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Supermarket giants to hand over cheque for £1,000 Donation for hospice at new store opening

Report by **Suz Elvey**

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TESCO will celebrate the opening of its new Sittingbourne store next week by making a donation to Demelza.

The supermarket giant announced it will present a cheque for £1,000 to a representative from the children's hospice at the official opening of the Tesco Metro in The Forum on Monday.

The store will open for business at 8am but the official cutting of the ribbon will be done at 10am, by Demelza's community fundraiser Laura Smyth.

There will be champagne, orange juice and cake for the first customers while youngsters on school holiday can take advantage of free face painting 9am-5pm.

Store manager Anna Webb said: "We are all really excited about welcoming our new customers into the store.

"I hope the residents of Sittingbourne are pleased with their new store and that Tesco will become a key part of the local community."

Laura Smyth added: "I would like to thank Tesco for the kind donation, we are thrilled with the money and to be part of the store's opening celebrations."

As well as selling food and drink, the Tesco Metro will offer non-food items including health and beauty products, DVDs, CDs, books and stationery and will open 7am-8pm Monday to Saturday and 10am-4pm on Sundays.

Meanwhile, despite not being picked as Swale Council's chosen partner for the wider regeneration of Sittingbourne, Tesco is keen to continue working with the authority, said corporate affairs manager Jonathan Simpson.

Mr Simpson reminded people Tesco had submitted planning applications for a large superstore, new shops, homes, leisure facilities and a pedestrian bridge linking areas north and south of the railway, which it hoped would come before Swale's planning committee soon.

At a meeting of the council's cabinet on Wednesday, members agreed to select the Spirit of Sittingbourne consortium in principle as the council's preferred development partner and to finally authorise the decision before June.

A development agreement is to be drawn up by director of regeneration Pete Raine with assistance from council leader Councillor Andrew Bowles.

Spirit of Sittingbourne is made up of property consultant and owner of the old paper mill site Essential Land, London-based property developer Cathedral Group and financial fund managers Altyon.

Mr Bowles said: "I am delighted that we are now a significant step closer to an exciting agreement which will give the people of Swale, and Sittingbourne in particular, the town centre regeneration which it so badly needs and which has been promised for so long. We will now sit down with the consortium and discuss the development agreement, the details of which will be released in due course."



Opening imminent: Tesco has stamped its mark on The Forum ahead of next week when its Metro will open its doors for the first time

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