

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

Meeting held 8 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Cate McDonald (Chair), Neale Gibson, Ibrar Hussain, Alf Meade, Tim Rippon, Steve Wilson, Paul Wood, Penny Baker (Substitute Member), Peter Price (Substitute Member) and Jillian Creasy (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received and substitutes attended the meeting as follows:-

Apology

Substitute

Councillor Ian Auckland

Councillor Penny Baker

Councillor Steve Jones

No substitute nominated

Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris

Councillor Peter Price

Councillor Rob Murphy

Councillor Jillian Creasy

Councillor Joe Otten

No substitute nominated

Councillor Martin Smith

No substitute nominated

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 Councillor Tim Rippon declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (The Future Role of the City Centre) as a resident in the City Centre.

3.2 Councillor Ibrar Hussain declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (The Future Role of the City Centre) as he works in the City Centre.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 28th August 2014

The minutes of the special meeting of the Committee held on 28th August 2014, were approved as a correct record.

4.2 10th September 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th September 2014, were

approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, reported that, in connection with the Committee's Work Programme 2014/15, (a) he had circulated an updated copy of the Programme to Members and (b) further to a Notice of Motion at the Council meeting on 1st October 2014, Air Quality would now be added to the Programme.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

6. THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE CITY CENTRE

- 6.1 The Chair reported that discussion on the issue regarding the future role of the City Centre had been requested at the Committee's meeting held on 9th April 2014, at which Members had discussed the issue of City Centre vibrancy. Arrangements had been made for two Council officers and four representatives from the private sector, with particular interest in the City Centre, to address the Committee. The Committee also considered a document produced by the Sheffield First Partnership – "Sheffield City Centre – Shaping the Future".
- 6.2 Edward Highfield, Director of Creative Sheffield, provided a brief overview of the economic position of Sheffield, indicating that the City's economy had significantly transformed over the last 20 years, with substantial improvements made across a range of economic indicators. He stated that cities matter, scale matters and that cities drive regional growth and, in relation to the first point, Gross Value Added (GVA) had increased from a 24% share to a 28% share of the national economy. In relation to the scale of the City, he referred to the challenges facing smaller towns and cities and to the vast economic differences between Sheffield and London. On cities driving regional growth, he reported on the various components of a successful city and indicated that, despite many of Sheffield's successes, the City Centre still underperformed economically as compared to a number of other cities.
- 6.3 Simon Ogden, Head of City Regeneration, gave a presentation on the work being undertaken in terms of updating the City Centre Masterplan following consultation on the Plan in 2013. He stated that work was progressing towards a Delivery Programme, and referred specifically to a ten point vision which included a number of plans and proposals, such as the creation of a compact, high quality retail centre, the establishment of three new business districts, the creation of a new vibrant and innovative area at Castlegate, better use of road space and parking, and improvements to the bus and tram networks. Mr Ogden also reported on the plans to improve the retail and business sectors within the City Centre and referred to the Grey to Green Project, which involved plans to remove traffic lanes on the route along West Bar, towards Castlegate, in order to provide more green space for recreational purposes, including walking and cycling. Reference was also made to the University Campus Masterplans, which involved the two City's Universities drafting Masterplans containing proposals to make their respective campuses more integrated, welcoming and safe, linked to the creation of the Advanced Manufacturing Park at Waverley; plans to create a more resilient and low carbon City; plans to improve facilities for those people living in the City

Centre, by improving key routes and green corridors, and by creating pocket parks; and improvements to access routes to the City Centre and to parking facilities. Mr Ogden concluded by referring to the Sheffield City Centre Region Investment Fund (SCRIF) Programme, which involved four clusters – Riverside Business District, University of Sheffield Campus/Brookhill junction, Knowledge Gateway and Central Shopping, which has received a provisional allocation of £21m to be drawn down subject to the submission of business cases over 2015-18.

