



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2005 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor A. Vincent- Chair
Councillor Kitterick- Labour Spokesperson
Councillor Porter–Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Henry
Councillor Renold

Councillor Thomas
Councillor Waddington

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Farmer– Cabinet Member for Strategic Community Renewal and Safety

* * * * *

18. 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.

Councillor Thomas declared a personal interest in Report A “Leicester City Centre Night-Time Economy SP&R Investigation 2005”. As part of the discussion, the name of a judge was mentioned. Councillor Thomas knew this judge as he was a member of the Probation Board.

19. LEICESTER CITY CENTRE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY SP&R INVESTIGATION 2005

The Leicester Night Time Economy Review Group submitted a report presenting the conclusions and recommendations of its in-depth investigation into the night-time economy of Leicester on behalf of the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

Roy Roberts, Policy Officer, gave a presentation, giving an overview and details about the layout, the key conclusions, feedback received and the next steps to be taken.

The Chair welcomed Chief Superintendent Ian Stripp and highlighted the need

for joint working between the Council and the Police.

A Committee Member felt that the report was a good piece of academic style work, but not a manifesto for the city centre. He also felt that a wide range of good ideas were expressed as part of the investigation. It was hoped the report would provide a mechanism where some of these could be implemented. The report didn't include any specific proposals for addressing any of the problems identified by the investigation. For example how toilets would be provided and how the market place may be used. Officers in response to this point stated that the report provided a starting point for developing ideas about improving the night time economy.

The need for a high level group who could be responsible for the management of the City centre was raised by a number of members of the Committee. It was suggested that this group needed links in to relevant agencies to ensure action could be taken. Officers stated that the City Centre Virtual Team was the Council mechanism and the Leicester Partnership was the multi agency body that could have responsibility for delivering improvements to the city centre as set out in the report. Concerns were expressed about these bodies ability to affect real change to the centre. It was felt that there needed to be a body that could change policies and provide focus for all the agencies that operate in the city. It was also felt that clearly identified individuals needed to be involved. Further concerns were expressed by Members that this high level group would create another layer of bureaucracy. Chief Superintendent Ian Stripp noted that most other cities he had visited had such a group. He felt that this group should have an overarching strategic remit to consider areas where things were failing and shift resources to address problems as they arose. He felt that the investigation report should influence the work of this group in terms of identifying some of the problems that needed to be addressed. He gave the example of where Nottingham had such a body and was able to undertake actions such as a session of low tolerance and Police Community Support Officers working in collaboration with street cleaners.

Members of the Committee wanted to give their views on any response report provided by the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture before Cabinet considered it. The Service Director, Regeneration confirmed that this would be possible.

A member of the Committee recommended that the Council should learn from other cities to enable some of the issues raised in the investigation report to be addressed.

A member of the Committee was of the opinion that the investigation report should become part of the planning process and Development Control should be involved in working out ways of designing out problems identified by the investigation. The example of the three nightclubs closely located was given. These sorts of problems could be addressed for the future by the means of a planning guidance document. Another Councillor suggested that the Council's licensing powers should be used to their full extent to address problems that the city centre faced. It was also felt that it would be beneficial to consult with other cities who had experienced significant regeneration and to look at their successes. The example was given, of good design being used to promote good behaviour such as happened in Broad Street in Birmingham.

A Member of the Committee made some further points. It was suggested that proposals for taxi wardens be discussed at the Licensing Committee. It was noted that there was currently a 'saturation point' in the three nightclubs area, and there may be more implemented in other areas. This was an example of where the Police and the Council were using their powers to control disorder. It was thought that there should be more variety in the types of establishments available in the city centre.

