

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE & LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL**

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 5.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Hannah Hockaday (in the Chair)

Councillors Steve Hastings  
Alicia Denny  
Yahiya Chowdhury  
Lee Hunt  
Matthew Winnington

#### **1. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

All members of the panel were present.

#### **2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting - 9 January 2017 (AI 3)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **4. Smarter Cities Review (AI 4)**

Professor Steffen Lehmann, Professor of Sustainable Architecture at the University of Portsmouth and Director, Cluster for Sustainable Cities gave a presentation to the panel and members of the public entitled '**Regenerated Cities are Sustainable Cities**'.

##### Introduction

Professor Lehmann thanked the panel for the opportunity to address them to look at the challenges in the city and give ideas for urban solutions and strategies for the way forward; he gave a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation (75 slides). He mentioned that one of the main problems in Portsmouth was the level of traffic and he asked where were the cycle ways and safe routes for cyclists? He also observed that the waterfront had huge potential for improvement and upgrading of public spaces both big and small; the waterfront was also relevant to students as the University of Portsmouth (UoP)'s campus idea was expanding. With regard to housing and land use, he suggested that it is smarter to build upwards with three to four storeys infill expansion and densification and in selected areas in the city centre up to ten storeys around public transport nodes. His presentation then went on to look at urban systems, water, energy, transport and waste management interaction

of networks. The UoP is involved in an application for the 'Urban Nexus' project that uses ICT technology to interconnect urban systems to provide efficiencies and an assessment tool for cities to guide decision making on future urban development.

#### Partnership working

The potential of working jointly with Southampton meant that collaboratively the cities became the urban size of the fifth largest city in the UK. He also reported that the University of Portsmouth was now 25 years old and ranked in the top 2% in world rankings according to the recent THE rankings of young universities. The economic benefit to the local community was £300m per annum (recent report by Deloitte) that the University contributes to the City of Portsmouth, eg. students brought to the city; and the student numbers were projected to increase from 24,000 to 29,000 by 2020. UoP is also the owner of 35 buildings in the city centre. Professor Lehmann felt that it was therefore important for the City Council and University to be involved in discussions to share strategies especially with the expanding University Quarter that needed an urban heart. One of the ideas being put forward by the university was the future pedestrianisation of Hampshire Terrace to create a new mixed-use high-quality public space.

#### Urban Regeneration

Professor Lehmann gave examples from other cities showing strategies of their "rebirth" in Bristol and Manchester. Internationally, Seville had created public meeting places on the site of a former car park, and in New York the High-line provides a new linear park which had resulted the property values doubling in these areas. At Detroit, a shrinking city that struggled with empty properties and people leaving, there were now community garden schemes in place to improve the neighbourhood. His view was that Portsmouth had disconnect between its parts of the city, which has led to a fragmented city; and that there was a threat of the sea-level rise that the council needed to future proof in preparation. He suggested building the sea defence by creating better public spaces and landscape along the waterfront.

Professor Lehmann stressed the importance of opening public spaces and the waterfront promenades to give connectivity within the city which should be reflected within the cycling and transportation plans, to encourage cycling and walking and thereby a more active and mobile local population.

#### UoP University Quarter

A "**smart campus**" should not just be about IT and sensors but about creating a better public space network, citizen-centric improvements and decision making based on evidence and big data. The UoP's University Quarter Plan aimed for an open campus at ground floor, with visibility of activities, where research and teaching could be viewed happening from passers-by.

He was asked how the city could become more attractive for more of the staff at the university to wish to live in Portsmouth. Professor Lehmann responded that better models of infill housing and more housing choices should be encouraged (with innovations such as gardens on rooftops) as consumers need to have a better choice, so there is the need for a more experimental

approach without inflating prices. Some areas like Southsea were expensive and were lacking affordable real estate. He referred to modular prefabrication of houses which was a research area to provide houses with more floors built off-site possibly bringing down the land costs per unit, as well as the innovative use of new construction methods and materials such as engineered timber.

Prof. Lehmann reported that the estates group at the University is planning to invite participation in an international design competition for a key building on the corner of Victoria Park (a flagship building for the Business School on the former site of Victoria Baths) to promote innovation and good design. The forthcoming Estates Masterplan will set out the University's vision for developments over the coming 20-25 years and will see significant investment in new buildings, the upgrading of existing buildings and – most importantly – investment in new public space between buildings for informal social interaction.

#### Sea Defences & the Waterfront

In exploring the idea of the sea defences being future proofed, Prof Lehmann advocated the need for good designs of public space, as seen at new waterfronts in Bordeaux, Sydney and Lower Manhattan, which incorporated landscaping elements. He also reported that the Blackpool seafront had taken an innovative approach regarding the design of sea defences.

