



# Town and City Centre Partnerships

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### Partnerships – Why participate?

The external environment surrounding our pharmacies and stores can significantly impact on performance and profitability. Retailers suffer if they are situated in localities that are run-down and poorly managed and maintained. Active management of the town or city centre needs to be co-ordinated, so as to ensure a quality shopping environment for our customers. For example, many measures available to combat theft, and violence against staff, can only be delivered if implemented on a town-wide basis. Similarly, many of the opportunities to market and promote a centre will be more effective if co-ordinated across the whole business community.

Competition between centres to attract customers has become fierce. Shoppers have a choice of regional shopping centres, traditional town centres, supermarkets and local district centres.

To respond to these pressures there has been a renewed focus on the quality of town centres with government and local authorities recognising their importance as an employment hub, a leisure attraction and increasingly as a destination where people wish to live, shop and work.

Reinvigorating town centres is now at the forefront of the government's political, economic and social agenda. For the first time in 20 years there is more retail development and investment in town centres than in out-of-centre locations.

This heightened focus on town and city centres has led to the development of a multitude of private / public sector partnerships. These partnerships provide an opportunity to bring stakeholders and key interest groups together, enabling them to work collectively towards a shared goal of improving the town centre experience for all users, especially customers.

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Today there are in excess of 500 City and Town Centre Management initiatives across the United Kingdom and AllianceBoots store managers are active members of many of them.

Additionally, in many smaller retail communities, local authorities and businesses have developed similar but simpler structures to manage and improve their retail environment.

### **Communities want Town Centres!**

Almost 90% of the UK population live and work in town and cities, and nearly everyone depends on them for access to shopping, entertainment, leisure, culture, public services and transportation. Town and city centres also act as a focal point for government and public administration, hubs of regional infrastructure and natural locations for trade and commerce – it is therefore difficult to overstate their importance.

In a very real sense, town centres are everyone's neighbourhood and their management is central to the prosperity and well-being of whole communities.

### **Different forms of partnership**

Although the remainder of this paper focuses on Town and City Centre Management initiatives, it should be recognised that many other forms of partnership exist. For instance, in recent years there has been a significant growth in the number of Retail Crime Partnerships, now numbering in excess of two hundred across the U.K. Although these organisations often sit within a TCM scheme, they may evolve as independent bodies. *For more information see separate 'brief' (Number 28 Retail Crime Partnerships).*

### **What is Town Centre Management (TCM)?**

As locally developed initiatives working across centres of different scale, they are naturally varied in terms of remit and activities. However, in all locations Town Centre Management has evolved to

deliver a co-ordinated response to identified local issues impacting on the town centres.

- Key stakeholders work together, sharing ideas and decision-making. Inevitably this necessitates a close co-operation between the public and private sectors, coordinated by a Town Centre Manager.
- Stakeholders include the local authority, retailers and other businesses, major property owners, the police, transport operators and local residents.
- Businesses work together to identify a realistic vision for the town's future development.
- A business/ action plan is prepared
- Working groups and resources are established to tackle the priorities
- Measures are agreed to monitor and identify progress
- Success is communicated to the broader business community and to external audiences such as investors and visitors

### **Keys to Success**

An analysis of successful partnerships has identified common features. These include: -

- The genuine commitment of the Local Authority (both at senior officer and political level)
- A robust, inclusive partnership that represents a genuine cross-section of all the elements of town centre activity.
- A realistic, achievable vision for the centre that identifies the necessary steps required for its delivery
- A Business Plan and a programme of projects endorsed and funded by the partners
- A management structure with clear accountabilities to deliver the Business Plan and to monitor and evaluate progress
- Adequate funding identified from a broad base of supporters/ sponsors and other sources
- Project delivery focused on addressing local requirements over a sustained period of time. Likely to include issues as varied as access, car parking,

cleansing, security, inward investment, business development, marketing and promotion

- Inclusive ongoing consultation across all sectors of the business community with consistent, up-beat communication
- Monitoring progress against defined and relevant measures and Key Performance Indicators
- Market research created to identify trends and anticipate change

### **What Difference does TCM make?**

The steady growth and development in the number of Town Centre Management schemes over the past twenty years, demonstrates recognition of their value to local business communities.

