limited to a few independent traders and none of the national brands have any concerted involvement.

Funding is £80,000 of GLA money plus an additional £100,000 of planning monies from permissions granted by the Local Authority previously.

### **What's gone well?**

The Local Authority has made significant investment in improving the public realm with the development of mini squares and Forest Hill pools. The Pilot also have a strong brand (SEE3) which is used to good effect through their marketing and communication plan, as well as on shop fronts and pop-ups.

A number of pop-up shops are trading in the town, occupying empty units and adding colour, and there is considerable activity thanks to an 'artist in residence' creating explorer trails for public art and points of interest to help develop the community interest aspect of SEE3. Linked to this is a series of events ('Pop Goes Sydenham') designed to increase footfall and dwell time. Food fairs and markets have seen some success, although these have been identified as being able to produce more for the Pilot and town. Two local 'Friend' community groups are represented on the Pilot's Board and this was a key factor in having three centres support the Team.

### **Challenges**

There is no long-term funding in place for ongoing delivery, so the sustainability of the activity is a concern. There is a tremendous amount of volunteer time being used by a very engaged community; volunteer fatigue is a worry and this glut of free resources may be hiding the 'true' cost of delivery, but equally this may be an example of the benefits of a strong community engagement package.

Likewise, there does not appear to be a robust review mechanism in place to outline what success is and whether this was achieved. It would be good to see more involvement from the major high street brands, a number of whom are on the High Street in Sydenham.

## Recommendations

This report and these recommendations seek to build upon the great work done following the publication of the Portas Review and the subsequent identification and successes of the Portas Pilot Towns. From an extensive review of the original pilots, it is clear there are common factors for success in each of the towns and common areas that have been problematic; adoption of these recommendations will support the delivery of more successful towns and High Streets in the UK.

- **The 'Plan-Do-Review Model for Town Centres' on page nine is an excellent starting point for leadership of High Streets, town and city centres across the UK, and should be used as the structure for current and future partnership models**

We recommend that the 'Plan-Do-Review Model for Town Centres' be recognised as best practice for managing town centres in the UK. Drawing on the experiences of Portas Pilots and Town Teams across England, Task & Finish Group One has determined that the presence of a structure (be it a BID, local partnership, town centre management group or Town Team) is a key community asset in bringing local businesses, communities and public sector representatives together to help develop a common vision for the future projects that support that vision. The model sets clear steps for any location to follow.

- **We recommend that stakeholders be invited to agree to support the ongoing adoption of the 'Plan-Do-Review Model for Town Centres' through a culture of proactive engagement at the local level**

The 'Plan-Do-Review Model for Town Centres' has been adopted by several Portas Pilots and Town Teams, and the Association of Town & City Management (ATCM) are currently supporting remaining locations to use the concepts within the model in their own areas. Business in The Community (BiTC) are supporting high streets through their business network and the Healthy High Street Campaign, designed to roll out a package of support for 100 locations to help reduce vacancy rates, increase footfall and create jobs.

It is the recommendation of Task & Finish Group One that members of the Future High Streets

Forum, in their capacity as town centre stakeholders, be encouraged to offer further support to aid the development of local partnerships. This could be by releasing local staff to work with groups, or in the case of the Local Government Association, helping to ensure public and private sectors join together effectively. ATCM and BITC are well-placed to help match local groups with support from partners both inside and beyond the Future High Streets Forum.

- **We recommend that an online resource is set up to provide high quality current information on how to help High Streets and town centres, support sharing best practice and provide an interactive forum on what makes great High Streets and town centres**

Work is now underway to develop this important tool primarily using resource from the ATCM, supported by Department for Communities and Local Government and the online resource should be available towards the middle of 2014.