

## **EDCL Scrutiny Panel - 22 October 2014**

### ***'Revitalising local high streets and secondary shopping centre area in the city'***

#### **TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT**

This document provides an overview of the role of Town Centre Management.

##### **ROLE SUMMARY**

To work with businesses, local community and PCC to lead the promotion and management of initiatives designed to maintain, support and enhance the position of Portsmouth City Centre as a sub-regional shopping centre.

- To co-ordinate the aims of the City Council with the aims of business.
- To create an environment in which business can flourish.
- To represent business needs to the City Council.
- To co-ordinate the different City Council functions where they impact on Town Centres.
- To maximise the benefit and minimise the detriment of Town Centre developments.
- To be a conduit and a catalyst.

In more simplistic terms town centre management focus on two key issues: How many people come and how long they stay. The terminology is footfall and dwell time.

##### **TOWN CENTRES**

Nearly everyone depends on our town centres for access to shopping, entertainment, leisure, culture, public services and transportation. Portsmouth town centres are natural locations for trade and commerce and, in a very real sense, they are the heart of their community. Their management is central to the prosperity and well-being of whole communities as they are the main drivers of the sub-regional and local economy. A local centre is also very important to the community surrounding it. Additionally the City Centre acts as a focal point for local government and public administration. It is therefore difficult to overstate the importance of these centres.

These town centres are no longer about the 9 – 5 economy. The value of the evening and night time economy in terms of jobs, and business creation, is also very important. The evening and night time economy is worth about £450 million to Portsmouth. Developing leisure activities and places to meet within the local community would also have many benefits.

Footfall in the City Centre is about 9% down over the past 10 years and shows a decrease this year so far of 6%. Southsea has decreased by 21% over the past 10 years and shows an increase this year so far of 5%. The deeper and earlier decline in Southsea would reflect the greater impact of Gunwharf Quays on Southsea.

The 80s and early 90s saw a decline in most town and city centres due to out of town developments which led to a “town centres first” planning policy and the development of town centre management initiatives. We are facing a similar crisis now due to the internet and a change in retail patterns. Centres must now be more than a retail hub. Nationally Town centres are under threat. Visits to town centres have declined by over 20% in the last 5 years. In Portsmouth over the past 5 years footfall has declined by 7% in the City Centre and decreased in Southsea by 6%.

Centres now need to be much more than shops and must have an affinity with their communities if they are to succeed. There has never been a more important time to help town centres meet the challenges facing them.

## **CO-ORDINATED APPROACH**

Town Centre Management aims is to develop a co-ordinated pro-active approach which helps ensure that our town and city centres are desirable and attractive places at all times of the day. Town Centre Management is a partnership between the public and private sectors and brings together a wide-range of key interests to promote the vitality and viability of a town centre and maintain its key role as the heart of its community.

Externally we also need to promote a co-ordinated offer. The City has a disparate retail offer with the sub-regional shopping offer in effect being split across three primary retail centres. These primary retail centres, The City Centre, Southsea Town Centre and Gunwharf Quays, are inextricably linked in determining our City's competitive position and it is the combined offer, which will differentiate our City from its regional competitors. It is therefore critical that these three centres work together to deliver a positive shopper, visitor, employee and resident experience. These centres together define the overall City retail offer and it is by working together that they contribute effectively to the City's economy.

A mind's eye image of a City is invariably based on the perception of the retail offer. When a town or city is named, say, Southampton, Chichester, Guildford, Brighton, most people will think about the Town Centre and its shopping experience before its cultural / theatrical offering. Likewise, all centres, and in particular the City Centre, have a particular role in delivering Civic Pride and determining how residents view their local authority.

The character of the City may be defined by its unique 3-Centre retail offer however the District Centres of Cosham, North End together with Albert Road and Elm Grove each has a specific role that is particularly important for residents and employees.

### **Focus**

Town centre management initiatives have also been focused on resolving environmental, security or marketing issues applicable to each centre.

