

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

**Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee**

Meeting held 17 January 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Helen Mirfin-Boukouris (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Roger Davison, Terry Fox, Neale Gibson, Steve Jones, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten, Sioned-Mair Richards, Steve Wilson and Geoff Smith (Substitute Member)

.....

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bob Johnson with Councillor Geoff Smith attending as his substitute.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where a resolution may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee held on 15th November 2012, were approved as a correct record.

4.2 The minutes of the Special meeting of the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee held on 28th November 2012, were approved as a correct record, subject to the 7th bullet point under the heading "Sheffield Museums' and Galleries' Trust" in paragraph 5.4 being removed and replaced as the final bullet point under the heading "Sheffield Industrial Museums' Trust" in paragraph 5.4.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions.

6. CITY CENTRE VIBRANCY

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Place, which set out what was meant by City Centre Vibrancy and included the Strategic Framework for a Competitive City and City Centre

Vibrancy, together with a Proposed Framework for Defining Vibrancy. The report was supplemented by a presentation given by Brendan Moffett, Director of Marketing Sheffield, and Richard Eyre, Head of City Centre Management and Major Events. This provided information on the levels of vibrancy in the City Centre and plans for the future, and made particular reference to the development of The Moor area and Paternoster Row, and initiatives such as the High Street Innovation Fund which had enabled the setting up of the Bird's Yard retailer start-up unit, Showcase Sheffield and the aim to achieve Purple Flag Accreditation. Mention was also made of the funding challenges associated with the Tramlines festival and the fact that a healthy series of events was lined up for 2013. The importance of ensuring that these events did not leave the City was emphasised and it was noted that consideration was being given to the development of an events strategy covering the next 3 years.

6.2 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions in relation to the report and presentation, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- Despite the existence of a City Centre Retailers' Group, it was felt that retailers were not as proactive as they could be, as they only appeared to be concerned with their own premises. For instance, the Fright Night event appeared to have little effect on retail, although retailers did seem to be engaging with the proposed development of The Moor and the New Retail Quarter. There was also the challenge of getting retailers to open later.
- The Bird's Yard unit was to be launched later that month and there would be appropriate signage put in place, together with media coverage promoting Chapel Walk.
- Following completion of the New Retail Quarter, there would be some investment in infrastructure on the Wicker and Victoria Quays would also be improved to create good quality public realm. It was hoped that this would attract more people who were staying at the hotels on Victoria Quays, to the Wicker. The Purple Flag Accreditation required the City Centre to be family friendly and it was considered that theatres were a key feature of this, as would be the proposed multiplex cinema on The Moor. There was a national campaign to encourage retailers to open until 6.00 pm and it was felt that retailers at the Forum, Peace Gardens and Chapel Walk contributed to café culture in the City Centre. To further encourage café culture, the provision of blankets to allow people to sit outside in colder weather was worthy of consideration.
- Accessibility into the City Centre was good, with the Supertram and buses providing this at low cost. There was good car parking and it had been shown that people would pay for good

parking facilities such as at John Lewis's. Charges for car parking had been criticised but their reduction was not felt to be a panacea. There were some good modern car parks available in the City Centre, with some having special deals for patrons of certain businesses. The Council owned 12% of off-street parking in the City Centre and it wanted to offer flexible, convenient tariffs. It was considered though that if the offer was good enough people would come into the City Centre.

- Attempts were being made to get landlords to reduce rents in the City Centre, but they were proving to be difficult to engage with, particularly the remote ones. There was, perhaps, a need to lobby the landlords more. Recent high street departures indicated that there was a problem and consideration was being given to involving social enterprise in developing pop-up shops and use by people such as artists to help with the vacancy problem.
- Discussions were taking place with Sheffield Hallam University regarding the use of the former Post Office on Fitzalan Square and the Salvation Army Citadel would be an ideal location for use by artists and groups such as a dance co-operative.
- Although there was a City Centre Residents' Forum and work being undertaken with residents around Devonshire Green, it was acknowledged that there was a need to engage better with residents of the City Centre.
- It seemed to be a logical idea to encourage businesses to offer free home delivery.
- The ambition was for Sheffield City Centre to get into the Top 20 in the Shopping League and to see an increase in average spend as well as square footage. There was a need to align independent and larger traders and to support the independent, creative thinkers which Sheffield appeared to have. It was also important to support the ways in which consumers looked for their purchases. In addition, the Enterprise Team and Creative Sheffield offered support to independent traders.
- The Bird's Yard initiative would be promoted via The Star and Sheffield Telegraph newspapers and in appropriate local magazines, and the following week there was to be a meeting to promote independent retailers generally.
- It was acknowledged that the future of City Centres was not just about retail, but it was only possible to work with what was known and work around it to suit our purposes. Agility was required to take advantage of any opportunities which may arise.

