

REPORT TO: STOBSWELL PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 18 JULY 2007

FROM: PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

FILE: TEMP 22

SUBJECT: STOBSWELL PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT 2006 - 2007

SUMMARY

Stobswell continues to improve. House prices are rising, the time it takes to sell property is greatly reduced, most dereliction is removed and environmental improvements are making an impact, new housing is making a difference and private investment in new housing is increasing. New services started in the past couple of years are now established, appreciated and well used. Importantly these are all complimentary and support each other to the benefit of the community.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Stobswell Partnership Board has been established for 2 years. This report summarises progress with the Stobswell Regeneration Strategy and Development Framework over the year 2006/2007.

1.2 A key objective of the Dundee Partnership Community Planning Building Stronger Communities Group is "to demonstrate the long term viability of inner city communities by achieving a sustainable regeneration of Stobswell". The basic task is to restore Stobswell to its previous status as Dundee's third most popular inner suburb.

1.3 The outcomes expected are:

- a a more stable neighbourhood with greater housing choice;
- b greater neighbourhood satisfaction because there is a perception of a safe neighbourhood;
- c rising property values and reduced turnover in residents, showing the neighbourhood is somewhere that people want to live; and
- d improved physical environment with no derelict land or property, improved fabric of property and a reduction in litter and unmanaged refuse.

1.4 The Fundamentals of the Strategy and Development Framework

Spatial Framework and Environmental Investment Programme:

- a remove dereliction;
- b introduce new house building to improve housing choice and tenure choice;
- c improve the quality of the tenement environment and the maintenance of the tenements;

- d improve the shopping environment of Albert Street;
- e undertake environmental and streetscape improvement; and
- f the physical work is supported by Social and Economic Programmes and a marketing strategy.

Socio - Economic Programme:

- a promote community engagement;
- b sustain community facilities;
- c develop training and employment;
- d promote improved health;
- e promote youth projects;
- f promote better property management; and
- g market the neighbourhood.

2 ACTION DURING 2005/2006

2.1 Delivery Mechanism

The partnership **officers group** including staff from Communities Scotland, Tayside NHS Trust, Hillcrest and Home in Scotland Housing Associations, Dundee City Council (Planning and Transportation, Housing, Leisure and Communities, Economic Development and Environmental Health and Trading Standards), the Police and on a voluntary basis representatives from the Stobswell Forum and the Stobswell Landlord's Forum now meets every 2 months. This enables co-ordination of funding and actions and keeps all partners updated with regard to issues.

Meetings have usually included a presentation from groups providing different services in the neighbourhood to determine what the remaining concerns are or if there are related actions the Partnership can undertake to enhance the service or resolve difficulties.

The Stobswell Forum, the Community Representative Structure, meets monthly and has open forums every 3 months. This remains invaluable as a means of consulting on proposals and keeping the community updated and as means of the community raising concerns.

The key to delivering the strategy is **funding**.

The local housing investment agreement between Dundee City Council and Communities Scotland continues to include Stobswell as a focus for housing association investment. **Communities Scotland** invested £1.92m of Housing Association Grant in Stobswell during 2006/2007. The **Environmental Budget** for Stobswell was £100,000, **Wider Action Grants** totalling £41,181 from Communities Scotland support the Stobswell Information Centre, the expansion of its premise and the Active Communities service initiatives.

The **Vacant and Derelict Land Fund** has continued to be partly focussed on Stobswell with a total of £376,000 being spent here. Disposal of several sites previously dealt with via the VDLF have resulted in receipts of £80,000 used on allowable works in Stobswell in 2006/2007 and £193,000 to be used in 2007/2008.

ERDF grant assistance of £97,000 was received.

The **Council's Community Regeneration Environmental Improvement** budget dedicated to Stobswell was £25,000

The **Community Regeneration Fund** is supporting 25 projects in Stobswell or that serve Stobswell.