We have initiated and supported Pubwatch schemes in the City Centre, Southsea and North End. We also initiated and support the Portsmouth Business Crime Reduction Partnership. These initiatives will have contributed to the falling crime rates.

Environmental Improvement projects commenced in the City Centre have also been delivered in Southsea, Albert Road, North End and Cosham. There has also been an interim improvement project in the City Centre pending the northern quarter development capital. The City Centre Manager has always acted as 'the Client' for these schemes.

We initiated the '3 Centre Retail Strategy', now incorporated into the City Planning documents, and we are working with City Centre, Southsea and Gunwharf business representatives to publicise the comprehensive offer that defines Portsmouth.

In Southsea the focus has been on specific programmes to protect the centre from the challenges presented by Gunwharf Quays and the development of the City Centre northern quarter. The Portsmouth Shopping Study Update of October 2009 identified issues facing Southsea and concluded that the Southsea Retail Centre has fallen in national ranking, and was a relatively unattractive location for retail investors. These problems needed to be addressed and we developed a clear Southsea Town Centre brand identity, which has been shared with the Southsea Beach group and Southsea Directory, and this has created a visual presence. The introduction of Hampshire Farmers Market, Love Southsea Market, occasional Continental Markets and the Arts & Collectables market, together with the annual Southsea Food Festival, has created an appealing identity that is supported by the local community. This is sound platform on which the marketing of Southsea can be developed.

The provision of Christmas Lights for the city was contracted out in 2008 thereby containing the cost and allowing a wider provision of the service. The development of Christmas Lights delivered to town and local centres across the city has engaged the communities in their area with switch-on events and celebrations. More recently the 'Shop Local' campaigns and the introduction of welcome banners engages the community. Similarly, the Independents Day launch has been well supported by the business community and sole traders.

The on-going delays to the city centre northern quarter development threaten the future of the City Centre. Specific focus and much work must now be undertaken to enhance the City Centre offer. If its status were to continue to decline as a sub-regional centre, it will have a long term negative impact on our retail and tourism industry. It cannot be isolated and set aside. What happens to the City Centre will enhance or be a liability to our tourism offer. The loss of these visitors will damage Portsmouth for many years to come.

A strategy for the city centre would include transport and access, environmental quality, cleanliness, safety and security and things for kids to do. It would indicate how what the City Centre has to offer would be improved and highlight strengths so as to attract people and investment. Town Centre Management plays a key role in delivering these strategic objectives and, as well as performing the role of client as it has done before with other schemes, could detail Action Plans that identify how the strategy is to be delivered.

The local authority, business partnership and involvement of key interests working through project groups mean that town and city centre management can:

- Create environments that are clean and safe by better management together with focussed investment in maintenance and security.
- Improve transport, parking, orientation and accessibility.
- Add vitality through professional marketing and events programmes.
- Stimulate growth by inward investment and development and through work with existing businesses.
- Develop branding that stresses distinctiveness and changes perceptions.
- Celebrate local heritage through tourism and destination management.
- Expand opportunities through developing training and employment programmes.
- Increase choice and diversity by promoting and integrating new amenities, residential development and the night-time economy.
- Enhance quality through public art and major infrastructure improvements to the public realm.
- Ensure that the town or city centre is welcoming to all and an experience worth having.

Through effective operations teams we will see an improvement in environmental quality with planting, greening, cleansing and community safety schemes, and this will make the city centre a more attractive place to visit and in which to trade. The more strategic initiatives will play a key role in attracting substantial investment into the centre; in helping to resolve transport and access deficiencies; in making centres places people want to live; and in creating vibrant trading and business environments.

## **GOING FORWARD**

Town Centre Management continues to respond to the new challenges facing our town and city centres. There will now be a greater focus on the City Centre.

Southsea Town Centre has both a clear and improved identity and a marketing plan will now be developed.

Through business groups and our own activity, we will continue to help the District Centres thrive.

It is possible that the skills and know-how held within Town Centre Management could be used enable all centres, including local centres, to achieve their potential.