

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE & LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 22 October 2014 at 6.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Julie Swan (in the Chair)

Councillors Ben Dowling
Lee Hunt
Matthew Winnington

27. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

These had been received from Councillors Hannah Hockaday and Simon Boshier. Marc Griffin had also sent his apologies for absence.

28. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

29. Minutes of Previous Meeting - 11 September 2014 (AI 3)

These were agreed as a correct record to be signed by the chair accordingly.

30. Review - Revitalising local high streets and secondary shopping centre areas in the city (AI 4)

Traders' Associations

The chair agreed to vary the order of business as unfortunately Tony Broome from Cosham Traders' Association had sent his apologies that he would no longer be able to attend this meeting. Barry Walker had received some comments from Mr Broome and some detailed comments from Jenni Catlow from Albert Road, they would both be invited to the next meeting when the traders' associations and the role of the town centre management officers would be discussed in full.

Public Transport

Danny Johnson, the Passenger Transport Officer had produced large maps showing the routes available to the secondary shopping areas and also circulated copies of the published public transport maps showing all the **bus routes** in the city. The city council does not run the bus services - this is a commercial venture run by both First and Stagecoach operators in the city. The operators cover 86% of the service with the city council purchasing 14% where they do not provide cover and where there is an identified social need e.g. the Highbury Estate. He stressed there had been massive investment by

both companies in the city with the provision of good services and shelters in the city. The real time information at bus stops would be rolled out by March 2015.

The Passenger Transport Officer outlined the frequency of services:

- for the shopping areas with the buses numbers 12, 18 and 20 ran half hourly services but most of the services were at 10 minute intervals such as to Highbury and at Locksway the number 13 was a half hourly service.
- In response to questions it was reported that the service at Paulsgrove was not ceasing. The number 18 was a half hourly service up to Hillsley Road which had subject to change with the loss of early morning services but this did not affect the shops as this was before the opening times and there were additional buses on this route. Paulsgrove Allaway Avenue had two services of 10 minute frequency each.
- There was some variation such as the number 19 to Ocean Park was only a two hourly frequency and most customers travelled there by car.
- Havant Road, Drayton had an aging population served by No. 23 Stagecoach which had a 10 minute frequency (and this had been rerouted to help access to QA Hospital).

Funding and Subsidised Routes

Most of the small parades of shops in the city did have reasonably services to them but the bus service provision was dependent on the city council's budget round (and also in some cases to the Hampshire County Council's budget provision.

However there is a bidding opportunity for the contracts and Danny explained the subsidised services:

- Numbers 1, 3, 7 and 8 are supported after 9.00 pm to the Portsmouth boundary.
- Number 12 is entirely city council supported to allow connectivity to Highbury.
- The 13 and 14 has a late night journey subsidised in the evening by PCC.
- The 15 and 16 is entirely PCC funded.
- The 17 and 18 is subsidised by PCC after 8.00 pm.
- The number 19 is a two hourly service entirely PCC funded
- Number 21 after 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm all day Saturday and all day Sunday (with a Hampshire CC contribution for their part of the route).
- Number 23 is PCC subsidised after 7.00 pm Monday to Sunday and some early morning Sunday provision.

The city council also subsidised the park and ride to the main centres. The gross cost to the city council is £440,000 pa (as at October 2014) but Hampshire County Council make a contribution for the numbers 21 and 23 and there is an element of Department for Transport (DFT) grant provision.

Discussion took place regarding the **definition** of the secondary (as opposed to primary) shopping centres - in planning terms the city council protect some retail centres whereas others are not protected in the same way.

Members were grateful for the map showing connectivity between the centres across the city and were mindful of the subsidy in being subject to budget constraints and that any reduction would be to the detriment of the shopping areas.

Parking

Michael Robinson, the Parking Operations Manager explained the parking provision for these shopping centres. In Fratton, North End and Cosham shoppers needed to pay for parking whereas in the local shopping areas of Milton, Allaway Avenue and Drayton the parking was not paid for but instead there was use of limited waits to ensure there was parking available for customers whilst still encouraging a turnover.

