

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED: CASTLE / CITYWIDE INTEREST

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7th DECEMBER 2006

CITY CENTRE STRATEGY SURVEY RESULTS

Report of the Service Director Regeneration, Highways & Transportation

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report informs the Scrutiny Committee of the results of the recent city centre survey.

2 Summary

- 2.1 A survey was carried out over the summer to ask people living within half a mile of the city centre what they thought of the improvements taking place. The response rate was 6.7%, which is somewhat disappointing.
- 2.2 While there was overwhelming support from the 200 respondents for what is going on, there is a clear demand for the extension of improvements beyond the current programme.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to comment on the survey's findings.

4 Financial & Legal Implications

Financial Implications

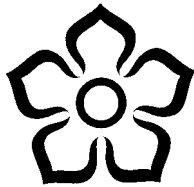
- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.
(*Martin Judson, Head of Finance, Regeneration & Culture*)

Legal Implications

- 4.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
(*Joanna Bunting, Head of Commercial & Property Law, Legal Services*)

5 Report Author

Guy Wisbey
Team Leader (Regeneration Policy)
Extension 7256
guy.wisbey@leicester.gov.uk



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Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Cabinet approved a three-year City Centre Development Project two years ago, and it is now half way through its life. Extensive public consultation was carried out under the “Streets & Spaces” brand, and site work began this Spring.
- 1.2 The spend of £19.4m is profiled to be completed simultaneously with the opening of Shires West (Highcross Quarter) and the Performing Arts Centre. The main focus of construction work at present is the top quality public realm in the retail streets – Gallowtree Gate, Market Street, and the approach to the Cultural Quarter - Charles Street and Halford Street.
- 1.3 As with all big transformational projects, there have been concerns expressed about the extent of work and the temporary disruption caused. The project team has been working with retailers and others to minimise the inconvenience, and the work is programmed to allow a Christmas break this year. Gallowtree Gate has been effectively completed and reopened in time for Christmas shopping.
- 1.4 We carried out a survey of some 3,000 households in and close to the City Centre during June and July 2006, in order to test public opinion and ensure that any issues are incorporated into the City Centre Strategy.
- 1.5 As reported below, the survey showed approval of the Council’s approach, and suggested some new ideas.

2. The City Centre Survey – “Your future, your City centre”

- 2.1 In consultation with the Cabinet lead for Regeneration, the Corporate Director approved a short questionnaire (attached as Appendix 1) which was sent in June 2006 to 3,000 households within and close to the Central Ring Road. It asked for their comments on a number of specific points, and had an open question for their ideas.
- 2.2 The survey floated five possible future schemes to test support:
 - Setting up a circular bus route to serve destinations around the city centre
 - Creating a restaurant zone
 - Enhancing the Market Place and finding additional uses
 - Developing the area around the railway station

- Relocating the Central Library to a new purpose-built facility

2.3 Some 200 responses have been received and analysed to date. The sample closely matches the overall demographics of Leicester and there is no obvious variation in opinion attributable to ethnicity, age or gender.

2.4 Key findings of the survey are:

- 80.9% of respondents agreed that the proposed changes would make them feel more proud of Leicester – the main concern being that ‘Leicester is dirty’
- When asked which areas should be tackled next, the railway station was the clear favourite followed by Humberstone Gate, Belgrave Gate, Highfields and St. Matthew’s. There is a clear public perception that these areas are ‘run down, need developing, are dirty, and not safe’.
- Three-quarters of respondents use the city centre primarily for shopping, with working, living and socialising also important
- People expect to use the centre in the future for shopping, family entertainment and ‘something for everyone’
- Of the 5 suggested schemes, 4 (circular bus route, restaurant zone, enhancements to the Market Place and develop the area around the railway station) received strong support; whilst the support for relocating the Central Library was less than both the ‘unsure’ and ‘don’t support’ figures.

