



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2006 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Renold - Chair
Councillor Kitterick – Labour Spokesperson
Councillor Farmer – Focus Team Spokesperson
Councillor Porter – Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Bhatti

Councillor Clair

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54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

There were no declarations.

61. CITY CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report updating the Committee on the current position of the three projects delivering public realm improvements in the city centre.

A member of the Committee raised questions about telephone kiosks, funding for Rutland Street improvements and funding opportunities for shopfronts. Officers commented that they were disappointed with the old BT telephone kiosks being returned to Gallowtree Gate, but as a recognised utility the Council could only negotiate with them, not compel them to replace the kiosks. Value engineering to reduce costs and other funding sources were being considered for the Rutland Street paving project. A scheme for funding the replacement of Humberstone Gate shopfronts was currently in place, but there had been a poor take-up. The Committee would receive a further report on this issue with a view to expanding this sort of scheme.

A member of the Committee asked about the environmental impact of using concrete, the delays to the Gallowtree Gate work and possible damage to the York Stone in Cheapside. Officers commented that alternatives to concrete could be explored but using concrete meant meeting the high quality British

standard which would result in less repairs and maintenance in the future. There were no delays to the work in Gallowtree Gate, the work was rearranged due to the problems in sourcing the granite slabs. It was hoped and expected that there would be minimal damage as the York Stone in Cheapside was removed, but where it was damaged it would be replaced.

Further questions were raised regarding street furniture, safety of traffic on Cheapside; staff supporting Traffic Regulation Orders; consultation on Clock Tower plans; plans for Granby Street and the building opposite the Performing Arts Centre (PAC). Officers responded that they would provide Committee Members with pictures of the street furniture planned for Gallowtree Gate. Traffic would not be allowed through Cheapside during the hours of Market operation and a full assessment had taken place to ensure safety. There were three staff supporting Traffic Regulation Orders and it was hoped to employ a further three although it was noted that recruitment and retention was proving difficult. There would be full consultation on proposals for the Clock Tower area, it would be undertaken before Christmas and would involve local Councillors. Improvements to Granby Street would take place in a later phase of the improvements programme. Officers would be working with the owners of the building opposite the PAC to ensure that any redevelopment plans would not affect the plans for a public square in that area.

Members of the Committee then considered issues relating to the funding of the city centre improvements. It was queried whether funding was secure. Officers in response stated that details of funding would be confirmed as part of the Council's budget process. Members also made comments regarding whether funding for the improvements coming from the Local Transport Plan should be consulted on with the public as they may feel it would be better spent in local areas rather than the city centre. Members of the Committee also felt that they needed further details of what was to be achieved with the expenditure.

Members of the Committee considered the linking of the city centre through to the St Matthew's area. Officers noted that this was being held up due to BT being unable to give the Council an answer, for five years, regarding whether they would sell part of their car park which was required to enable this link. Members of the Committee suggested that a high level political intervention could be used to speak to BT with regard to this matter. Officers commented that this wouldn't ordinarily happen but agreed to consider doing so.

A committee member made a further comment regarding the noise and fumes emanating from buses in the city centre. It was queried whether anything could be done to reduce these problems. Officers agreed to speak to the bus companies about this.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.