

Altrincham Town Centre Partnership

www.altrincham.org.uk

Altrincham Update

TOWN CENTRE UPDATE ISSUE 6—WINTER 2009

Altrincham Town Centre Partnership helps deliver a 'Festive Feast'

Altrincham Town Centre Partnership had a busy time in the lead up to Christmas, helping organise events for the Town.

At the Stamford Quarter, local war veteran and Victoria Cross winner Bill Speakman was joined by soldier Mark Taylor newly returned from fighting in Afghanistan, to jointly switch the Altrincham lights on. Entertainment was provided throughout the afternoon and despite the atrocious weather the event was well attended.

On the 26th November, Altrincham Market held their switch on, a special craft market took over the market for the evening. Juice Day Nursery opened the proceedings with a medley of Christmas songs from their older nursery children, this was followed by further seasonal music from the locally based Music Place choir and Urmston and Davyhulme scout & guide band brought the evening to a thundering close.



Phoenix Cheerleaders at the Stamford Quarter Switch on



Crowds gathered for the Goose Green Event

On Thursday 3rd December, evening visitors to Goose Green were treated to a festive feast by the restaurants and retailers based there. The event master minded by Julie Blackburn of Cheshire Bridal Wear, in association with the Altrincham Town Centre Partnership, brought the businesses of Goose Green together to raise funds for local charities. Children from the Clare Tanner School of Dance, Timperley, provided both song and dance and the Rotary Club of Urmston brought Santa to hand out festive cheer and goodies for the children at the event. The Christie Choir provided some old fashioned Christmas caroling, but the star of the event was Karen Challinor who sang beautifully tracks from her Christmas CD, which has been produced to raise funds for The Manchester Children's Hospital.

The final event organised by the Partnership, in association with the Grafton Dome was the Annual Christmas Wish on Thursday 10th December, between 4pm and 6pm. Hundreds of primary school children came to the Dome to swap their Christmas Wishes for a present from Santa. Entertainment was provided by Mike Mawdsley our Christmas DJ, to help pass the time while the children waited to give Santa their wish. This is a very popular event and some of the children's wishes really pull at the heart strings.

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Events For 2010

The Altrincham Town Centre Partnership marketing group are meeting on the 7th January to draw up a calendar of events for 2010. Can your business help by sponsoring an event or by allowing staff to spend an hour or two helping at an event. The more people and funds we have available, the more events we can organise which all helps to encourage extra visitors into the town centre to support local businesses! If you can help or you would like further information on our marketing group, contact the Partnership office.

ALTRINCHAM AMBASSADORS

As a Partnership member we would appreciate your help in promoting Altrincham's assets to customers and visitors:-

Free parking after 3pm Monday –Friday and all day Sunday in Council owned car parks & on street
 Unique independent shops and businesses
 Department stores and quality high street retailers
 Outdoor and indoor market
 (Tues, Fri & Sat)
 Good transport links
 Our own Silver Blades Ice Rink open all year round
 The state of the art Apollo Cinema



Martin Blackwell from the Association of Town Centre Management and Jeff Caplan from Storecheckers UK, present Andrew Dootson, Store Manager at Smiths, with their award for outstanding customer service.

ASSOCIATION OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGERS (ATCM) ENTERPRISING TOWN CENTRE PROJECT

Altrincham Town Centre Partnership successfully applied to be part of a free programme of support for town centre businesses in the North West sponsored by the ATCM and the North West Retail Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE).

A number of Altrincham businesses were asked to complete a survey provided by a national research company. Altrincham was commended, particularly considering all the problems with the recession following on the heels of a major town centre redevelopment. 60 Altrincham businesses took part in a 'mystery shopper' programme with a view to helping their customer experiences and business prospects.

To celebrate the culmination of the project, a business networking and feedback evening event with a buffet supper was held at the Cresta Court Hotel. Geraldine Hurd, from Betty and Belle lingerie shop and one of the winners of an outstanding customer service award, says, "As a small independent retailer I feel the Altrincham Town Centre Partnership is vital to our survival and to the regeneration of Altrincham. It was great to meet up with other local retailers and discuss improvements that have already been made and ideas for the future. Altrincham has some great, vibrant businesses that have won many awards and we need to work together as a team to have our voices heard – the Partnership, I'm sure, can help make this happen. We are also absolutely delighted in winning an award for 'outstanding customer service' following a visit from a mystery shopper."

