



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 1 MAY 2013 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington – Chair

Councillor Bhatti – Vice-Chair

Councillor Bhavsar Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chaplin Councillor Dr. Chowdhury
Councillor Porter

Also in Attendance

Sir Peter Soulsby – City Mayor

Andrew Smith – Director Planning, Transport & Economic Development

Mike Dalzell – Head of Economic Regeneration

Sarah Harrison – City Centre Director

Frank Jordan – Strategic Director, City Development and
Neighbourhoods

Brendan McGarry – Property Development

David Orton – Service Improvement Manager, Arts & Museums

Jerry Connolly – Member Support Officer

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99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Naylor, Councillor Shelton and Liz Blyth.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for the Municipal Year. She paid thanks to Scrutiny Commission Members, to Jerry Connolly and Angie Smith for their support to the meeting, to the City Mayor for his contribution to the meetings, and thanked Officers for their work and support over the year. The Chair paid particular thanks to Councillor Bhatti as Vice Chair.

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or other interests they may have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Cassidy declared interests in the business to be discussed, as he was on the board of Leicester Promotions as a member and on the board of the LLEP.

Councillor Dr. Chowdhury declared an interest in the business to be discussed, as he worked in a voluntary organisation in receipt of Council funding.

101. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission Meeting held on 17th April 2013, be agreed as a correct record.

102. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

It was reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

103. PETITIONS

It was reported that no petitions, in accordance with the Council's procedures, had been received.

104. TOURISM REVIEW

Sarah Harrison, City Centre Director, presented an outline draft plan for the review of the effectiveness of Leicester's Tourism Strategy. The draft outlined what would be covered at each of the meetings, and at each stage various people would be invited to give evidence.

Members offered suggestions for inclusion in the marketing and promotion of Leicester's tourism offer. Sarah said that all comments were welcome and would be considered. She added that Richard III was the springboard from which the tourism offer could be developed.

The Chair suggested the first meeting cover the following:

- Analysis of current employment situation that supports tourism in Leicester:
1/ Jobs and quality of jobs.
2/ Accessibility needed highlighting in the review, i.e. getting from A to B for everyone.

The Chair said it would be useful to have a list of stakeholders the Scrutiny

Commission would be hearing from with experience in the areas above, for example, employment, training providers that would look to enhance opportunities of work. She added that the review would be planned over five meetings to take into account a need to hear evidence. It was suggested LLEP be included in the list of stakeholders.

Sarah noted the suggestion the tourism offer should include the contribution of immigrant communities to the economy of the city. It was also noted the city should be marketed to students at the universities in Leicester, and include family members and friends visiting the city, and alumni. It was also suggested comparison be made to similar cities, to see how they dealt with tourism.

The Chair said a timetable of witness and evidence should be assembled and held over a period of five meetings.

The Chair thanked Sarah for the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The timetable for the review be brought to the next meeting.

105. GATEWAY RETAIL AREA IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Andrew Smith, Director Planning, Transport and Economic Development presented a report to update on progress made across each area of the Gateway Retail Improvement Scheme.

The scheme, which formed part of the Economic Action Plan, was a series of interventions to help support trading areas identified as struggling during difficult trading conditions. £680,000 of City Capital Programme funding has been allocated over the period to 2015, and the following six priorities were outlined:

- Environmental improvements
- Marketing
- Signage and barriers
- Access and infrastructure
- Business support
- Area development

The report identified progress made to date and thinking on new ideas. A funding summary was provided, and an officer reported that 24 shop fronts were completed, and a further 33 were subject to discussion.

The City Mayor said the take-up of the scheme had exceeded expectations, which had in the past been slow when smaller schemes were undertaken. He said one advantage of the scheme was the engagement owners and the support of traders from those areas, who had taken ownership of the scheme.

In response to a Commission Member, Andrew said Belgrave Gate could also

benefit from other related improvements , such as the development of the new Haymarket bus station. He also noted that a 'Cycle City Ambition' grant bid had also been submitted to Department for Transport to create a cycle route from the city centre to Belgrave Road via Belgrave Gate.

Andrew said that land and premises fronting the A50 at Frog Island were largely owned by the Private Sector, but the Council were using its planning and building control powers to get owners to tidy up buildings and sites. Grant funding had been invested in the Sanvey Gate highway improvements, and the Council was working with owners of sites at the top of Highcross Street to encourage office development. This follows a more flexible approach to finding suitable office development sites in the city centre and car parking provision. The City Mayor said some of the the unused land in the Woodgate and Frog Island area was now held by the Homes and Communities Agency as a result of the Government's decision to abolish the Regional Development Agency. He called on Members to support him in his plea to Government to transfer the land to the Council's control, as he was concerned for the regeneration of the area. The Chair agreed there should be a review of the development of Frog Island and the development of Waterside.