3. Progress against the City Centre Vision

3.1 Cabinet agreed the following eight ‘vision’ statements in 2004:

- 1) A vibrant, exciting and welcoming City Centre in which people choose to live, learn, work, play and visit.
- 2) A City Centre that is clean, green, safe, well managed and in which people have pride.
- 3) An enlarged and regenerated City Centre where there is a high degree of connectivity to Leicester’s neighbourhoods.
- 4) A City Centre which exemplifies and celebrates the city’s cultural diversity and which is cohesive, inclusive and accessible to all individuals and communities.
- 5) A City Centre with an identity – that feels like Leicester and reflects its defining characteristics e.g. its cultural diversity, fine architecture, industrial heritage, festivals, sporting excellence, environmental achievements.
- 6) A City Centre that promotes the social, economic and environmental well-being of the wider city.
- 7) A City Centre, which is the retail and employment centre of the City, County and Region, with suitable accommodation to become the location of choice for facilities that serve the whole city.
- 8) A City Centre where there is always activity, and where that activity is always accessible, including by public transport.

3.2 We are currently going through a process of construction that is causing some temporary inconvenience and disruption. Some of the work has had to be

phased to avoid damage to new paving from heavy construction traffic, and this has affected programming.

3.3 2008 is a key year for Vision milestones. It will see the completion and opening of:

- The Shires West retail expansion (to be renamed the Highcross Quarter), with its 2,500 new jobs, flagship John Lewis store and 2,000 new car parking spaces
- The landmark Performing Arts Centre and surrounding public space in the Cultural Quarter
- The city centre Pedestrian Zone, to include the pedestrianisation of High Street as part of the connection of the city centre to the Highcross Quarter shopping

3.4 While 2007 will mainly be a year of supporting works, it still contains some vital milestones for the city centre:

- The City Council takes over decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE) on 2nd January 2007, and at last has the powers to deal with the selfish and illegal parking which blights much of the city centre
- The 8-outlet Food Court in the Market Place will provide an exciting new place to eat and a tangible celebration of Leicester's cultural diversity
- Public realm works will start on the pedestrianisation of High Street and the completion of the "Liveability" public realm improvements in St. George's
- It is unlikely that the construction programme will permit a complete break in work for the Christmas shopping season

3.5 We can already see glimpses of the future. The granite paving in Gallowtree Gate is showing how our retail area will look. Similarly, the refurbished public toilets and lifts in the Shires demonstrate the high standards of accessibility cleanliness, safety and good design that we aspire to throughout the City Centre.

4. Where next?

4.1 The current 3-year City Centre Development Project will be completed in 2008. A new programme has not yet been considered, but there is a clear case for continuing investment in public realm works in the city centre.

4.2 The survey, and comments from Members, gives some clear suggestions for priority areas in need of renewal:

- Humberstone Gate East
- The area around the Railway Station / Charles Street / Granby Street
- Links to St. Matthew's (Wharf Street) and Highfields
- Belgrave Gate and links to Belgrave Road
- Abbey Street, Church Gate & Lee Circle.

4.3 In addition, there are substantial works needed in support of:

- The Cultural Quarter
- The Master Plan's New Business Quarter & Waterside intervention areas