Claire Upton-Brown reported that Portsmouth's sea defences were at conceptual design stage at the moment, with focus on securing funding from the Environment Agency. Professor Lehmann felt it was key to ensure that Portsmouth has a world class standard waterfront incorporating good landscaping, promenades and public space elements of very high standard.

#### Green Urban Space

Prof Lehmann was keen to encourage easy access to more green space and community gardens, showing images of fences preventing public access within the city close to the waterfront. Tree planting along streets also enhances good landscape, water management and cooling, and he pointed to opportunities elsewhere of harvesting and storing rainwater.

#### Sustainable City Planning and Public Open Space

Prof Lehmann explained the urban resilience principles for a compact regenerated city and felt it was wasteful that many cars are travelling into the city each day carrying one person each, blocking public space, and there should be encouragement of buses and bikes to free up the space as well as the use of electric cars and e-bikes. He showed images of bikes accommodated on light railway at Stuttgart, and as streets formed a high percentage of public space some cities encouraged the underground parking of cars in designs.

**Solar energy** was also important for sustainable architecture. Embracing the idea of generating energy within the city, he explained the concept of solar power houses to generate more energy than they consume would feed back into the grid (this was already seen with Energy-Surplus Houses in Freiburg).

He continued to speak about the relationship between health, liveability and urban living. Studies in Japan had shown obesity can be reduced through better public space and encouragement of cycling and walking and this would also attract more people to work and live in the city. There was evidence that quality outdoor environments affect activity attitudes and behaviour<sup>1</sup>. Sustainability also meant use of vacant units with the example shown of Canterbury using an old train shed as a food market and restaurants (The Food Shed) serving locally sourced organic food.

**Traffic planning** - an example was given of the success in Barcelona in reducing traffic in the centre of the city by 25% by introducing a new grid system of flow<sup>2</sup>. In Singapore they had managed to increase green space whilst increasing urban density at the same time.

#### 'Urban Nexus' Research Project

He expanded on an European research project that the University wished to take forward with a partnership approach; the 'food, water, energy Nexus' is an application for funding for which Portsmouth was invited to take part along with other cities (in the Netherlands and Poland) to develop an "urban living lab". The aim was to produce energy and food within the city.

#### Arising Issues

Members commented that there could knock on traffic effects by closing roads for pedestrianisation. Professor Lehmann thought there should be a carefully considered action plan for prime locations such as Hampshire Terrace or Clarence Pier to see what the public gain could be.

Members recognised that there is the opportunity to be more imaginative in the future schemes for flood defences. There is also a need to encourage safer cycling routes for this compact city.

#### **Way forward on the Nexus Bid**

Members of the panel were grateful for the presentation and showed interest in the Nexus bid. Whilst the panel supported, in principle, a joint way of taking forward innovation, members acknowledged that it was not the role of the Panel to consider and decide whether Portsmouth City Council should be one of the partners to the expression of interest which needs to be submitted to the EU on 15 March 2017. Professor Lehmann and Claire Upton-Brown would be liaising and raising this further with the appropriate members.

**ACTION:** Claire undertook to take away this draft proposal for further discussion with her director, Stephen Baily the Director of Culture & City Development. If there is a letter of support this would be copied to members of the EDCL panel and Claire would update the EDCL Chair.

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<sup>2</sup> Super Blocks, see:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/video\\_and\\_audio/features/magazine-38895435/38895435](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/video_and_audio/features/magazine-38895435/38895435) <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/video\\_and\\_audio/features/magazine-38895435/38895435](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/video_and_audio/features/magazine-38895435/38895435)

### Public Questions

Members of the public were permitted to ask questions. Celia Clark and David Baines took the opportunity to ask questions regarding the need to encourage developers to 'up their game' and not just provide small houses and regarding how innovation could be encouraged. Claire Upton-Brown reported that there was the opportunity for housing designs to be considered at a more strategic level through the reviewing of the Local Plan and the Transport Plan. This would encourage investment in the public realm and people's ideas are invited in this process.

Members of the public also felt that there was a need to encourage more people to make better use of the efficient bus services in the city.

Celia Clark suggested that locations such as Wymering Manor might be suitable as a trial area for the use of local food waste in gardens for the production of energy. It was also acknowledged that Professor Lehmann's ideas were ambitious at a time of local government austerity.

Councillor Hockaday, as Chair, thanked Professor Lehmann for his very thought provoking presentation and the panel would encourage the partnership approach and participation in networking events to take forward innovative ideas.

### **5. Date of Next Meeting (AI 5)**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 5pm, to hear from Dr Horsley the new Joint Director of Public Health. This would also be an opportunity to hear feedback from members and officers attending a Smart Cities conference in London on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

The meeting concluded at 6.40 pm.

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Councillor Hannah Hockaday  
Chair