

# District Centre Management Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 7

Autumn 2011

Welcome to the autumn issue of the District Centre Management Team's quarterly newsletter, an exciting bulletin giving you up-to-date information on initiatives, developments and activities taking place in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall.



BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP



**Bloxwich**  
Business Partnership



**Brownhills**  
Town Centre Partnership

**Darlaston**  
Town Centre Partnership

**WILLENHALL**  
Traders and Community Support Group

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## Jobs Boost in District Centres



**We are delighted to have welcomed 36 new and relocated businesses to our five district centres over the last six months creating around 150 jobs.**

Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall have successfully bucked the national trend which has seen several big name shops close and high numbers of vacancies in many town centres. Whilst most of the new businesses have been independent retailers, the largest

retailer to open its doors is B&M in Brownhills whilst Bloxwich also received a significant boost when Ethel Austin was saved from closure after it was one of several stores bought out by entrepreneur Sue Townsend.

The District Centre Management Team is working closely with the business partnerships in each area on everything from raising the profile of the town centres, helping to attract new businesses, offering free business mentoring and training opportunities and, where appropriate, supporting businesses looking to relocate within the area.

Councillor Adrian Andrew, Walsall Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "In 2009 we launched our Shop Smart Shop Local initiative and clearly one of the keys to encouraging people to shop on their doorstep is to have a wide range of retailers offering a lot of different services. The number of new businesses setting up in our district centres over the last six months is really encouraging. It's important to remember though that this is an ongoing process and we will continue working hard to attract even more retailers in. We want our district centres to be places which serve the needs of our local residents together with being thriving centres where businesses of all sizes can succeed."

## The Team

Walsall Council's District Centre Management Team works with the business partnerships in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall to provide support to local businesses and promote the district centres to shoppers, residents and visitors. For more information about your local business

partnership or any other support you may need, please contact the officer for your area:

**Antonia Pompa** – Regeneration Officer for Aldridge and Brownhills 01922 652095

**Diane Mansell** – Regeneration Officer for Darlaston and Willenhall 01922 652416

**Nikki Rolls** – Regeneration Assistant for Bloxwich 01922 652507



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Aldridge Village Business Partnership  
Bloxwich Town Centre  
Brownhills Town Centre Partnership  
Darlaston Town Centre Partnership  
Willenhall Traders and Community Support Group



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@BrownhillsTown @Darlastontown  
@WillenhallTCSG



Walsall Council



# Blooming Marvellous Award Winners

**The Heart of England in Bloom results are in and the district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall can be very proud of their achievements.**

All five were entered into the Urban Community category and came away with excellent results. Aldridge achieved a Silver-Gilt award, Brownhills a Silver award and Bloxwich, Darlaston and Brownhills received Bronze awards. Congratulations to everyone who helped to make the In Bloom campaigns so successful.

Diane Mansell, who oversaw the Darlaston and Willenhall entries, received a special achievement award for the significant improvements both towns had made over the last year. Finally, Aldridge was singled out for special praise winning the Subaru Heart of England in Bloom Community Achievement Award in recognition of the hard work and high levels of community involvement that went into the village's In Bloom campaign.

Councillor Adrian Andrew, Walsall Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "All our district centres looked fantastic this summer which is down to the hard work of everyone who has been involved from officers to members of the community. It's particularly pleasing to see people showing pride in their local community and taking responsibility for doing a lot of the hard work themselves.

"Together with turning our district centres into a sea of colour we have also worked hard to tackle issues such as litter, graffiti and vandalism and make some real lasting changes.

"We are determined to raise the profile of our district centres and this competition has had a real impact in helping us to do that and make them really attractive places for people to visit."

Each district has an In Bloom organising committee made up of representatives from local businesses, voluntary organisations,

Street Pride, Green Spaces, local schools and churches, and the District Centre Management Team. These groups are already putting together projects for the next 12 months. If you would like to get involved, please contact the Regeneration Officer for your business partnership.



## Pension Legislation – Important Information for Employers

**The Government is proposing to bring in new laws from 2012 that will have a significant impact on every employer in the UK.**

### Key facts

The framework for these new laws is already in place in the shape of the Pensions Act 2008.

- Employers will, for the first time, be required to automatically enrol eligible employees into a pension scheme.
- Employers will, for the first time, be required to pay pension contributions for any employees who join and stay in the pension scheme.
- The Pensions Regulator will police and enforce these new laws.
- Even if you have an existing workplace pension scheme, you may have to make changes so that it complies with the new laws.

- Employers can either use their own pension scheme to comply with these new laws or rely on a Government built scheme - the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) scheme.

Do you want to keep control of your employee benefits package or rely on someone else, who knows nothing about your business, to do it for you?

### What happens next?

It's up to you:

- You can wait until 2012 and let someone else, who knows nothing about your business, set up and run a pension scheme for your employees or
- You can set up your own scheme and retain complete control over your benefits package.

The information provided is based on our current understanding of the relevant

legislation and regulations and may be subject to alteration as a result of changes in legislation or practice. The information provided is based on our current understanding of the Pensions Acts 2007 and 2008.

**Please do not take any action without first seeking professional financial advice.**

The Regeneration Officer for your business partnership will be sending out additional information in the near future by e-mail or post covering the following areas: the timetable for the changes, qualifying earnings, the Quality Workplace Pension Scheme (QWPS), eligible employees and the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST).

**We are very grateful to Martin Ward of Four Oaks Financial Services and a member of Aldridge Village Business Partnership for compiling this article.**

# Christmas All Wrapped Up



There will be lots of seasonal fun in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall as the business partnerships and local community groups host a range of Christmas events and activities aimed at putting a spring in the step of the festive shopper. The message this Christmas season must be to 'Shop Smart Shop Local', supporting your local shops and businesses during the crucial festive period.