5. Other issues from the survey

- 5.1 There are a number of other comments from the survey that need to be drawn to Members' attention and followed up.
- 5.2 There is an element of 'mutual cancellation' with some comments – for example, there were calls for both “more pound shops” and “fewer pound shops”. The message behind these comments is that the Council needs to consider the overall 'offer' of the retail area, and this will be addressed by the Retail Circuit Project Team.
- 5.3 There are clear continuing concerns about dirt, litter, graffiti and fly-posting. Despite the Council's investment in recent years, public perception does not yet consider Leicester to be a clean city. This is being followed up by the new Street Scene Division and will be tested by resident's surveys. (The cleaning and sealing of the new granite paving is an example of proactive work to reduce the problems created by the irresponsible disposal of chewing gum.)
- 5.4 The survey was targeted at households. Work carried out for the BID prospectus suggests that businesses still have a similarly poor perception of cleanliness, (though the BID ballot result showed reluctance to pay extra to improve services).
- 5.5 Respondents strongly support diversification of the Night Time Economy. There were a lot of comments asking for more family entertainment facilities (cinema, ice rink, dance club, indoor play gym, creche); for good quality retail, restaurants and bars; for new weekend uses for the market place such as a car boot sale
- 5.6 The demand for 'child friendly' facilities in the city centre is intense. Those residents with children lament the lack of local amenities, whilst others believe that there is not enough for children to do.
- 5.7 Crime and Disorder is still a worry to many people. Comments included “job culture”, “a bit scary”, “feel excluded”, “haven for druggies and beggars”, “too many bars”, and “doesn't feel or look safe”. The Crime and Disorder Partnership is being asked to look again at some of the issues, and Members have already had a presentation on policing the Night Time Economy.
- 5.8 Ethnic minority respondents suggested that the City Centre is lacking in some attractions – for example prayer/quiet room, religious bookshops, ethnic food shops. While much of this provision is outside the Council's power, it is a clear indication that the city centre still lacks cultural connectivity to some of its closest neighbourhoods. Work on the Belgrave Masterplan has also identified this abrupt division.
- 5.9 Many respondents mention transport. There is a clear expectation that the city centre improvements will bring better bus services, both in terms of passenger and pedestrian needs. This is being addressed by the pedestrianisation consultation and route planning work, but has to be clearly communicated to our citizens.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to comment on the results of this snapshot survey, and consider how the findings could inform the development of the city centre strategy.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	PARAGRAPH REFERENCES WITHIN SUPPORTING PAPERS
Equal Opportunities	YES	Suggestions are made for making the city centre more universally attractive to young people, families, older people, ethnic minorities and disabled people
Policy	YES	The survey results are influencing future city centre policy
Sustainable and Environmental	YES	There were specific comments about the city centre being a sustainable and environmental showcase
Crime and Disorder	YES	The concerns about crime and disorder have been referred to the Crime & Disorder Partnership
Human Rights Act	NO	
Older People on Low Income	YES	The role of the Market is valued, as is the city centre with its range of free facilities

8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

9. Consultations

Consultee

Crime & Disorder Partnership
Service Director, Street Scene
3,000 residents

Date Consulted

November 2006
November 2006
June 2006

Text of the “Your future, your City Centre” consultation leaflet June 2006

Leicester City Council has a vision for the city centre.

Quite simply, we want it to compete with the best in the country. Our aim is to transform Leicester city centre, creating a centre that’s exciting, accessible and clean – and provides the facilities and jobs that people need.

As someone who lives in the city centre, your views are important to us – and that’s why we want to make sure our plans for the city centre match your expectations.

By answering the questions within this document, you can help us decide what kind of shops, businesses, housing, offices and open spaces are needed – and play your part in creating the city centre that you want to see.

OUR VISION

Leicester city centre should be:

- vibrant, exciting and welcoming
- clean, green, safe and well-managed
- bigger, regenerated and with good access to Leicester’s neighbourhoods
- cohesive, inclusive and accessible to all
- somewhere that celebrates the city’s cultural diversity, fine architecture, industrial heritage, sporting excellence and environmental achievements
- developed in a way that drives the city’s social, economic and environmental regeneration
- the retail and employment centre of the city, county and region
- a place that’s always buzzing

Q1. If we are able to achieve all of the things in our vision, do you think you would feel more proud of Leicester? Please tell us why?

HOW ARE WE GETTING THERE?

Work on our Streets + Spaces programme has already started in Gallowtree Gate, Horsefair Street and Halford Street, and will continue across the city centre until 2008. This £19 million investment works in tandem with the development of the new Shires and the Performing Arts Centre on Rutland Street, both of which are due to open during 2008.

During 2007, work will start in Humberstone Gate East to improve bus services, and this will continue in the Wharf Street area in 2008. Work also needs to be done to provide additional community facilities – such as a GP’s surgery and a pharmacy.

