

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 1 August 2012

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Nelder, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Darcy, Fox, Martin Leaves, Michael Leaves, Parker (substitute for Councillor Damarell), John Smith, Wheeler and Wigans.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Damarell

Also in attendance: Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport), Councillor Brian Vincent (Cabinet Member for Environment), Clint Jones (City Centre Manager), Philip Heseltine (Head of Transport Strategy), Mike Artherton (Parking and CCTV Manager), Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Planning), Peter Ford (Head of Development Management), Gill Peele (Business for Development) and Ross Johnston (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 3pm and finished at 5.30pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

12. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

13. **MINUTES**

Agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2012.

14. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

Review of Subsidised Bus Routes Project Initiation Document

The Chair informed members that in order to review the subsidised bus routes in a timely manner, it was necessary for this PID to be considered, and agreed, at this panel meeting to ensure that it goes through the scrutiny process as efficiently as possible.

Agreed that –

- (1) the title of the PID is amended to 'Review of Subsidised Bus Routes and Through Ticketing';

(2) membership of the task and finish group is approved as follows:

- Councillor Michael Leaves;
- Councillor Nelder;
- Councillor Nicholson;
- Councillor Wheeler;

(3) Gill Peele, Panel Lead Officer in consultation with Councillor Nicholson, Chair and Councillor Nelder, Vice-Chair, have delegated authority to amend the PID if necessary prior to its submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

15. **UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES**

Gill Peele, Lead Officer informed the panel that at present there were no updates on Government policy.

16. **MARY PORTAS REVIEW AND CITY CENTRE RETAIL**

Clint Jones, City Centre Manager, presented a report summarising the Plymouth City Centre Company's (PCCC) response to the Mary Portas Review. Members were informed that –

- (a) the report summarises the PCCC's responses to the ten most relevant recommendations that came out of the original 26 recommendations following the Mary Portas Review of the High Street in December 2011;
- (b) PCCC applied for Plymouth City Centre to be a nominated town in the Portas Pilot Scheme, however, this application was unsuccessful on two occasions;
- (c) unsuccessful towns who applied for the Portas Pilot Scheme were invited to become 'a Town Team Partner' and Plymouth had signed up to this scheme;
- (d) the latest audit of Plymouth's Business Improvement District (BID) revealed that out of 460 retail properties approximately 10 per cent were vacant; this was below the 11.8 per cent national average and the 20 per cent vacancy rates that many of the Portas Pilot Scheme towns operated.

In response to questions from members it was reported that –

- (e) Plymouth College of Art and Design were utilising the vacant store at 109 Cornwall Street, for a 'Design2Sell' scheme, where students were able to promote and sell their work in a store that would be vacant without this project. The PCCC were looking at using similar kinds of initiatives within other city centre vacant stores;
- (f) foot fall was lower for June and July in 2012 compared to the same period in 2011, however, this was a difficult statistic to compare due to weather

variations having a major impact on figures. A more reliable statistic was cash spend which demonstrated that 63 per cent of retailers were trading at the same level or above for the same period as last year;

- (g) PCCC were unable to provide accurately a collective spend per head, although, CACI, a lead provider in marketing solutions, produced an annual report which provided a lot of data and statistics;
- (h) the larger vacant stores within the city centre were being actively marketed and it was hoped that at least one of the three largest stores would be occupied by Christmas 2012;
- (i) PCCC was exploring the possibility of hosting a monthly market and had ambitions to use the income generated to purchase market equipment with a view to creating a regular fortnightly craft and continental market.

Agreed that Clint Jones, City Centre Manager, would email a copy of the CACI report to all members.

17. **EVALUATION OF GYDNIA WAY**

Councillor Mark Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport and Philip Heseltine, Head of Transport Strategy, presented a monitoring and evaluation report on the East End Transport Scheme (EETS). Members were informed that –

- (a) despite recent publicity of Gdynia Way, the signage on the road meets legal requirements and follows the Department for Transport guidelines and the road was operating well;
- (b) the EETS was subject to a number of traffic surveys both before and after the scheme and a further evaluation project would be conducted after 12 months of the road being operational, this evaluation would provide more detailed analysis which would be provided to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Panel members raised a number of concerns relating to the EETS which included –

- anti-social behaviour and vandalism in Cavendish Park;
- noise pollution on Mainstone Avenue;
- flooding in Heles Terrace;
- vacant shops and parking issues on Embankment Road;
- dangerous junction at Heles Terrace;
- traffic light system at Tothill Road;
- lack of a Park and Ride system at Plymstock;

In response to members questions it was reported that –

- (c) monitoring the air quality at Prince Rock Primary School was part of the evaluation programme and was being undertaken;

- (d) the final evaluation survey, scheduled for January 2013, was postponed from November 2012 due to the delay on completing the Finnigan Road works;
- (e) the Transport Department were looking at ways of capturing data for the evaluation survey and would likely use traffic counters to measure volume of traffic and journey times, bus driver surveys from all three major bus operators (CityBus, First and Target Travel) and an online questionnaire;

The Chair thanked Phillip Heseltine and Councillor Coker for their attendance and commented that the scheme had delivered some real benefits, although there were some issues that needed to be resolved.