Andrew and Jamie from Smiths, who sell high quality mens and womens fashion, and also present at the event said, "It was great to get together with other traders in the town and is a bonus to have won this outstanding customer service award. This project was definitely a help for local businesses and it is vitally important to get together and pool ideas and resources to promote the town as a whole in order to attract people in to see what is on offer."

Most of the participating businesses have now received one to one feedback of their results in a private interview. The next part of the project involves additional free advice and training help for participants. **A full list of participating businesses is on the town centre website.**

Help with Business Rates

The government have introduced a scheme for most ratepayers to defer 3% of their total rate bill for 2009/10 —the Business Rates Deferral Scheme.

The deferred amount has to be paid back over the next two financial years in equal portions; half during 2010/11 and half over 2011/12.

All traders will receive a letter from Trafford's Revenue Services inviting them to apply. However, in the meantime all ratepayers should carry on paying their existing rate bills.



Rates Revaluation

Rate revaluation for all commercial property will take effect on 1 April 2010 and is based on market rental valuations as of April 2008. Some businesses will see increases in their rateable value and it is recognised as a serious cost issues for businesses. Business rates are set by the Valuation Office Agency, collected locally, but redistributed by central government. We recommend that all businesses investigate the ways rate bills can be reduced, including transitional relief. Information is available at www.trafford.gov.uk/business. For more information and to appeal your new valuation visit www.voa.gov.uk/2010.

VAT Holiday to End

The standard rate of VAT is due to return to 17.5 per cent on 1 January 2010. For any sales of standard-rated goods or services that you make on or after 1 January 2010 you must charge VAT at the rate of 17.5 per cent. If you have a cash business and calculate your VAT using the VAT fraction you must revert to the VAT fraction of seven fortysevenths from 1 January 2010. There are no changes to sales that are zero-rated or reduced-rated for VAT. Similarly, there are no changes to VAT exemptions. Any sales you make at these rates are unaffected by this change.

Free Business Advice And Support

BusinessLink have lots of practical advice, information and support for all businesses, including information on how to manage during the recession, marketing and business efficiency, training and how to look after staff working alone.

More information is available on their website:

www.businesslinknw.co.uk

DO YOU WANT TO JOIN IN THE BIG TIDY UP?

We are very fortunate in Altrincham town centre to have excellent street cleaners in the form of Dave and John, and also the team at the Stamford Quarter. In addition, Altrincham Town Centre Partnership's environment champion, Keith Somerville, also regularly undertakes audits of the town centre along with Trafford Council's Environmental Services Officers to identify where litter, weeds and graffiti are a particular problem. If you know of an area within or near the town centre that could do with a good tidy up, let us know about it and we will endeavour to help get it cleared. Also, if you know of any schools or community groups who would like to get involved in the 'Big tidy up', the Partnership would be happy to work with them on projects within the Town Centre.





Altrincham
Town Centre Partnership

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES AND PROMOTING THE TOWN

Free retail training for local businesses

Following on from our participation in the successful 'Enterprising Town Centres' project sponsored by the Association of Town Centre Management and the NW Retail Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE), the mystery shop feedback sessions resulted in requests from town centre businesses for specific training opportunities. The project's CoVE partner for this area is offering the following free training courses, a number of which will be held in the conference room at the Stamford Quarter in the heart of the town centre.

Customer Service & Sales Training*

- Customer Service Training
- Sales Training

Institute of Leadership and Management Qualifications (ILM)**

- Award in Team Leading Level 2
- Award in First Line Management Level 3

Other free courses available

- Retail Diploma Level 2
- Sales NVQ Level 2
- Management NVQ Level 3*

Dates start from February 2010 and training is suitable for all levels of staff in retail businesses of all sizes.

Book early to avoid disappointment. Places are strictly limited and will be offered on a first come, first served basis! (Priority will be given to the businesses that took part in the Enterprising Town Centres project).

For more information please contact Angela Lofters at the Manchester College Retail Team. Phone: **0161 935 4068 / 0161 920 4466** or email: **angela.lofters@themanchestercollege.ac.uk**

*Free to staff with no formal qualifications or less than five GCSE's grade A-C.
Free to people working in businesses employing less than 250 staff.

Altrincham Town Centre Partnership
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Find out more about how the Partnership can benefit your business!