

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: Plymouth City Centre Company (Business Improvement District)

Committee: Growth & Prosperity Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 9 January 2012

Cabinet Member: Councillor Fry, Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development

CMT Member: Director for Development and Regeneration

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Ref:

Key Decision: N

Part: Part I

Clint Jones, City Centre Manager will attend the meeting and provide an overview of the key issues and challenges for the City Centre Business Improvement District

I. Summary overview of presentation:

Recession

- Over the last three years retail has been hit exceptionally hard by the impact of the on-going global recession.
- All High Streets have been affected and Plymouth is no exception.
- Comparison to Nationwide trends and other local centres.

2011 Delivery & West End

- Review of board report*
- Problem of three large closures – impact on West End.
- West End redevelopment and its impact.
- Vacancy Rates of West End retailing area.
- Colin Campbell Court.

Developments and Opportunities

- Problems facing commercial landlords and how we are building stronger relationships with them.
- Project overview for empty shop project with PCA.
- Summary of threat of online shopping – project overview of shopplymouth.co.uk.
- Multi-functional uses for retail premises – overview of PCA / PCCC shop project, linked with Economic development work.

Projects Planned for 2012:

- Comprehensive Training programme for retailers using local training providers.
- Development of Shopping / 3D map App for Plymouth.
- Development of Ecommerce platform on website.

2. July to December 2011 Report

(a) Marketing

Since July we have published a further 3 editions of Explore Plymouth.

Our summer edition distributed in July included information on summer retail offerings along with upcoming City Centre event information. Alongside this we have also published the September Arts and Culture publication to promote the retail, leisure and culture offer within the City. These publications were each distributed to 40,000 homes in the Plymouth and drive to work area. For the September Arts and Culture publication, which included information on both the America's Cup and the British Art Show was distributed further afield, in motorway service stations along the M5 & M4 and within the London 'Community Network' including offices, gyms, spas and leisure areas. We have delivered another edition of Explore magazine, which received fantastic results, with over 200 entries received for the competition within the magazine hitting our KPI of 40% within our ABI target demographic.

For the Christmas edition of Explore we altered distribution to bring more visibility of pick up issues with 20,000 copies being available for pick up across large supermarkets in the local area including Sainsburys Marsh Mills, Waitrose Saltash, Tesco Lee Mill and Sainsburys Armada Way alongside POS now being available for retailers in store within the City Centre to encourage pick up from tills. 20,000 copies have also been distributed door to door throughout the Plympton and Plymstock areas. This combined distribution has worked well and we've seen a dramatic increase in competition entries and public engagement with the publication.

We have carried out a variety of marketing activity surrounding Flavour Fest. As a major event in the Plymouth Summer Festival calendar Flavour Fest is a great opportunity for Plymouth to drive footfall. For 2010's event we carried out the following marketing activity:

A6 events booklet – distributed within Devon and Cornwall Life to over 30,000 homes, JC Decaux posters throughout the City Centre, Advertising through the PSF campaigns on Radio Plymouth and Pirate FM throughout August, placed advertising within the Herald (double page spread) and Western Morning News (8 page pull out supplement) and coverage within Explore, Plymouth Summer Festival brochure and Plymouth magazine. All of our marketing activity was supported by a strong PR campaign to ensure full awareness of the event throughout the region and locality.

The Winter Festival launched in November encompassing all activities and events taking place within the City in the run up to Christmas, including the Lights Switch on, Ice Rink, Christmas Market and Christmas Carnival. To promote the Winter Festival activity we have created a TV advert, which has been aired on ITV West country from the 21st November for a concentrated 4 week campaign. To ensure high visibility of Winter Festival messaging we have also adopted a campaign within the Plymouth Herald, Western Morning News, Plymouth Extra and the Plymouth Magazine alongside radio campaigns on Radio Plymouth and Heart FM.

(b) PR

Since July with our events programme and PR activity generated the following Advertising and Editorial value:

Advertising Value (June – September) - £62,905.00

Editorial Value (June –September) - £188,445.00

A large proportion of our EVE was generated through Flavour Fest with over £127,000 of EVE generated through PR surrounding the event.