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The Council, as part of its City Living Strategy, was aware of the difficult balance between the residential sector and night-time economy in the City Centre. A number of quiet zones had been established, where there was a concentration of residential accommodation and, as part of a review of the Strategy, officers were looking at establishing further such zones. There were still issues with regard to West One, where there was a concentration of late night, licensed premises and residential accommodation. As part of this work, it had acknowledged that there was a need to look at how the Planning and Licensing Services could work together in connection with applications for and enforcement of, licensed premises. There were plans to review and update the City Living Strategy in 2014.
- Whilst there was sufficient car parking in the City Centre, it was accepted that not all parking facilities were easy to find, and that it was not used by people who needed it most. Not all the car parks were linked to the variable message system.
- Whilst Meadowhall had obviously had an effect on footfall in the City Centre, it was an important development in its own right, and an important asset to the City.
- It would be critical to the City's economy that the HS2 rail station was constructed in the City Centre. Other city centres of comparable size to Sheffield provide a far higher number of jobs than Sheffield, and having the HS2 station in the City Centre would help bridge this gap. Whilst Meadowhall was viewed as being a suitable location for transport reasons, it would not provide the economic benefits a City Centre station would.
- A new biomass power station at Blackburn Meadows was now being operated by EON, and plans to link in with the City Centre were now under way.
- Work in respect of the City Centre Business Improvement District (BID), was being progressed by a steering group comprising representatives from the City Centre's public sector, and retail, leisure, education and office sectors, as well as the night-time economy, and which aimed to deliver a wide range of initiatives, focusing on making the City Centre a better place to visit, work and live. A ballot of businesses and retailers in the City Centre would be

taking place in February 2015 and, if successful, would result in businesses with a rateable value of a specific amount paying a levy, which could generate additional funding. Part of this additional funding could be used to encourage more retail outlets to remain open later in the evening in an attempt to further boost the City Centre's night-time economy.

- In terms of economic comparisons with other English cities, Sheffield was 7th out of 8 in terms of GVA per head in respect of the Country's core cities and, in comparison with other European cities, apart from London, all the Country's core cities compared poorly with such cities of equivalent size. It was considered that the Country was far too reliant on the economic position in London and that any improvements to Sheffield's economic position would require long-term, generational changes. Although Sheffield had kept pace with the other core cities, the gap in GVA, as compared with London, had grown bigger. The majority of the big development schemes in the City had been constructed using public investment, and it had been identified that there was a need to move to a position where such development involved little or no public investment. There was a need to look at improving the City's office accommodation in order to attract inward investment.

6.5 The Committee received brief presentations from representatives of the City Centre retail, leisure and business sectors, as follows:-

6.5.1 *Alastair Reid, Chair of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce's Sheffield Property and Regeneration Committee*

Mr Reid stated that the Chamber of Commerce recognised the high level of public sector jobs in the City Centre, and that, in the light of the present economic position, there would be a risk to such jobs for some time. The City needed to become more attractive to inward investors, and the Chamber had recognised the need for more quality office and retail accommodation, more housing where it was needed, and an increase in the number and quality of the workforce. It was considered that some areas of the City Centre needed improvement in terms of their appearance, and that there was a need for improvements to the transport network, including the access routes in and out of the City Centre and to signage.

6.5.2 *Tim Bottrill, Vice Chair, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce's Sheffield Property and Regeneration Committee*

Mr Bottrill stated that the City Centre has to be a place where people can live, work and play and to enable this, there was a need for more family housing, more high quality office accommodation, and more, high quality retail outlets, including the identification of specific areas within the City Centre where independent retailers could locate, at lower rent. He made specific reference to the problems with regard to land value in the City, indicating that there was a need for more imaginative initiatives in terms of raising such values. He also referred to the need to provide potential inward investors with assurances and advice in order to encourage them to take up office space in the City Centre. Also related to this, was the need to ensure that errors made in previous years, relating specifically to the construction

of office accommodation in incorrect locations, were avoided. Mr Bottrill concluded by stating that the New Retail Quarter was vitally important to the future economic success of the City Centre.

6.5.3 Ian Slater, Manager, The Sheffield Metropolitan Hotel and Chair of Hospitality Sheffield

Mr Slater referred to the importance of the HS2 rail station being located in the City Centre and to the need for better links between Meadowhall and the City Centre to ensure that both shopping centres complimented each other, and that it was not a case of Meadowhall versus the City Centre. He stated that whilst Supertram provided an excellent link between the two centres, there was a need to create other links, not necessarily transport links. He considered that there were both good and poor areas in the City Centre in terms of appearance, and referred specifically to the urgent need for improvements to the Castlegate area as this was the main gateway into the City Centre. Mr Slater also referred to the need for a mix of business and residential accommodation and considered that a vibrant night-time economy was vital, if managed correctly. He concluded by stating that Sheffield was still a very popular visitor location, with occupancy rates at many hotels remaining very high on Saturdays, with occupancy rates being driven by events in the City. However, a drop in business tourism during the recent recession had had a detrimental impact on hotel occupancy rates in the City Centre, Monday to Friday.