The City Mayor and Officers informed the meeting that the programme was targeted at selected areas/routes, so efforts could have more impact. Andrew said there was no target as to the number of units (occupied or unoccupied) that would be supported as the scheme was flexible and could range from whole shopfronts to simple signage schemes.. He said there was a very good planning policy design guide for shop fronts, that was initially developed for Belgrave Road but that could be used across the whole of the city. Andrew said grants to premises varied, but on average were £2.5 – £3k, and were sometimes paid to individuals or were multiple shop requests. He added that more detailed information was available if required. The City Mayor said he would be pleased to talk to Members and Officers to hear other suggestions for implementation around the city.

Members discussed an item in the report on the promotion and branding of Narborough Road Rail Bridge, in partnership with Network Rail. It was agreed that the area needed to be taken care of but branding of the bridge required a careful approach, and the design should last, and Camden Lock was cited as an example.

Members discussed information in the report on improvements to Belgrave Road and Melton Road, or the 'Golden Mile'. The City Mayor said discussions had taken place with various groups, and it was agreed the area was not shopper friendly and the feeling was a radical change was needed. The idea was to give back the area to shoppers through the use of shared space, with pedestrians having a greater feeling of ownership.

Mike Dalzell said officers were in dialogue with businesses to discuss other benefits to engagement, for example promoting apprenticeships, the Step Up project and skills programme.

The Chair thanked officers for the update and congratulated them on the work that had been done. She asked that the Scrutiny Commission be given a regular six-monthly update on the progress of the scheme, and suggested shop-front owners who had benefited from the improvement scheme be invited to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report noted.
2. That an update be brought to a future meeting, and shop-front owners be invited to present information to the Scrutiny Commission.

106. UPDATE ON THE MARKETING OF THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

The Director of Property submitted a report to provide an update on the marketing of Haymarket Theatre. The report was presented by Brendan McGarry, Principal Valuer, Property.

Brendan reported that an advert had been placed in the Estates Gazette, and would hopefully give the property national exposure. Also, following the Leicester Mercury's coverage of the Scrutiny members visit to the Theatre, the City Mayor's appearance on Central News, and a report on BBC Radio Leicester, it was felt a local advert was not required at this time.

Brendan said the current landlord had gone into administration. He added that Leicester City Council was in a weak position as it was currently paying a high service charge, and it would not be in the interests of the landlord to change the provisions of the lease to make it more attractive for potential buyers.

Scrutiny Members suggested the theatre be spruced up inside and a lift installed for disabled access to allow the building to be on a temporary basis for the City of Culture, and it would also assist with the marketing of the property in the future.

It was also suggested that following demolition of the structures relating to the bus station development, the end wall of the Haymarket could be rented out for branding / advertising space to recoup some of the money being spent. The City Mayor said he was open to suggestion for the use of the space, and would take on board the suggestion for creative use.

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.

107. CITY MAYOR'S DELIVERY PLAN 2013-14

It was reported that the Overview Select Committee at its meeting on 18 April 2013 requested that each Scrutiny Commission should consider and comment upon the City Mayor's Delivery Plan 2012/13, in relation to its own

responsibilities.

The Chair stated it was a well written plan, and she was pleased to see targets contained in the plan. It was noted there were no targets in the document for Adult Learning, therefore the Chair had asked Kerry Gray to produce an article for the meeting which was circulated. Kerry was also congratulated on her recent appointment to the Head of Skills and Learning Services post. The Chair said Kerry's paper would be revisited at a future meeting as part of 'line-by-line' review sessions of the plan with relevant officers to look at the targets, and a timetable of topic issues and evidence from officers over a number of meetings would be developed.

The City Mayor said further work was required on the plan, and asked the Commission to consider if the plan covered all areas, and to look at the targets contained in the document to see if they were appropriate, realistic and challenging, as it was difficult to say if the targets were appropriate as there was nothing to compare them against.

Members asked that the Square Mile Project, and that the Healthy & Active City element be linked to education. They also asked that LASALS related targets be embedded in the Mayor's plan, and a target for the reduction of the number of NEETs in the city should be included as a key performance indicator within the plan.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for presenting the Plan.

RESOLVED:

1. That the City Mayor's Delivery Plan 2013-14 be received.
2. That a timetable of topic issues and evidence from officers be brought to a future meeting.

108. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.