3 GENERAL SUMMARY OF POSITION IN 2006/2007

- 3.1 As part of the Regeneration Outcome Agreement for the city a survey was carried out to provide a baseline position to measure community satisfaction and change. This was undertaken by consultants T L Dempster in 2005. The results became available during 2006/2007. The number of respondents for Stobswell itself was 90. Most respondents felt there was no change. Only 8% felt there had been an improvement in the area. More than half felt they had more influence over decisions affecting the neighbourhood. Despite the widely held perception of Stobswell being a problematic area, the vast majority of responding householders had not been a victim of crime.
- 3.2 During 2006/2007 the Stobswell Partnership also had the benefit of the findings of a PhD study by a post graduate student from St Andrews University. The general tenor of the responses she received was that the area had improved but Park Avenue still continued to be a problem. The shops also remain an item of concern, along with dereliction and a lack of cleanliness of back courts.
- 3.3 The environmental programme, including "white light", focussed on the Craigie Street car park and starting work at Park Avenue.
- 3.4 Housing choice is improving with four private housing developments under construction. There has been no significant change in tenure. This will probably remain the case until all the new housing for sale has been completed. As a proxy for the tenemental streets, Park Avenue and Baldovan Terrace have been examined. Private renting accounts for 85% and 65% respectively of the flats there. This has not changed in the past 2 years.
- 3.5 **Average prices of flats (at June 2005)** have markedly increased compared with the Dundee average. The annual change in average selling price of all flats for Dundee was 19.7% while Stobswell was 32.9%. The actual average price in Stobswell (£60,191), however, is still lower than the Dundee average (£75,884). Taking Baxter Park Terrace out of the analysis the remainder of Stobswell enjoyed an even higher % change which is encouraging. In terms of time taken to sell flats at 2005 there was no difference between Stobswell and the rest of the city. Comparing key streets with counterparts in the West End the differential remains roughly the same as the previous year, with the exception of Albert Street and Blackness Road, where average prices achieved seem to have converged. The relative position compared with Clepington Road has not changed either. In terms of value the situation seems satisfactory.
- 3.6 Shop vacancies are surveyed every two years. The 2007 survey is being undertaken in May and will be reported separately. Two shops (effectively 4 shopfronts) have benefited from Facade Enhancement grants.
- 3.7 Dereliction is now largely eliminated or is close to resolution but derelict property at key locations of Whalers Close and Kemback Street remains an issue.

- 3.8 Items on which progress has been disappointing are:
- a the back court improvements in Park Avenue where, despite eventually managing to get owners in agreement in closes, they have not progressed with any action on the ground. This is symptomatic of a continuing lack of maintenance in tenements. It is impossible to say if this has any relationship to the increasing buy to let position; and
 - b the appearance of the shopping street remains a local issue.
- 3.9 The various recently established services in the neighbourhood are well received and being well used. These include The Clean Close Co, The Community Wardens, The Anti-social Behaviour Team, the Environmental Wardens, Action Team for Jobs, Access to Learning, Help IT and Dundee Healthy Living Initiative.

4 SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY DURING 2006/2007

- 4.1 A derelict warehouse at Whalers Close was demolished, but remaining derelict property here is proving difficult to resolve. At Dura Street/Erskine Street a Compulsory Purchase Order was promoted to complete the ownership of the property. The only objection is on the point of being resolved.
- 4.2 The environment programme undertook the reconfiguration and renewal of the Craigie Street Car Park, thereby increasing the number of car parking spaces by 15, introducing more underground recycling bins, simplifying the landscaping to improve safety and introducing white light. Street lighting was converted to white light in Raglan Street, Cardean Street, Pitkerro Road and the northern half of Baxter Park Terrace.
- 4.3 A start has been made to the contract for the streetscape improvements at Park Avenue. This will introduce private areas in front of ground floor flats and street trees. The euro bins introduced to Park Avenue as a first phase have proved beneficial. Misgivings by some residents have proved unfounded and the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Department have reported that it is now exceptional to receive a complaint about dumped rubbish in back courts in Park Avenue. Proposals for Baldovan Terrace that will be subject to consultation in May include euro bins.
- 4.4 No new housing units were completed. However, the 41 social rented units at Victoria Street should be completed in May 2007. Importantly, a start has been made on four sites with private housing which in total involves 144 units.
- 4.5 Offers of grant to 5 closes in Park Avenue were made for back court and security improvements, but as yet this has not translated into work on the ground. This has been nearly 3 years of work and is symptomatic of the difficulties in trying to encourage owners to co-operate and maintain property. To continue to be pro-active in this field will require a dedicated team and additional resources.
- 4.6 The Clean Close Company (report appended) has had another remarkable year. Although only operational for 2 years the company now employs 14, providing good training to SVQ level, and has 300 tenemental closes under contract. They have now also extended its services. Some potential business is lost because interested individuals are unable to persuade all owners in their tenemental close to participate. Advice leaflets on including this service as part of Housing Benefits have been issued that might help landlords decide favourably.

- 4.7 The Stobswell Landlords Forum has had relevant presentations for its members by the Anti-social Behaviour Team and Tayside Fire Brigade, and have circulated information about these and landlord registration and landlord accreditation to its extensive database of landlords. It also continues to advocate the benefits of using the Clean Close Company. Despite poor turn out at its meetings it remains a useful means of promoting good practice for landlords.
- 4.8 Dundee Landlord Accreditation now has 52 members which cover 862 of the cities properties. This is approximately 12% of the private rented sector in Dundee.

The development officer responsible for setting up DLA was on a one year fixed term contract which expired on October 2006. Since then, no full time staff have been devoted to landlord accreditation and the scheme has been continued on a minimal service until a more permanent solution can be found. However, in the restructure of the private sector services Unit within the Housing Department, the equivalent of one full time post has been proposed for Accreditation.

The Council awaits deliberation from the Scottish Executive on proposals to set up a national landlord accreditation scheme. The Executive have indicated that no further financial assistance will be given to support accreditation. Loss of the Accreditation system would be unfortunate. Services such as a tenant reference system for landlords is only afforded to those "accredited " as a means of fostering better management and maintenance.