6.5.4 Ann Cadman, Vice Chair, Sheffield City Region Retail Forum

Mrs Cadman stated that there was a need to look at the overall character of the City Centre to ensure that there was a good mix of retail, residential accommodation, leisure and tourism facilities and green spaces. She stated that one of the most important factors was the need to increase footfall in the City Centre and the main method of achieving this aim would be to increase the amount of residential accommodation. She referred to the fact that many Sheffield residents visited Manchester, Leeds or Nottingham to go shopping, and stressed that a vibrant retail centre was required in order to stop this. She reported on the need to consider the changes in retail practice, referring specifically to online purchasing, which was resulting in retail outlets requiring less floor space. One possible model which could be the way forward is the one adopted by Debenhams, where a number of smaller companies shared the floor space in a large store. Mrs Cadman stated that it would also help if retail centres were clustered together as this was always more appealing to shoppers. She stressed that there was a need for the Council to give serious consideration to the area at the bottom of Fargate, down to, and including, Castlegate, and consideration also needed to be given to introducing free or cheaper car parking in order to attract more people into the City Centre. She concluded by stating that there was a need to review signage, both in and around the City Centre area and from Meadowhall to the City Centre, and to review the highway network around the City Centre area.

6.6 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- In terms of the New Retail Quarter, there was a need to have a mix of major retail companies, smaller retail chains and small, independent stores, such as those found on Division Street. Any new major retail development needed to be complementary to Meadowhall and not viewed as competition.
- Consultation by the Council with the private business, leisure and retail sectors was considerably better than it had been in the past although, on occasions, it felt like a 'tick box' exercise. All the representatives welcomed the improved dialogue.
- The majority of the hotels were located on the fringes of the City Centre simply due to the improved transport links to the motorway and rail station.
- There was a need, from a safety point of view, for hotels to be located close to office accommodation and retail outlets. It would also be beneficial if residential accommodation was located near to office accommodation and retail outlets.
- The City Region was undertaking detailed work in connection with the location of the HS2 rail station in the City, and looking at how to maximise the economic regeneration benefits if a station was located in the City Centre, and how to maximise the economic regeneration benefits if a station was located at Meadowhall.
- It was accepted that more people travelling to the City Centre by Supertram or train would have environmental benefits, but the majority of people still found it more convenient to travel by car, particularly those shopping.
- As part of the Delivery Programme, following consultation on the City Centre Masterplan, the Council was looking at a number of areas on the periphery of the City Centre, such as Woodside and Park Hill, in terms of possible development and improved links to the City Centre.
- The Council was currently very active in terms of discussions with companies seeking office accommodation on the periphery of the City Centre. Whilst there was a chance that some of the office accommodation would be let other accommodation would be left vacant for some years to come. One possible alternative for such accommodation would be to look at conversion to residential accommodation.
- The sectors represented at the meeting received regular updates from the Council in terms of the various developments in the City Centre, and work was being undertaken to look at how these communication links could be further improved.
- The BID may help to address the issue of how to increase footfall in the City Centre between 5.00 pm and 8.00 pm.

- The City Centre Masterplan Delivery Plan and Prospectus was due to be published in the near future, in a number of different formats, following consultation on the Plan in 2013.

6.7 Members of the Committee then had a discussion and identified the following headlines:-

- The importance of the evening economy
- Potential for further residential sites in the City Centre
- Need for more, and improved, signage
- A mix of use for the New Retail Quarter should be considered
- The Council needs to be efficient, fast and effective in its response to business
- Need for progress on the New Retail Quarter
- The BID work was very positive

6.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks the Council officers and the private sector representatives for attending the meeting and updating Members on the current position and future plans in respect of the City Centre, and for responding to the questions raised; and
- (b) agrees that the Chair writes to Councillor Leigh Bramall, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development, informing him of the summary of the discussion and to raise the key points.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday, 10th December 2014, at 4.30 pm, in the Town Hall.

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