Advertising Value (October – November) – £25,975.00

Editorial Value (October – November) – £77,925.00

(c) Big Screen & Events

Since July we have held a variety of events on the Big Screen;

- Royal Opera Madam Butterfly & Cinderella
- Tank Regiment Homecoming Parade
- Open Weekend/One Year to Go
- Summer Movie Screenings: The Jungle Book & Finding Nemo.
- Lloyds TSB Torch Tour
- Triathlon Live
- BBC Domesday Reloaded
- FotoNow Summer Mix Photo Booth
- Flavour Fest 2011
- Last Night of the Proms
- America's Cup World Series
- British Art Show 7

British Art Show - Plymouth Fringe
Big Blueprint public art project
Christmas Festivities

In August we held Flavour Fest, extended for 2011 to reach Place de Brest Flavour Fest attracted over 150,000 visitors to the City Centre over the three days of the event.

The Ice Rink returned to the City Centre from October half term, and is in place until March 2012. After going out to tender the contract for the Ice Rink was awarded to Ice Angels, a newly created local company who have brought in the Rink and Santa's Grotto to the City Centre to create a Winter Wonderland on the Piazza as the centre piece of the Winter Festival.

On Thursday 17 November the annual Christmas Light Switch on event was held at the top of Cornwall Street in the City Centre. Thousands of people turned up for the event, with guest stars Michael Collings, Ronan Parke and Marine Mark Ormrod taking centre stage to turn on the lights alongside the Lord Mayor and Cinderella. The City Centre was a hive of activity until late into the evening.

Now in its fourth year the Christmas Carnival was held on Thursday 1st December from 4pm – 8pm, with an entertainment stage from Radio Plymouth on Frankfort Gate with guest star Sophie Habibis, a chance to meet live reindeer and a twinkling twilight lantern parade with over 200 school children and local samba bands taking part it was a night of festive family entertainment. Despite the horrible weather there was a good turn out for the event, however we are looking into more successful ways for a carnival event such as this to be run in the future to ensure high footfall.

(d) Independent Retailers

Plymouth City Centre Company continues to work closely with the Independent Retailers within the City Centre and more than 20 retailers have now taken part on the NSA course – World Host Customer Care and Mary Portas; My Shop My Future Masterclass.

We are now currently in talks with a Plymouth based training provider to deliver NVQ training and in work courses.

Plymouth City Centre Company has taken over responsibility for organising the farmers market, following extremely positive feedback after trialling it for the America's Cup, this will become permanent in 2012. As part of the 2011 Christmas market, PCCC were able to secure 4 stalls for use by City Centre retailers. The take up was immediate and those who have taken advantage of the opportunity have been extremely pleased with the extra trade they have benefitted from.

The Christmas edition of Explore featured a double page spread, specifically for the Mayflower Street retailers and promoting the 5 menswear stores there.

(e) Re-cycling scheme

5 new businesses have joined the re-cycling scheme this quarter bringing the total to 60. The scheme continues to run smoothly and is still within budget.

(f) Cleaning

September saw 'Civic Pride – Clean Up week

The BID clean team were joined by various PCC departments and volunteers from McDonalds in a hive of activity to tidy up the city centre.

This included painting of the blue banner poles, painting of dustbins and the installation of a few new ones, extra power washing, graffiti removal, repairs to utility cabinets and street benches, tidying of flowerbeds and washing of street furniture.

There was also a marquee where council departments could promote their services. e.g re-cycling, composting and other services. PCC enforcement teams were also out and about 'educating' the general public on littering offences.

(g) PCSO's

We now have a new police SGT, Tim Hinde overseeing our dedicated team of PCSOs who have been actively engaged working with external agencies in order to address some of the City Centre anti-social issues.

PCSO Tristan has been gathering evidence to help in the process of issuing ASBOs against 3 persistent offenders.

PCSO Sid and PCSO Tony have been working with a group of Eastern European rough sleepers and sign posting them to the relevant agencies for support.

PC Glen Hawkins and PCSO Katie have been working with the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in respect of identify long term solution for street drinkers.

On a daily basis the PCSO's respond to calls from the BID Hotline and also help the PARC manager with the distribution of PARC information and photographs.

Kathy Davey has worked closely with the police and the fire brigade to monitor the Occupy demonstration on the Jigsaw Garden, visiting the site daily to monitor any health and safety issues and to ensure that rubbish is kept down.