Agreed that –

- (1) Philip Heseltine, Head of Transport Strategy and Julie Wileman, Major Schemes Project Officer, would organise a meeting with members from the Sutton and Mount Gould ward in order that local issues could be communicated;
- (2) Transport Officers are requested to review the traffic arrangements at Heles Terrace to improve and attempt to avoid issues of congestion;
- (3) Transport Officers are requested to investigate ways to consult with the wider public and as to how councillors can assist in gathering intelligence and feeding through to the Transport Department;
- (4) a future report is submitted to the panel early in 2013 following the evaluation programme.

18. **ON STREET PARKING REVIEW**

Councillor Mark Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport and Mike Artherton, Parking and CCTV Manager, presented a report reviewing on-street parking. Members were informed that –

- (a) on street parking was a serious city-wide issue and the submitted report was the first step in attempting to identify the parking issues that the city was facing;
- (b) the review of on street parking was originally started in September 2010 via a series of resident and business surveys;
- (c) it was acknowledged that to resolve the issue of on street parking would be a long and difficult process, where a 'one size fits all' approach would not be satisfactory. In order to resolve this issue the Parking Department and Cabinet Member for Transport were keen to work closely with the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Members commented that there were a number of parking issues across the whole of the city and these varied ward by ward. These issues included –

- vehicles illegally parked on public footpaths;
- oversubscribed permit parking areas;
- commercial vehicles allocated parking permits;
- caravan and trailers parked on the public highway;
- student parking areas;

Following members questions it was reported that –

- (d) this paper predominantly focused on controlled parking zones (CPZs) where parking permits had been severely oversubscribed;
- (e) further analysis and surveys would be undertaken to identify all of the issues;
- (f) student parking was a significant issue which was being researched through monitoring models adopted by other cities, Cardiff in particular.

Agreed that a further report is submitted to the panel meeting in February 2013 for further review before the policy is formulated.

19. **PLANNING SERVICES CODE OF PUBLICITY**

Councillor Brian Vincent, Cabinet Member for Environment, Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Planning and Peter Ford, Head of Development Management presented a draft Planning Services Code of Publicity. Members were informed that –

- (a) the Planning Department were exploring ways to more effectively engage the public, whilst reducing costs and improving standards and to do this a new Code of Publicity was proposed;
- (b) the public notices, used to advertise planning applications, had been improved by including QR codes, to enable smart phones to access the information and by ensuring that they were more user friendly;
- (c) ensuring public notices were situated in the best possible locations to inform the public on development proposals in their areas and that this would be achieved through a new process that had been instigated whereby ward members play a more proactive role and work with the planning department on the siting public notices following the recently agreed 'Probity in Planning' code;
- (d) this new Code of Publicity has simplified the process of siting public notices meaning that the code is less complicated and that everyone has equal access to view public notices;
- (e) a publicity campaign will be undertaken to promote the changes in the Code of Publicity and also the department propose to work with Plymouth

Disability Action Network to ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to be engaged on planning applications;

- (f) due to recent rises in postage the Planning Department would no longer be sending letters of notification to householders and letters would be replaced by increased use of public notices, with exceptions for members of the public who had difficulty accessing public notices due to disabilities;
- (g) the public notices would be written in plain English, although all notices use internationally recognised symbols informing residents that there are translation services available.

Following members questions it was reported that –

- (h) the Government set the fees for planning applications and as such the Planning Department had no control over fee setting, which means that the additional costs of postage could not be passed on to applicants;
- (i) the changes to the Code of Publicity and ‘Probity in Planning’ code allowed a more flexible and more proactive engagement with local communities and stakeholders on development proposals and potentially, through the further development of a cooperative model of delivering planning services, a fundamentally different relationship between local citizens and the Local Planning Authority.

Members welcomed and supported the proposed new Code of Publicity. Members commented that they were confused as to the level of council resource that could be used to undertake ward work on planning matters following previous advice offered from the Monitoring Officer.

Agreed that:

- (1) the proposed new approach advocated in the Code of Publicity is welcomed and supported;
- (2) the Monitoring Officer, is invited to attend the next meeting of the panel to provide a report which advises councillors when it is appropriate to use council resources for ward work, particularly in line with increased members involvement in planning applications and site notices.

20. **MINUTES OF THE GROWTH BOARD**

The panel received the minutes of the Growth Board held on 21 May 2012 and commented that the minutes needed to be more comprehensive in order to fully understand the issues that were discussed.

Agreed that the panel’s feedback on the minutes being more comprehensive is provided to the Growth Board’s support officers.

21. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The panel noted its tracking resolutions document.

22. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel discussed its work programme for 2012 – 2013.

Agreed that –

1. Gill Peele, Panel Lead Officer, is to ensure that all items included on the work programme are populated with meeting dates;
2. the following items are added to the panel’s work programme –
 - Inward Investment Team – an overview on how the team are working to generate inward investment. What have they done and what are their plans for the future;
 - Community Events and Road Closure policy - to be added for the next meeting and a report requested to be submitted;
 - BT Broadband connectivity – should include all service providers. Request a report for the next meeting;
 - Highway maintenance – request a report to be reviewed at the next meeting;
 - Market Recovery Scheme – request a report so this can be reviewed at the next meeting;
 - Youth Unemployment – this item to the included at the November meeting.

23. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.