Chief Superintendent Ian Stripp made a number of comments / suggestions, stating that the issues surrounding the Night Time Economy were very complex. They could be safety, violence, aesthetics or other issues and that these weren't easily addressed. He noted that there were currently initiatives being implemented in the city centre such as a dispersal zone and Operation Fortify; these were aimed at reducing the levels of violence and disorder. He said he would welcome the Committee's support for the Violence and Disorder thematic group of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. He said he would seek to circulate their action plan which raised a number of similar points to those raised by the investigation. He felt that further funding was required for this group to make a further difference. Another suggestion he made was for a licensing forum to encompass the Council, the Police and licensees. Difficulties faced by the new licensing legislation could be discussed at this forum. If such a group was to be formed, he would be happy to provide relevant statistical information. He also agreed that the planning and regeneration aspects were important to consider as part of the development of the night-time economy. He also felt there were opportunities for developing the city's network of CCTV in to a centre of excellence.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Community Renewal and Community Safety made a number of comments. He felt that the report needed to identify more firm proposals as there was evidence demonstrating what needed to be done. He said that the Leicester Partnership was the agreed delivery body for improvements to the city centre and it was considering ways of delivering local improvements. He said that there was a need for a body which involved senior level people and that involved the ward councillors and residents. He said that he would welcome ideas coming from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). He was particularly interested in hearing about zero tolerance schemes relating to a wide range of issues such as street trading and public urination. He welcomed the report as it arose from an investigation where the public were engaged. He recommended that an approach to Cabinet should be made with solutions, not problems. Councillor Kitterick, as Castle ward Councillor expressed no wish to take part in any high level group and felt that it would not be beneficial as he could command no resources or the change that may be required.

Councillor Henry indicated that as far as she was aware there was already a licensing forum set up with nightclub owners. She requested that if there was not such a forum, that it be set up as soon as possible with her involvement as Chair of the Licensing Committee.

Members of the Committee raised the issue of CCTV. Some felt that it wasn't as effective as it was made out to be. Ian Stripp commented that court judges had praised the city's CCTV system. He also stated that without CCTV, he

would be not be efficiently policing the city centre. Other members of the Committee were in favour of it. One knew anecdotally of doormen who had commented that the presence of CCTV had caused them to moderate their behaviour. It was felt that it could protect and give confidence to the public.

Daxa Pancholi, as the Council's lead on Community Safety informed the meeting that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership would be putting in to place action groups based on the partnership approach. Local people and key organisations would be involved. These groups would identify problems and solutions and who would be accountable. The actions of the groups would be monitored and they would link in to Area Committees.

Chief Superintendent Stripp invited members of the Committee to attend a city centre policing briefing. He felt this may be of some use.

Another Member of the Committee suggested that the proposed high-level strategic body, in identifying priorities should consider some actions that were short term, some medium and some long term. The short term actions would demonstrate achievements made by the group.

The Service Director, Regeneration queried whether the Committee felt it would be useful to get input from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in the report which responded to the point raised by the investigation. Chief Superintendent Stripp confirmed he was happy to provide an input.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the committee endorses the recommendations as set out in the Final Report of Leicester's Night-time Economy Review Group, June 2005
- (2) that the Chair presents the investigation report to the Cabinet giving particular regard to the following points:-
 - that there was a strong feeling that a high level strategic body was required for the management of the city centre, which was able to overcome bureaucracy, was at a senior level and was able to take decisions,
 - any proposed actions to be taken by the high level strategic body needed to be divided on a short / medium and long term basis to ensure, at least some action was taken quickly,
 - that a planning guidance document was needed for the city centre to avoid future problems,
 - that the Council should welcome input from the Violence and Disorder Thematic Group of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership,
 - that this Committee monitors the actions of the proposed high level strategic body for the management

of the city centre and how the group affects the priorities identified in the report;

- (3) that this Committee receives the report from the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture which responds to the investigation, before it goes to Cabinet.

20. REVIEW OF THE SP&R INVESTIGATION 2005

The Chief Executive submitted a report providing the Committee with a review of the in-depth investigation carried out by Leicester's Night Economy Review Group on behalf of the sponsoring committee and which officers in the Chief Executive's Office supported.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report and the positive feedback that the night-time economy review received, be noted; and
- (2) that Cabinet be asked to agree that any further reviews take account of the feedback provided by contributors to this investigation.

21. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