The combination of vision, strategy and action, engaging with key interests through working and project groups, has enabled town and city centre management schemes to deliver:

- Creating environments that are safe, clean and attractive by ensuring that existing funding (largely public sector) is properly focused
- Improving transport, parking signage and accessibility
- Providing a coordinated and professional marketing and events programme
- Stimulating growth through inward investment and development
- Coordinating the retail offer with tourism
- Integrating the day-time and night-time economies
- Creating clarity and focus for the future development and growth of the town centre
- Promoting local heritage through destination management
- Developing the link between the day time and evening economy

Equally, Government policy acknowledges the significance and impact of TCM. The development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) has further strengthened the influence and growth of effective local partnerships. BIDs allow a local business community to vote in favour of a small

addition to their local Business Rate, to pay for additional services. Where there is a majority vote in favour, all businesses are required to pay. The precept is gathered by the Local Authority but passed to a business-led local partnership to manage and deliver the BID Business Plan.

*A separate brief (number 10) is available supplying more detailed information on Business Improvement Districts*

### **It's all about Delivery!**

Delivery will inevitably vary between different locations as TCM is all about responding to local needs. However, so as to illustrate the potential benefits that can be derived from working in partnership, lets consider a few examples;

- 80% of businesses indicate that crime is a problem in their local area, with business crime now accounting for £12.6 billion annually. Only through working collectively can retailers respond to organised crime – sharing photographic evidence; exclusion schemes; targeting known offenders; challenging local police, magistrates, schools and drug agencies; radio link; serving Ambos; and co-ordinating emergency action
- The Christmas period generates 40% of annual sales for many retailers. Marketing and Promoting a towns seasonal offer can only be effectively delivered if retailers pool their resources collectively
- The reason to visit town centres (rather than supermarkets and other formats) needs to be promoted in terms of their breadth of offer - retail, leisure and culture
- Developing and promoting extended trading hours (Sundays, seasonal and late nights) needs a critical mass of retail support (60%+)
- Substantial investment is already directed towards town centres - but is it directed at the long-term needs of the business community? Managers have neither the time nor the knowledge to liaise with public sector bodies to ensure this money is well used

- There are substantial opportunities to lever additional investment into town centres (for instance, regeneration funding). The retail community needs to input into this process, but through what resource?
- In most thriving town centres 'development' is a continual process. It can however, negatively impact on the existing retail community requiring effective dialogue, management and co-ordination
- There are many other organisations, committees and public sector bodies impacting on town centre vitality and viability. Business representation and lobbying is essential (for instance, transport, accessibility, car parking, Planning, Crime and Disorder Partnerships). However, who will provide business representation and a voice for the retail community?
- The quality of the Public Realm (for instance, streetscape and cleaning) is largely the responsibility of the local authority. The private sector has a crucial role to play in ensuring standards are maintained and improved, again requiring business participation and representation

### What next?

If a business partnership does not exist in your town, or if its impact is limited what support resources are available?

The Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) is the body that co-ordinates Town Centre Management in the UK. It has published a number of useful 'good practice' documents. In particular 'Getting It Right – a good practice guide', providing advice on how to launch and develop an effective TCM partnership.

The ATCM website can be accessed through [www.atcm.org](http://www.atcm.org)

A separate organisation focuses on smaller centres and market towns - Action for Market Towns. Extensive research and best practice is available on their website via [www.towns.org.uk/](http://www.towns.org.uk/)

### Support available from Alliance Boots, Corporate Affairs

1. A series of short briefing papers have been prepared that store managers and town centre managers can receive upon request. These include;
  - Preparing a Business Plan
  - Participating in Working Groups and Steering Groups
  - Broadening the Base of Business Engagement – membership services
  - Influencing Car Park Provision
  - Developing a Retail Crime Partnership
  - Funding
  - Sunday/extended Trading hours
  - Marketing and Promotion. Launching an effective campaign to promote your centre
  - Business Improvement Districts – what are they
  - Business Improvement Districts – key criteria necessary for Alliance Boots support
  - Business Improvement Districts – lessons learnt
  - Developing Christmas
2. The Company continues to support the core funding of 100 Town Centre Management initiatives  
A twice-yearly Induction Programme is provided by Boots UK (at no charge to ATCM members), for newly appointed Partnership Managers. The programme focuses on the key issues that challenge partnerships and offers help to successfully resolve them
3. An additional programme is facilitated by Boots UK for those sites currently without an effective local partnership, but wishing to establish one
4. Advice and guidance to store managers and Town Centre Managers, via contact details on page one of this brief
5. Links and contacts to a broad range of external organisations that can assist with sourcing information and practical support.