Charges - At **Fratton** the charge is 90p per hour and it was asked what cost there would be to reduce it to be free for half an hour? It was noted that the Mary Portas review had looked at the correlation between parking charges and demand but it was noted that Gunwharf was very successful but had the most expensive parking in the city.

The Parking Operations Manager felt that whilst half hour and one hour limited waiting works at **Elm Grove** it is more expensive for the parking service to manage, whereas pay and display areas are most effective with the necessary revenue for managing the provision and to ensure a turnover of vehicles. At Elm Grove there it had been decided that one hour free had been the best compromise (to suit the mix of businesses) before extra parking is charged for. The challenge at **Albert Road** was that there was no off-street parking in the vicinity whereas at **Marmion Road** this was alleviated by the Waitrose car park.

The **Cosham** traders had not wanted charges introduced but when they were implemented they experienced reduced commuter parking outside the retail units, which had been welcomed. There customers could press for ticket for one hour's free parking so this did not impact on the parking officers.

Area of review

Discussion took place regarding the "tertiary" areas covered by the review and the need to see what is practical for the type of area to see if this would work in other retail areas. Claire Upton-Brown reported that the areas covered were listed within the city plan and there was a question when considering the next development plan of whether the retail offer is being diluted and the need for impact assessments for further retail provision in the city. Alan Cufley, the Head of Corporate Assets, Business & Standards raised the issue of whether a residential element would increase the sustainability of these smaller retail areas?

Further Information Required

- The panel felt there was a need to investigate **occupancy rates**
- There is a need for a full list of the parking restrictions for the shopping areas and the associated car parks nearby from the Parking Operations Manager.

- The panel would also wish to give further consideration to the use of **empty retail units**
- Council Tax would be asked if they had records to assist with these requests or other options would be to engage university students in research this or the panel members could look at the extent of empty units within their own areas once the list of areas to be covered had been provided.

Carbon Reduction

Jo Cole, the Carbon Reduction Co-ordinator had been invited to attend the meeting to look at environmental issues and the sustainability agenda. Other modes of transport should be considered to encourage walkers and cyclists for the local use of retail centres, with the provision of safe places to secure bikes. It was important to promote sustainable events and promote local produce such as the high quality produce of Bransbury Butchers and the Farmers' Market in Southsea which was a major attraction.

Retail units were major users of energy and there were recycling and waste issues for the shopping centres. Use of materials for carrier bags and takeaway containers were also of concern. It was important to encourage businesses to share in environmental schemes such as rubbish and recycling and pooling of resources although this was usually done on a larger scale to be beneficial. The panel felt it would be useful for the local traders to receive more information regarding low voltage goods. It was noted that there is some funding available for small businesses for energy efficiency.

Cyclists were provided for well in the main areas. These were less well provided for in the tertiary areas. Councillor Winnington reported that the D locks could not be used on the thick lampposts and the crime rates could be off-putting in the smaller areas for those wishing to leave their bikes securely. Further information was needed regarding the budget for cycling provision (Nicola Waight in Transport & Environment would be asked to provide information to a future meeting). Claire Upton-Brown reported that when looking at new provision in planning terms cycle lanes and including the use of car park spaces for cycle storage. The Cycling Forum would also be invited to provide their comments as part the review.

The main concern regarding **carbon emission** was the high number of cars and therefore there was a need to change behaviour and make the local centres more pleasant experiences to encourage the use of local shops on a regular basis and reduce car journeys. Councillor Swan reported that one of the ideas raised at the retail conference referred to later on the agenda was the pooling together regarding online ordering via local collection points. To improve air quality, Alan Cufley suggested there be more encouragement of drivers to stop idling engines when waiting outside shops for their passengers to return.

31. Date of next meeting (AI 5)

It was agreed the next meeting take place on **Wednesday 12 November at 6.00 pm** with the traders' associations to be invited and also Lindy Elliott,

Steve Baily and Jane Mee to talk about museums and the library involvement in retail centres.

The chair asked that the deferred items on traders associations be discussed in more detail along with the reports provided regarding town centre management at the next meeting, and discussion on of her attendance at the high street conference with Claire Upton-Brown (which was the subject of the other report on the agenda).

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm.

Councillor Julie Swan
Chair