NEW ECONOMICS

The huge expansion of the Shires shopping centre will have a significant impact on Leicester’s retail economy. We are also considering what retail investment should happen elsewhere in the city – perhaps by planning a new restaurant zone or developing the Market Place to enhance and increase its use.

A new business quarter is planned in the area around Granby Street, with the redevelopment of office space in Charles Street already under way.

Further development in the area close to the railway station could help businesses – through better links to London (and the Olympics in 2012), Paris and Brussels (with new Eurostar routes planned for 2010).

Further development of a family-friendly city centre, offering activities and facilities for people of all ages, could help provide a more diverse early evening and night-time economy.

Consideration also needs to be given to the city’s Central Library: should it move to a new purpose-built building?

Q2. Please tell us what you think about these proposals?

- a) Circular bus route (Between Leicester Royal Infirmary, the Railway Station, and St Margaret’s Bus Station)
- b) Develop a restaurant zone in the city centre
- c) Enhance & create new uses for Market Place
- d) Develop the area around the railway station
- e) Relocate the Central Library

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

We want to develop plans for the city centre that help reflect Leicester's diverse community. As well as ensuring that all our citizens have access to, and benefit from, new developments, we will also help to train and develop Leicester's workforce so that new and existing employers are able to benefit from local skills.

Public open spaces in the city centre should be exciting and reflect the experience of living in Leicester.

Where further opportunities arise, we will encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to feel the city centre belongs to them and to join in activities there. As well as retaining and increasing the current daytime visiting population, we need to attract families to live in the city centre. This will help change its character during both the day and evening. The redevelopment of St George's North and Leicester's Waterside will offer opportunities to do this and we need to make sure that developers include affordable family housing in these areas. To make accommodation more attractive, public bodies – including Leicester City Council – will work with developers to provide a family-friendly infrastructure (including supermarkets, healthcare, open space, schools and libraries).

Q3a. Do you think that our decision to start the development work in St George's and the main city centre area first was the right choice? Please tell us why?

Q3b. Please tell us which part of the city centre you would like to see us start to develop next and why?

VIBRANCY

The vibrancy of the city centre's street life is vital to its prosperity. We want to encourage more of the city's workforce to stay in the city centre into the late afternoon and early evening by providing an exciting programme of events and entertainment in public spaces.

Leicester's night time economy has already given previously derelict buildings new use and offered the local workforce new employment opportunities in the leisure industries. We will continue to ensure a safe and attractive environment for those who enjoy the city centre's night life, while encouraging the development of a more diverse range of leisure facilities to appeal to people who currently feel excluded from parts of our city centre at night.

Q4. What is your main reason for visiting or using the city centre?

Q5. As the city centre evolves over coming years, we want to understand what the people of Leicester want to use it for. Please prioritise the 3 most important uses that you think the city centre should provide (1 indicating your first choice, 2 your second, 3 for your third).

- Retail – shopping mall, major retail outlets, small or independent stores
- Business – office space and units for businesses & industry
- Diversity – making sure the city centre provides something for everyone in the city
- Family living – housing and essential services / facilities to encourage city centre living (both high spec and affordable)
- Night time socialising – bars / clubs and restaurants etc
- Night time family friendly entertainment – non-alcohol based activities to cater for a wider audience, including leisure, sporting and cultural activities

Q6. Aside from those already mentioned, please list any other attractions or developments you would like to see introduced within the city centre.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

To make a real difference to the prosperity and appearance of the city centre, Leicester City Council needs to work in collaboration with influential partners. This will include establishing a new City Centre Forum that is able to influence major investment and spending plans in the city centre over the next five to ten years.

ABOUT YOU

1. Please state your age:
2. What is your gender?
3. Which of the following best applies to your ethnicity?
4. Would you class yourself as disabled?
5. Please state your home postcode:
6. Do you have childcare commitments?

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire. The information you provide will help us to make sure that our plans for the city centre match your expectations.