- 4.9 The Facade Enhancement Grant Programme has continued, again with the benefit of CRF assistance. Two premises have been completed, the extension to the Information and Advice Centre in Arbroath Road and the Albertay Laundrette, which is effectively 3 shopfronts. The shopping available at Stobswell has been increased with the opening of the Lidl supermarket at Dura Street. A useful meeting was held with businesses in Lower Albert Street that identified issues. This information will influence a review of the FEGS Programme and help develop other responses.
- 4.10 A marginal increase of 1.5% in Anti-social Behaviour cases in Stobswell was reported in 2006 compared to 2005, but this might be because people are more aware of the service. On a per capita basis the number of cases is not exceptional. Although unable to break down figures for Stobswell, the Night-time Noise Team view is that Stobswell does not have a disproportionate share of their cases. The Community Safety Wardens also have developed good relations in the neighbourhood and consider Stobswell not to be problematic. Most of their reported items still relate to rubbish.
- 4.11 The completed extension to the Information and Advice Centre in Arbroath Road has provided much needed space for the increasing use of the various services delivered through it. It is open every weekday, often until 7.00pm. Action Team for Jobs (report appended) reports an increase in customers from the general area of Stobswell from 261 to 284 (+9%) and that the job shop run from the Information and Advice Centre is the busiest they run, and the only one occurring twice weekly. Most clients are Eastern European. Many clients enter employment. This service continues to be supported by the Hilltown Outreach Translation Service and the Access to Learning Project. Adjacent to the Advice and Information Centre is the Help IT Project that assists local businesses with developing their IT skills and needs.
- 4.12 The aim of Dundee Healthy Living Initiative is to improve health by breaking down barriers to having a healthy lifestyle (report attached). There are staff linked to the Stobswell/Hilltown area. Not many activities are held in Stobswell because of

difficulties with suitable accommodation. However, they report that a large number of people from Stobswell attend activities in Hilltown such as Tai Chi, walking groups, technical knockout, keep fit, circuit training, weight management etc. They have also had residents from Stobswell attending the weekly Health Information Point at the Wellgate centre. The WEB Project at Baxter Park continues to be well used by young people. This provides a confidential service that works around issues such as sexual health, drugs and alcohol, relationships, or any other issue that is of concern. Redevelopment of the Wallacetown Health Centre is planned to start this year. A new building will replace the current unattractive building.

- 4.13 Youth work provision continues to develop in the neighbourhood. Through the Community Safety Fund, the successful Thursday and Friday night football has secured funding to continue. These sessions are attended by up to 100 young people and are instrumental in reducing youth related complaints in the neighbourhood. Coaching staff from Dundee and Dundee United take the sessions. In response to complaints about young people "hanging about" the Crescent Lane area a "youth club" has been established. The Boomerang Centre has provided the space, Hillcrest Housing Association has offered the use of its minibus and Communities Scotland made a small grant to help purchase some equipment. It is well attended with around 20 boys and girls aged 12-16. Again, calls to the police have greatly reduced as result (report appended).
- 4.14 In terms of marketing, a full page article was placed in the Evening Telegraph featuring property developers, landlords and the Clean Close Co, explaining why Stobswell is worthy of investment. A DVD has been produced where the film makers were asked to interview a cross section of people, mostly selected at random and reflecting honest opinion. This reflects people's opinions on the situation that prevailed and how the neighbourhood has started to improve. It was very well received at the Stobswell Forum AGM open meeting. It is intended to circulate copies to schools, colleges, estate agents and funding agencies and to try and organise screenings in local public venues. Funding has also been secured for a larger sized notice board and to develop a website.

5 ACTION PROPOSED FOR 2007/2008

- 5.1 The environmental programme will include:
- Park Avenue streetscape completion;
 - Whalers Close/Langlands Street - renew and re-organise the Langlands Street car park, increasing the number of spaces in Phase 1. Phase 2 will continue into Whalers Close and the forecourt of the TSB and Alliance Chemist to complete the link and increase parking provision;
 - Baldovan Terrace - streetscape improvements that will increase car parking provision. Consultation during May; and
 - complete the White Light Programme.
- 5.2 At Dura Street/Erskine Street, confirm the Compulsory Purchase Order to complete the ownership and move towards the redevelopment of the property.
- 5.3 At Kemback Street, make an effort to secure the derelict property and seek its removal or renovation.

- 5.4 Review the tenement maintenance situation.
- 5.5 Focus budget and extra effort on the shopping street to alter perceptions.
- 5.6 Communities Scotland Wider Action Fund will continue to support the Help IT Project, Tenement Factoring (The Clean Close Co) and the Information and Advice Centre.
- 5.7 Marketing will develop good news stories with first occupiers of new housing developments and will develop the website.

19 July 2007

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Projectcoordinator/Stobswell/Reports/StobswellPartnershipAnnual18-07-07