Here is a selection of festive dates for the town centres for your diary:

## Facts & Figures

In July, August and September 2011, the District Centre Management Team has:

- Co-ordinated 9 business partnership meetings
- Provided business support to 57 new start-ups, existing businesses, landlords and agents
- Completed 35 individual business audits and provided follow-up advice and support
- Issued 15 press releases promoting the district centres
- Raised directly or provided partnership support to bring in an additional £5700 for events, promotions and public realm improvements
- Worked with our partners to deliver 23 events and environmental initiatives

### Sparkle into a Bloxwich Christmas

Saturday 26 November  
11am to 3pm  
Bloxwich town centre

### Brownhills Christmas Windows

Throughout December  
Brownhills town centre

### A Wonderful Willenhall Christmas

Saturday 3 December  
11am to 3pm  
Willenhall town centre

### Darlaston Celebrating Christmas

Friday 9 December  
4pm to 6pm  
Darlaston town centre

### Aldridge Christmas Festivities

Saturday 10 December  
10am to 4.30pm  
Aldridge village centre

### Darlaston Spirit of Christmas

Saturday 10 December  
11am to 3pm  
Darlaston town centre



## Santa Stroll and Dash with St Giles Walsall Hospice

Saturday 26 November, 10am start,  
Bloxwich Park, Bloxwich

Saturday 10 December, 10am start, The  
Croft, Aldridge

Walk or run around your local park to help raise money for St Giles Walsall Hospice. Each participant will receive

## Launch Pad – Can You Offer a Work Placement?

Launch Pad is a programme run by A4e Walsall for lone parents, carers and partners who are attempting to return to work. The course lasts for 8 weeks with the first 4 spent in-house learning about the role and importance of work to improving their lives, work ethics, customer service and transferable skills. This is followed by a 4 week placement with a business in Walsall to update their work experience.

A4e is looking for local businesses who would like to become involved in the scheme by providing a work placement. There is no cost to the employer – all travel, clothing, etc, is paid for by A4e or Jobcentre Plus. If you are interested in supporting the programme, please e-mail Sue Hayward at [shayward@a4e.co.uk](mailto:shayward@a4e.co.uk) or phone her on 01922 659194. She will arrange to visit you and explain how the programme works and what is expected from a placement.

Businesses already involved in the scheme have found it a good experience and have asked when they can have another work placement person. So, if you think you can help, please contact Sue and arrange a meeting.

a free santa hat, and full fancy dress is encouraged! £7.50 per adult, £2.50 per child. Participants are asked to raise sponsorship.

Call 01922 602520 or email [walsallfundraising@st-giles-hospice.org.uk](mailto:walsallfundraising@st-giles-hospice.org.uk) for a registration pack or more information.

# Around the Districts

## A Warm Welcome



Visitors to Aldridge are now welcomed to the village centre by new signs featuring the village logo and highlighting its involvement in the Heart of England in Bloom campaign. The signs are located on the three main gateways into the village and were funded by local businesses and voluntary organisations. A big thank you to all who contributed to the project.

## New Kids on the Block

We are delighted to welcome several new and relocating businesses to our districts over the last few months including The Ginger Tree, Da Vinci's, B & M, Lifestyle Express, the Hussey Arms, Bry's Brunchies, Dice Pizza, Custom Party Banners, Chan's Place, The Carousel, Ethel Austen (under new ownership), PC Drive, Manorshow, Funeral Partners, Cash 4 Clothes, Spring Garden, Malcolm Frost Butchers, Super Value Household Stores, Home City, Tom's Corner Café, Ace Communications and In Style.

## Launch of Aldridge Village Loyalty Card



The Mayor of Walsall, Councillor Garry Perry, officially launched the Aldridge Village Loyalty Card earlier in October. Photographed with the Mayor are Cllr. Adrian Andrew and representatives of the participating shops. Already, over 800 shoppers have signed up for their loyalty card which can be used at about 20 locally based shops and businesses of all types.

## New Housing Comes to Brownhills

Work has now started on the new Walsall Housing Group development at the southern end of Brownhills High Street. Once completed, around 80 new families will be welcomed to the area. At the same time, major works are being undertaken at Severn and Humphries houses to upgrade the outside of the existing buildings with work due to finish in March 2012.

## Combating Crime



Bloxwich Town Centre Partnership, the District Centre Management Team and West Midlands Police are working together on two high profile initiatives to combat retail crime in Bloxwich town centre. The Cuppa for a Copper campaign was launched in September whilst a Radio Link scheme is being trialled later in the year. The impact of the schemes will be monitored closely over the coming months.

## Businesses Succeed Online

44 businesses have now taken advantage of the free Facebook, Twitter and Website workshops delivered by the District Centre Management Team with a further 34 booked in for sessions to be run later in the year. Dates for future training sessions will be available in January and if you have any suggestions for training you would like to see delivered, please contact Diane Mansell on [mansell@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:mansell@walsall.gov.uk)

## Many Hands Make Light Work



A. F. Blakemore & Son sent a team of workers to help develop a community garden in Willenhall and provide a new facility for children in the area. The team worked tirelessly for a day in July to help install a children's play area at the Rosehill Community Garden as part of Blakemore's ongoing commitment to supporting the local community.

## Contact Us

For more information about the District Centre Management Team and the local business partnerships, please contact us on 01922 652507 or e-mail [districtcentremangement@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:districtcentremangement@walsall.gov.uk)