- Consideration was being given to the concept of business improvement districts, whereby a levy on rates was spent by retailers on events, with the aim of improving footfall.
- It was important that the City Centre offer was inviting, flexible and provided something for all ages.

6.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Brendan Moffett and Richard Eyre for their contribution to the meeting and the earlier walkabout of the City Centre;
- (b) notes the contents of the report, the presentation and the officer responses; and
- (c) requests a further walkabout of the City Centre in approximately one year's time, together with a further update to this Committee.

7. **PARKING ON DROPPED KERBS AND PAVEMENTS**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Head of Transport, Traffic and Parking Services which outlined the issues involved in the Council's approach to parking on dropped kerbs and pavements, and suggested alternative approaches for the Committee to take in considering these issues.

7.2 Attending for this item were John Bann, Head of Transport, Traffic and Parking Services, Simon Botterill and Brian Hey, Place Portfolio.

7.3 John Bann took the Committee through the report which provided some background on parking on dropped kerbs and pavements, described what the Council was currently doing in this regard and the problems with this, posed a series of questions to be addressed, described how any measures taken would affect the people of Sheffield and suggested two approaches as to how the Committee could examine this issue in more detail.

7.4 In response to a public question relating to the narrowness of Houghton Road, Woodseats and the consequent access problems for the emergency services, John Bann indicated that there were many streets like this in Sheffield and referred to the cost of narrowing the kerb, together with the related issues of moving the lighting columns and protecting the utility services equipment beneath the pavement. In common with all such proposals, any work would need to be prioritised and a solution needed to be found to suit all such roads in the City.

7.5 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- It was difficult to have different rules for different situations and, in relation to dropped kerbs, this could be addressed with yellow lines but this would be expensive. It might act as a deterrent if it became more widely known that a parking ticket could be issued for obstructing a dropped kerb.
- In relation to Haughton Road, Amey may be able to narrow the kerb as part of the Streets Ahead works.
- Officers would liaise with the appropriate contract officers in relation to Amey's policy on verge protection.
- The Amey contract only required damaged kerbs to be replaced and there appeared to be no provision for a change in kerb height. In relation to damage to footways, it was Amey's responsibility to maintain them.
- Officers had no idea of the cost of the Council undertaking the enforcement of pavements being obstructed by cars being parked on them.
- It appeared that the Police did not take any enforcement action against cars being parked on pavements and causing an obstruction. Council enforcement involved parking on clearways, on yellow lines, in the vicinity of football grounds on match days, pay and display car parks, permit parking, bus lanes and where issues were drawn to the Council's attention.
- Parking issues on Derbyshire Lane had been resolved by allowing parking on a dedicated pavement area.
- It would not be expensive to test the pavement strength on Haughton Road, but priorities needed to be considered.
- If parking was allowed on pavements, criteria would need to be defined as to how much space needed to be left for pedestrians.

7.6 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- (a) thanks the officers for their participation in the meeting and notes the contents of the report;
- (b) agrees to set up a Task and Finish Group, to meet outside of the normal schedule of Committee meetings, to consider the issues involved in parking on dropped kerbs and pavements in detail and undertake site visits and workshops, with the aim of developing recommendations to be put to Cabinet;
- (c) requests the Policy Officer (Scrutiny), in conjunction with officers from Transport, Traffic and Parking Services and Highways

Maintenance, to put together a programme of meetings of the Task and Finish Group; and

- (d) appoints Councillors Ian Auckland, Neale Gibson, Roger Davison, Terry Fox and Robert Murphy to comprise the Task and Finish Group.

8. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

8.1 The Policy Officer (Scrutiny) submitted the Committee's Work Programme for 2012/13 and the Forward Plan for the period 3rd January 2013 to 30th April 2013, for consideration.

8.2 **RESOLVED:** That:-

- (a) the contents of the Committee's Work Programme 2012/13 be approved and it be noted that:-
 - (i) the joint meeting with the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, to look at what support the Council was giving to the development of the University Technical College, was to take the form of a workshop to be held in early March 2013;
 - (ii) appropriate youth and business representatives were to be invited to the aforementioned joint meeting; and
 - (iii) the Policy Officer (Scrutiny) was liaising with Public Health officers to decide on an appropriate time for the item on the Sheffield Food Plan to be considered by the Committee; and
- (b) The Forward Plan for the period 3rd January 2013 to 30th April 2013, be received and noted.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 21st March 2013, at 2.00 pm in the Town Hall.