

## **Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Monday 10 October 2022**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Riley, in the Chair.

Councillor Coker, Vice Chair.

Councillors Finn, Goslin, Hendy, Holloway, Laing (Substitute for Councillor Tippetts), Luggier, Partridge, Salmon and Wheeler (Substitute for Councillor Poyser).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Poyser, Tippetts and Tofan.

Also in attendance: Councillor Patel (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure and Sport), Councillor Shayer (Cabinet Member for Finance and Economy), Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place), Victoria Pomeroy (CEO of The Box), Martin Ivatt (City Centre Regeneration Co-ordinator), Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Chloe Hughes (Engagement Programmes Manager), Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk), Hannah Whiting (Democratic Advisor) and Lucy Davis (Policy & Intelligence Advisor).

The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 7.36 pm.

*Note: At a future meeting, the Panel 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.*

57. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

58. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2022 were an accurate record of the meeting.

59. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

60. **Policy Updates**

Lucy Davis (Policy & Intelligence Advisor) presented the report and highlighted –

- a) The Growth Plan 2022;

- i. Investment Zones to be established across the UK;
  - ii. New legislation to be introduced through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to accelerate and prioritise major infrastructure projects across England;
  - iii. Changes to tax.
- b) Changes had been announced since the agenda had been published on the Interventions in place to support businesses and families with rising energy costs.
- i. The Government will not proceed with the abolition of the 45p tax rate for higher earners;
  - ii. DLUHC was inviting expressions of interest for investment zones from Freeport's with a deadline of 14 October 2022;
  - iii. The Medium Term Fiscal Plan had been moved forward to 31 October 2022 from 23 November 2022.

In response to questions it was reported that –

- c) The Council would be submitting an expression of interest for the Freeport to become an Investment Zone with a separate Investment Zone expression of interest being submitted for the City Centre and Waterfront;
- d) Relaxation of planning controls for an investment zone on the waterfront have not been confirmed by government yet, but changes would be more likely linked to speeding the process of granting planning permission. Policies like Heritage Protection, Building Safety and Flooding, would all still apply;
- e) The expression of interest for the Freeport to become an Investment Zone would not change from the full business case submission;
- f) Temporary licensing changes that were brought in during the COVID19 pandemic to allow businesses to sell food and drink on pavements and pedestrianised roads would remain in place until 2023, when the guidance would become permanent.

The Committee agreed to:

- 1) Note the report;
- 2) Receive an update on social prescribing provision in walking and cycling;
- 3) Receive an update on any Council plans relating to the capping of bus fares to £2.

61. **Risk Review**

Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) presented the report and highlighted –

- a) The Audit and Governance Committee reviewed strategic and operational risks on a regular basis, but each scrutiny committee would have a risk report, relating to their Terms of Reference, added as a recurring item on their agendas to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with further reassurance on risks;
- b) Items could be added to the work programme from the risk register;
- c) The work programme for the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered the risks at that time.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

62. **Update on The Box**

Councillor Patel (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure and Sport) introduced the report highlighted –

- a) The Box opened on 29 September 2020 and had just celebrated its second anniversary;
- b) Since its opening The Box had received over 350,000 visitors, during a period that saw the venue closed due to COVID19 pandemic measures between 31 December 2020 to mid-May 2021;
- c) The investment in The Box had been significant and the project was hugely ambitious supported by several funders including the Arts Council of England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund;
- d) The facilities for museum and archive materials had been improved significantly with an accessible climate changeable area;
- e) There has been a focus on achieving physical and intellectual access;
- f) The Box has changed perceptions of Plymouth, generating civic pride, and had had significant national and international media attention;
- g) A significant number of visitors were local people and engagement has been done with local schools, colleges, universities and some of the hardest to reach communities within the city;
- h) The British Art Show opened on 8 October 2022 and would run until 8 January 2023.

Victoria Pomery (Chief Executive Officer, The Box) supported the presentation and highlighted –

- i) Over 350 people attended the opening of the British Art Show on Friday 7 October 2022 with a further 2000 over the following weekend;
- j) The vision at The Box was to reimagine the future through the past;
- k) The Box had worked in partnership with partners and curators for The British Art Show;
- l) The exhibition featured the inspiring and challenging work from artists including 6 Turner Prize nominees and 3 Turner Prize winners;
- m) The importance that a wide range of ages were engaged with through the British Art Show and of the learning and engagement team, headed up by Chloe Hughes (Engagement Programmes Manager), who worked to engage as many local people as possible with The Box;
- n) 6 ambassadors had been recruited, with extensive and varying networks and backgrounds between them, to further engagement;
- o) The Tap-In app had been used to gather data on those who are attending The Box, and to inform engagement programmes with the groups of people who had not attended.

