



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Support for Independent Traders – Update Report
Date:	13 December 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that, at the 23 August meeting of the Development Committee, a retail action plan was endorsed. This included six programmes to support the independent retail sector in the city.
1.2	The individual programme elements have been progressing since that time. An update report on progress is attached

2	Key Issues
2.1	The retail sector, and in particular the independent retailers, are under considerable pressure in the current economic climate. Retailers have been trying to develop a range of initiatives to increase footfall and spend in their areas and have, increasingly, been working collaboratively under the guise of traders' forums to carry out this work.
2.2	At the 23 August 2011 Development Committee, a budget of up to £200,000 was committed to promote the development of the sector through a range of activities including trader group development, local area campaigns, the bespoke Retail Therapy business development programme, market start up programme and Independent Retail week (proposed to take place in March 2012).
2.3	<u>Retail Therapy Programme</u> This tailored support programme helps independent traders to assess their business and provides one-to-one mentoring, mystery shops, business planning and financial assistance to move their business forward. A total of 27 retailers are currently on the programme.

2.4	<p>Previous participants on the Retail Therapy Programme have had noted successes in recent times: 2010-2011 Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For every £1 spent by BCC generated £10 for business - Shankey's Male Grooming have opened a new concession in the House of Fraser, Victoria Square creating two new jobs. - Ground Coffee Shop are in the process of opening another coffee shop in Belfast creating 16 jobs - Arcadia Deli - Regional Winner UK's Best Deli - Honey nominated for a UK Stars: Underlines' Award.
2.5	<p><u>Retail Masterclasses</u> The Retail Masterclasses series runs from October 2011-March 2012. These free masterclasses provide retailers with the opportunity to improve business skills, attract new customers and make their business more profitable.</p> <p>Dates of Retail Masterclass series:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 October 2011 – Dynamic management for retailers in difficult times - 22 November 2011 – Managing suppliers and sourcing locally - 10 January 2012 – The customer is always right vs the customer is always first - 31 January 2012 – Branding for retailers – a journey, not a destination - 21 February 2012 – Why retailers should be trading online and using social networking - 27 March 2012 – Loyalty schemes – their place in today's environment. <p>These events attract, on average, 25 traders. Feedback has been very positive to date.</p>
2.6	<p><u>Area campaigns</u> Under the previous retail support plan, provision had been made for local campaigns to enhance the profile of designated shopping areas through a range of targeted support initiatives. This enabled groups to undertake activities such as producing local trader maps and business directories, creating a website for promotion and online trading and organising local events to increase footfall and trading in specific areas.</p>
2.7	<p>At the 23 August 2011 committee it was agreed that an amount of up to £20,000 be available to constituted traders groups for expenditure against a range of agreed promotional activities, similar to those identified above, within the current financial year.</p>
2.8	<p>It is accepted that a number of the traders groups are more advanced than others and that some may be able to bring resources to supplement the Council contribution. In recognition of this, it was also agreed that, beyond the £20,000 support provided, Belfast City Council can match the trader contribution £ for £, up to a total maximum contribution from Council of £40,000. Consideration should be given to the sustainability of the proposed intervention, given that funding levels cannot be guaranteed in future years.</p>
2.9	<p>To date the following groups have received support to implement their area campaigns:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lisburn Road Business Association - £40,000 for retail focused events to promote the Lisburn Road, development of a customer management system, website development, PR and marketing for the area and engagement with all retailers on the Lisburn Road. One 'I love Saturdays' event has been held to date with the customer management systems currently being installed. LRBA have liaised with all businesses on the Lisburn Road and will feature these on the new website to be developed in January 2012. - Ballyhackamore Business Association - £9277.50 for marketing and promotion, retail focused events, development of a brand and customer e-zine. Ballyhackamore Business Association held their first Christmas event on 1 December with approximately 700 attendees. Initial feedback has noted a significant increase in sales on the day of the event and in the follow up period. - Strandtown Traders Association - £11,428.00 for marketing and promotion of the Belmont Road and two retail focused events. The first event a Victorian Christmas Fair will take place on Saturday 10 December 2011. <p>2.10 Work continues with other existing traders/business organisations to develop action plans to promote independent retail in their area. These include Sandy Row, Shankill and West Belfast.</p> <p>2.11 <u>Trader group development support</u> Some initial discussions have taken place with a range of new and fledgling traders groups, all of which are at varying stages of development. It is proposed that work should continue in helping these and other groups link into existing support; identify their priorities for action to address the challenges and help deliver on these. It will be important for the groups to consider becoming constituted if they are to draw down resources or to consider a management structure which might allow them to access and manage funding.</p> <p>2.12 It was agreed that some seed funding of up to £3,000 per group should be made available to work on issues such as collaborative promotion and marketing campaigns, events to increase footfall and customer loyalty initiatives. Initial discussions with traders have highlighted a wider range of issues including business rates; street cleansing; car parking and environmental improvements. We are working with colleagues from relevant departments and agencies as well as local Elected Members to see if these can be addressed. However for some of these groups, it may be some time before they can begin to work on the types of initiatives for which our support is intended.</p> <p>2.13 Potential Groups with whom some initial discussions have taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oldpark/Cliftonville Circus – Officers have liaised with retailers in the area regarding the formation of a constituted traders group. Discussions with the retailers have shown a consensus in establishing such a group and have also highlighted other issues e.g. cleansing, litter bins etc. These issues have been passed on to the relevant Council department via the neighbourhood working groups. The traders have agreed to meet in January to discuss the formation of a constituted group and identify an action plan.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antrim Road – Officers have liaised with retailers on the Antrim Road regarding the re-formation of a traders group. There is a good level of interest and an initial meeting will be held in January. <p>While a number of groups have made contact directly with officers, members are asked to consider additional groups and areas that may benefit from this type of support.</p>
2.14	<p><u>Market start up programme</u></p> <p>This pilot programme will support six new-start entrepreneurs to explore market trading as a possible business model, in advance of progression to a retail outlet. They will be receive a package of support to include workshops, one-to-one mentoring, best practice visits, assistance with product development, business plan support and undertake a test-trading period at St. George's Market. This programme will be launched in December 2012, in conjunction with a number of initiatives supported by the National Market Traders' Federation (NMTF).</p>
2.15	<p><u>Independent Retail Week</u></p> <p>Independent Retail Week will take place from 5-11 March 2012 and will include a range of events, workshops and activities to promote the range and quality of our independent traders and the services they offer. Traders have signed up to be included in the marketing materials, offer promotions and traders groups have agreed to organise local events to increase footfall within their area.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The independent retail support budget was approved by the Development Committee in June 2011.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no specific equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

6	Decision Tracking
A report on progress will be brought back to Development Committee in April 2012.	
Timeframe: April 2012	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay