

VITALITY OF PENRITH

STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2011 (Approved 31 August 2011)

SUMMARY

The Core Strategy for Eden provides for substantial numbers of new houses in the next 20 years. New supermarket developments are nearing completion. The new supermarkets are perceived as a threat to independent traders and thus create a negative effect on the health of the town centre. The public regard the environment of the town centre as being in need of improvement.

A pressing strategic economic issue for the Penrith travel to work area (TTWA) is the current (and forecast worsening) skill and labour shortage. This must be addressed if the aspiration for a sustainable community is to be achieved. It is especially important if Penrith is to take full advantage of any plans to expand the existing employment areas and avoid becoming, predominantly, a commuter town.

The Penrith TTWA remains dominated by a low wage economy.

On the other hand the Penrith area offers opportunities around which to build a marketing campaign that can lead to a wide range of advantages from increasing the customer base to creating investment in skills and employment.

In recognition of these 'headline' issues the District Council has made available a sum of £200,000 capital and £30,000 revenue to 'kick start' projects which will help the local economy. The hope and expectation is that the money from the District Council will act as a catalyst to attract additional financial and manpower resources from partners.

VISION

The District Council and County Council want to engage with the local community to better understand needs and identify projects which develop the local economy. The Vitality of Penrith group (VoP) was created in order to facilitate engagement and establish a mechanism for ongoing dialogue between the local authorities and the wider community.

VoP has been operating for three years. A Strategy Group supported by 'Task and Finish' teams led by appropriate 'Champions' are the preferred method of delivery. Terms of reference and a diagrammatic illustration of methods of working are attached as Appendix 1.

VoP is an unconstituted body and in view of limited capacity intends to remain so, preferring instead to use the powers and financial probity which comes with delivering through local authorities. In practice this means that EDC, as partner member will be required to contract for all goods and services that is necessary in delivering the aims of the Action Plan 2011 to 2013.

VISION STATEMENT

Vitality of Penrith wishes to become recognised by the local community as the body responsible for creating and sponsoring delivery of projects which support the economic vitality of Penrith and lead to a sustainable community.

VALUES

To become recognised by the local community as the body to sponsor delivery involves engaging with the local community. The VoP will use all resources within the partnership group to maintain to both collect and impart information to the 'local community' interpreting 'community' in the widest meaning of that term. In particular the VoP are keen to engage with local business because the vision of VoP includes improving the economic vitality of the town.

VoP recognises the inherent characteristics of choosing to create and then 'sponsor' delivery through partner organisations; principally the local authorities. Partners will act accordingly in the spirit of partnership attempting wherever possible to reconcile what will sometimes appear to be conflicting aims.

VoP operate through choice by partnership with others. Its members therefore will value and try to develop mutual respect; understanding and equality. There is an inherent commitment to work with each other and to commit funding or time and expertise. There is also willingness to compromise in pursuit of mutually agreed goals. Partners have signed this document to signify the commitment towards this method of working.

OBJECTIVES

The 'Vision' to become the recognised body to create and support delivery of projects which support the economic vitality of Penrith, has been translated by the VoP Strategy Group into a series of objectives headed by a 'Champion' which can deliver this 'vitality' for the town.

The objectives reflect what are considered by the local community to be the most important matters for attention over the next 2 years. The VoP Strategy Group has developed these objectives and themes into delivery projects which will bring the greatest reward to improve the vitality of the town over the next two years to meet the targets explained in more detail in the monitoring and evaluation section of this document.

- Environment (Cleaning and Greening)
The community concerns were around improving the image of the town centre through removal of rubbish; 'de-clutter' streets together with improving the appearance of signage and the public realm.
Objective: Improve the visual appearance of the town centre.
- Marketing and the Economy
The business community wanted to see more pedestrian movement in the town centre and the creation of an acceptable brand image for Penrith as a means of attracting new shoppers.

Objective: Increase shopper loyalty and footfall in the town centre.

- Arts Culture and Events (local distinctiveness)
All sections of the community valued many aspects of the quality events recently promoted and wanted to see more quality promoted as a means of generating new interest in the town centre.
Objective: Expand the customer base and build local pride amongst local people.
- Communications and Community Engagement
There is a recognition amongst the strategy group that it is vital to consult; listen and deliver what local people value about the town centre and also to keep them informed of progress; especially the local and voluntary organisations which are the lifeblood of the town.
Objective: Increase the number of people who feel 'engaged' in decisions by the public authorities about the town and feel able to influence those decisions.

ACTION PLAN 2011- 2012

The attached Action Plan contains key information on each project selected for Action during 2011-2012. It is expected that the Action Plan will be an 'organic' document updated and publicised as necessary.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The most effective strategies use Simple Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timed data to monitor progress against the vision and objectives of the strategy. Data collection is costly so this strategy recommends the minimum amount of data collection commensurate with enabling judgements to be made about the relative effectiveness of the overall strategy. That means there will inevitably be gaps in information. The effect of this limitation on data collection is recognised and accepted by partners.

Different partners may put a different interpretation on some of the data. It is accepted that in making judgements about any monitoring data that partners may have different views. There will be a need to reconcile any differences in the Strategy group before publication.

This section of the Strategy recommends the collection of a hard data and a range of softer information to do with the progress of projects. Some of the hard data will be annual figures whereas some of the other softer data on project progress will be less fixed and more regular.

The following information is recommended for collection. Which partner produces the data and pays for its collection and analysis will be developed in the in the Strategy group.

Town Centre Vitality and Viability Indicators

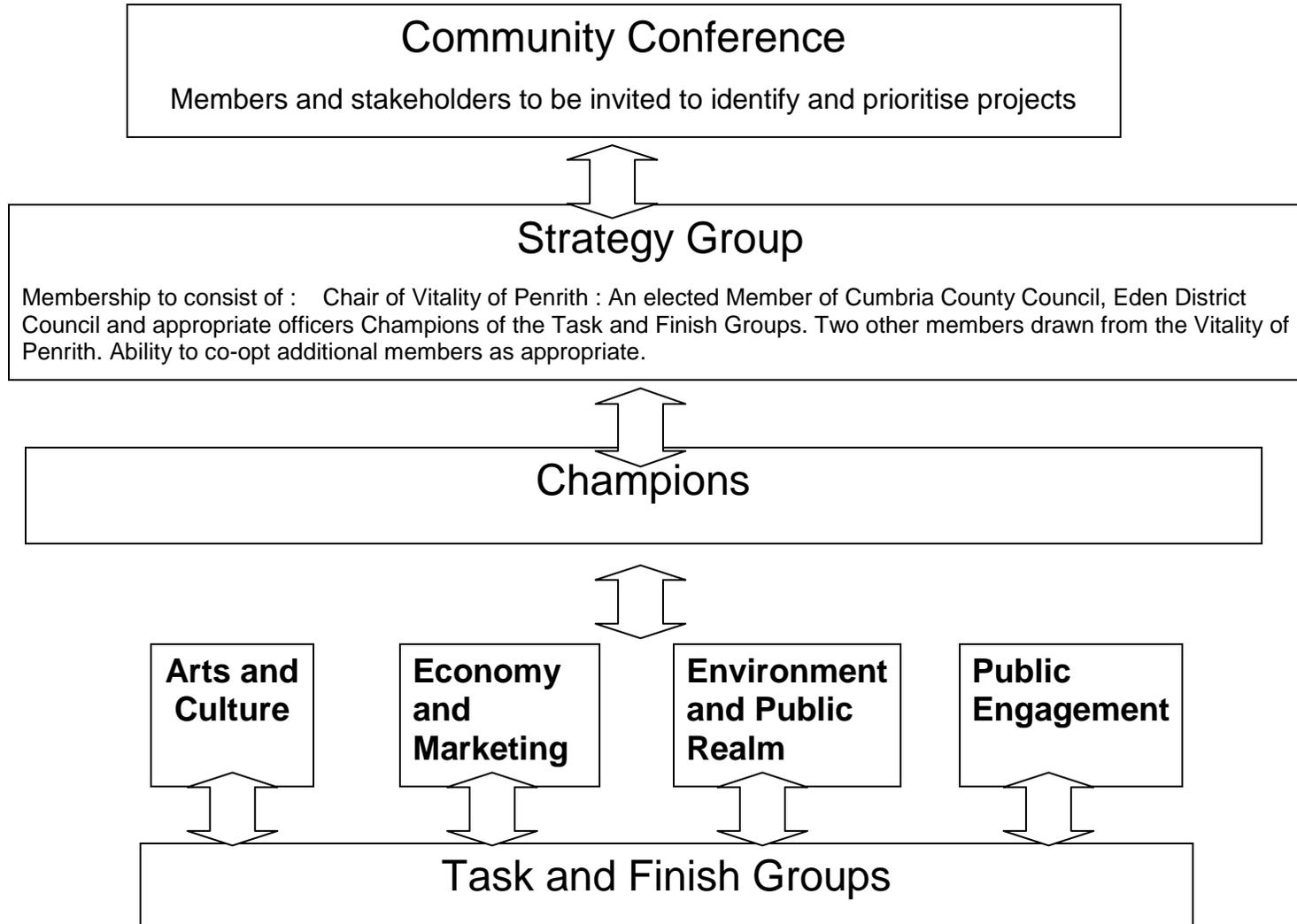
- Annual Footfall Counts

- Annual Retail shop Vacancy Rates(benchmarking data to show progress of Penrith against all this indicator is available from County Council studies going back as far as 1998)
- Annual count of Categories of shop uses eg Shoes; Cafes Charity etc (benchmarking data to show progress of Penrith against all this indicator is available from County Council studies going back as far as 1998)
- Bi- annual statistically and demographically representative sample survey of 600 Penrith 'customers' to review likes and dislikes and monitor shopping habits . Benchmark provided from England and Lyle surveys carried out for EDC as part of Eden District Retail Strategy 2008 as supplemented by further reports relating to Sainsburys and Booths Planning Applications.

Vitality of Penrith

Terms of Reference

1. To create a forum of key stakeholders capable of influencing the delivery of projects that will improve the sustainability of Penrith.
2. To strengthen Penrith as the first choice shopping destination for the town and its hinterland population.
3. To promote Penrith as a prime visitor destination.
4. To create projects that will strengthen the vitality and viability of Penrith Town Centre based upon measures agreed in the strategic group and detailed as part of these terms of reference.
5. To monitor the success of projects in the Approved Action Plan
6. To act as a focal point for press and public relations on key issues affecting the success of Penrith as an economic engine for the District of Eden.
7. To ensure co-ordinated action in the light of planned developments for the town.
8. To ensure the development and delivery of projects is informed by stakeholders and residents in the District.
9. To develop capacity in such organisations as the Chamber of Commerce and Trade.
10. To build community capacity within Penrith so that community 'grass roots' projects can be developed which increase a sense of place, belonging and local pride.
11. To increase the number of people experiencing social or economic inclusion.



VITALITY OF PENRITH: ACTION PLAN 2011 TO 2013

Project – What we want to achieve Our aims	How we will do it – SMART Target Our actions	Present Position	Lead Champion	Outcome or reference to evaluation	Partner Tasked With Delivery
ENVIRONMENT (CLEANING AND GREENING)					
Objective Improve the visual appearance of the town centre.					
Pedestrian and Movement. Improve permeability from supermarkets into town centre. Improve environment by improving signage and removing clutter	To strategy and implementation plan agreed in October 2011.	<i>Joint Meeting with Pedestrian and Movement Group 30 September 2011.</i>	Peter Ward	To strategy and implementation plan to be agreed by EDC Exec. 4 October 2011.	EDC
Greening Penrith	Install planters and hanging baskets	<i>Peter Ward developing a scheme</i>	Peter Ward	To proposals approved by VoP to commit £5k for this purpose.	PACT
MARKETING AND THE ECONOMY					
Objective Increase shopper loyalty and footfall in the town centre.					
Determine appropriate brand for Penrith	'Headline' brand issues determined through Pedestrian and Movement Project group to report on 22 September 2011.	<i>Pedestrian and Movement Project group to report on 30 September 2011</i>	Bob Clark	To strategy and implementation plan to be agreed by EDC Exec. 4 October 2011.	EDC

Project – What we want to achieve Our aims	How we will do it – SMART Target Our actions	Present Position	Lead Champion	Outcome or reference to evaluation	Partner Tasked With Delivery
Support a range of projects to increase footfall in the town centre financed by the Rural Development Programme for England.	Implement the RDPE bid	<i>Offer received and accepted. First Project appoint BID Canvasser October 2011.</i>	Bob Clark	To separate measures contained in the bid.	EDC
Appropriate levels of car parking provision	Carry out a study and implement findings	<i>Study completed and appropriate measures being determined</i>	Bob Clark	To targets to be determined.	EDC
ARTS CULTURE AND EVENTS (LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS)					
Objective Expand the customer base and build local pride amongst local people.					
Deliver 'signature' events to build knowledge of Penrith amongst residents and visitors and build local pride	Utilise a £25,000 fund to create at least 3 events during 2011/2013	<i>Discussions ongoing with Eden Arts</i>	Adrian Lochhead	To be determined	EDC
COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT					
Objective: Develop the VoP 'brand' so local people and organisations value and support the work of VoP.					
A Private sector led Chair	Advertise in Autumn 2011.	<i>Draft advert and particulars to be approved in November 2011.</i>	Current 'Chair' Cllr. G. Nicolson. EDC	Chair appointed by Jan 2012.	EDC

Project – What we want to achieve Our aims	How we will do it – SMART Target Our actions	Present Position	Lead Champion	Outcome or reference to evaluation	Partner Tasked With Delivery
An annual consultation/information event for the public at large	Through Ullswater College event September 2011.	<i>UCC College event 29 September 2011</i>	Colin Maughan VoP	Event to attract over 500 local people.	EDC
A bi-annual consultation and information meeting with organisations affiliated to VoP	Through arrangements to be approved during 2012	<i>Awaiting appointment of new Chair to decide how he/she would like these events to be organised</i>	Current 'Chair' Cllr. G. Nicolson. EDC	Meetings delivered to satisfaction of local organisations.	EDC