In response to questions it was reported that –

- p) The Box would be ambitious in applying for awards and would consider applying for the Art Fun Museum of the Year and had also been visited by a judge for a South West architectural prize and the archives had received two accreditations;
- q) Based on footfall at the time, The Box was on track to achieve its target of 200,000 visitors in the financial year 2022/23;
- r) Income revenue from the shop was down 30%, but changes had been made to merchandise available and research into audiences and propensity to spend, this could also be affected by the cost of living crisis;
- s) The value of the box cannot just be measured by revenue income;
- t) Venue hire figures had improved;
- u) The Box had been working with Foster's to monitor and maximise spend in the café, but the cost of living crisis had impacted the spend per head;
- v) The focus was on bid writing to fundraise for future projects;

- w) The income target of the previous museum had been £965,000 in 2013/14, and the income target for The Box in 2022/23 was £2.5 million;
- x) The net budget from the previous museum had been reduced by replacing income streams with bids;
- y) The catering had experienced inflation costs over Summer 2022 relating to cost of materials and wage inflation, whilst trying to recover from the effects of the COVID19 pandemic;
- z) Programming was key in securing higher numbers of visitors, especially new visitors, who might spend more at the gift shop;
- aa) Schools local to The Box were repeat visitors, and funding had enabled the engagement team to engage with schools in deprived areas, but schools across the city had struggled to plan visits due to travel costs;
- bb) The ambassador programme would be monitored and evaluated for its successes, and a teacher ambassador network was also utilised;
- cc) Plans for work to be shown at The Box are worked on 2-3 years in advance and at the time of the meeting there were no plans to show work from local artists such as Robert Lenkiewicz and Beryl Cook with the focus on working with up and coming living artists;

The Chair congratulated and thanked The Box team for working on such a successful cross-party project.

The Committee agreed to:

- 1) Note the report.
- 2) Recommend that they were provided with a report with up to date information on visitor numbers to The Box per ward to see which wards had lower engagement levels;
- 3) Recommend a report was to be provided on schools by ward that had been engaged with so Councillors could consider using their Community Grant funds to assist local schools that might not have engaged due to funding for transport.

### 63. **City Centre Update**

Councillor Mark Shayer (Cabinet Member for Finance and Economy) introduced the report and highlighted –

- a) Plymouth's City Centre, much like city centres across the UK, was facing a number of challenges, but Plymouth had been working on facing these challenges for some time and had delivered projects such as The Box and The

Barcode;

- b) There were new projects underway or about to start including the refurbishment of the city centre, The Guildhall refurbishment, work at the Railway Station, with work in the pipeline to bring in new homes and other non-retail uses to the city centre;
- c) Plymouth's City Centre, much like city centres across the UK, was facing a number of challenges., but Plymouth had been working on facing these challenges for some time and had delivered projects such as The Box and The Barcode
- e) Future Projects included Hilton Garden Inn and apartments on The Hoe, a new health and wellbeing centre and new homes at Bath Street as well as £26.5 million invested in improving the public realm across the city centre with contractor Morgan Tyndall;
- f) Works on Old Town Street and New George Street were due for completion in July 2023 and other projects at Colin Campbell Court, Civic Square and Armada Way were due to commence by the end of 2022 and to complete in 2023/24;
- g) Work was continuing on the extensive High Street Heritage Action Zone.

Martin Ivatt (City Centre Regeneration Coordinator) added to the presentation of the report and highlighted –

- h) A portion of the Transforming Cities Fund would be used to improve the public realm at Colin Campbell Court with work due to commence in January 2023 and be completed by the end of March 2023;
- i) At £12.7 million, Armada Way was the largest public realm program within the Better Places Programme with a deadline of March 2024 after a year extension to the Transforming Cities Fund deadline;
- j) Improvements would include:
  - i. Restoration of the Phoenix Fountain;
  - ii. Creation of an Amphitheatre Space near the Copthorne Hotel;
  - iii. Restoration of the 'grand vista' to the Hoe, the original aim for Armada Way which had been lost over previous years;
  - iv. A stream that ran North to South utilising granite curbs already in place;
  - v. Wildflower spaces;

- vi. Ping Pong Table and Pétanque playing areas;
- vii. A water-based play space with dancing jets;
- viii. Food and beverage outside spaces;
- ix. Restoration of the Sundial and modernisation of its setting;
- x. Replacement of broken slabs and opening up of tree pits to give trees space.

In response to questions it was explained that –

- k) Armada Way is the centrepiece of transformation and would act as a regeneration catalyst for plots either side of Armada Way more attractive as development space with development planned for the West End in relation to the Health and Wellbeing Hub;
- l) A compulsory purchase had been successfully made on some previously commercial properties on Western Approach in order to begin demolition in preparation for works at Colin Campbell Court;
- m) Department of Transport had been made aware that Senior Officers felt that the funding originally designated for Phase 2 of Frankfurt Gate funding would be better used to enhance cyclist and pedestrian movement at Colin Campbell Court, and this had been agreed;
- n) A consultation had taken place with businesses and the City Centre Company to inform them of plans around Christmas 2022 to reduce hoardings to widen pedestrian areas;
- o) Cycling links between Frankfurt Gate onto Devonport and St Budeaux Sustainable transport and cycling links had been adjusted to use the new plans for Colin Campbell Court;
- p) There was a cycle route included on the plans to run from North Cross, down Armada Way to Royal Parade with a mobility hub outside Mayflower House;
- q) The pedestrian and cycling routes would not be segregated but cycling route would be identified by a different colour;
- r) Approximately 20% of properties in the city centre were vacant and the team had been working with landlords to get vacant buildings back into use and reducing retail and diversifying uses;
- s) Analysis had not yet been completed on how the cost of living crisis could affect footfall in the city centre, but with mixed use it was hoped it would give people more reasons to visit and use the city centre, with new homes being built and the new Health and Wellbeing Hub looking to employ

approximately 250 people and have 2000 daily visitors, it was hoped there would be an increase in footfall and night-time economy;

- t) The Council was a major landlord in the city centre and was looking after small businesses and encouraging people to shop local and understand food miles;
- u) No further legal expenditure would be incurred in relation to the CPO's needed to deliver the Health and Wellbeing Hub;
- v) Technical design would look more closely at the cycle route and education would be carried out to encourage cyclists to stay on cycle paths as much as possible;
- w) Changes from retail to other uses are incremental, and the city centre area would not reduce in size, just the number of retail units within it;
- x) The works scheduled for Royal Parade were being looked at in technical design and works were due to start in early 2023 to make the area better for buses and pedestrians to use;
- y) Under Local Transport Note 120 it was stated that city centre environments were acceptable for non-segregated cycle routes providing they were appropriately delineated, but the plans were still in the technical design process;
- z) Global supply chain and inflation issues were of concern but the scheme was being closely tracked against the cost plan, which had a good degree of contingency built-in;
- aa) Different surfaces and rumble strips were being considered in the design of cycle paths along Armada Way to make it a safe shared space and the designs were at the beginning of a more detailed consultation phase which would provide an opportunity for redesign to adapt to concerns and issues;
- bb) A survey had shown that Plymouth City Centre was one of the busiest in terms of footfall in the country;
- cc) Areas such as Royal William Yard and The Barbican are fantastic for the city, but present a challenge for the city centre as it provides multiple locations for investors;
- dd) Works had been planned and funded in such a way to try and reduce the cost on local taxpayers.

The Committee recommended that -

- l) They be provided with a full report regarding the aborted start to the Old Town Street and New George Street project in due course;



- 2) They be provided with a report on the Armada Way sustainable transport solutions design process and how it would be implemented;
- 3) If any significant changes were made to the plans presented at the meeting, plans would be brought back to Committee for scrutiny.

*Councillor David Salmon left the meeting at 6.42pm*

64. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed –

- 1) To the current work programme;
- 2) To add Plymouth's Plan on Investment Zones to the work programme for 7 December 2022;
- 3) That the reports for the Culture Plan Annual Update, Visitor Plan Annual Update and Heritage Fun Activity Plan Update be provided a minimum of 7 days before the next meeting to give the panel sufficient time to read the reports.

65. **Tracking Decisions (To Follow)**

The Committee noted the tracking decisions and agreed to seek a further update on the 1 outstanding item.

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