There is a dedicated PCSO assigned to the site as a liaison officer, this is to ensure that there are no problems for members of the public or to the demonstrators themselves. The police are also gathering intelligence from the daily liaison meeting.

Police Focus week was held at the beginning of December and included an awareness event in the City Centre outside Drake Circus.

Police Cadets

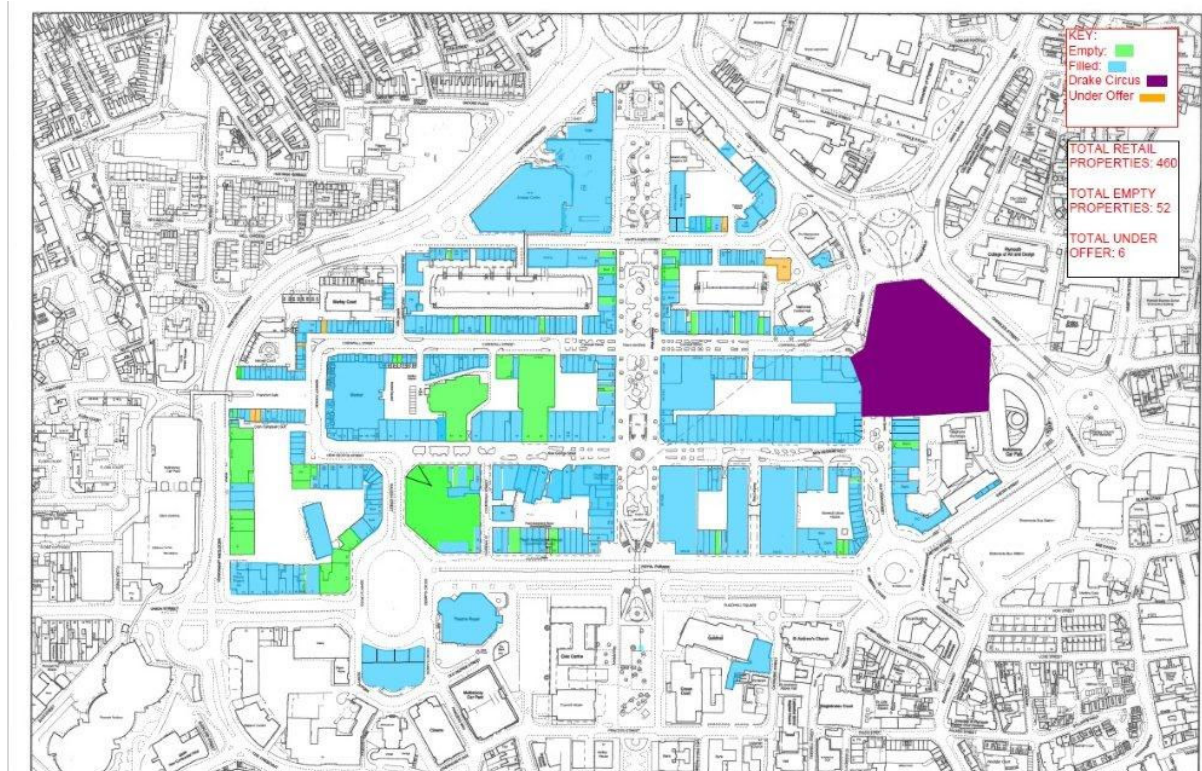
This year's Police Cadets have just started their training and we should see them on the streets assisting with events etc. in time for the Christmas activities.

Vacant Shops

We have now carried out a full audit of empty units and are working with PCAD to display vinyls in the windows of those that are empty.

Currently there are 52 empty units within the BID boundary, this is a decrease of 7 since the previous period. 6 of these empty units are currently under offer. It is however, worth bearing in mind that some of these have been taken up for by temporary Christmas traders.

City Wide Retail Vacancy Rate = 11.3%
National Average = 14.3 %



Commercial Bookings

Bookings received total £23,425 (at 8th December 2011)

Miscellaneous

Work is ongoing with Springboard to look at measuring footfall figures and the new facility "Milestone" enabling us to measure comparable KPI's in over 4000 UK towns and cities.

PARC Update

EXCLUSION NOTICES

Daytime businesses;

3 issued during period No's 183 – 185.

Total bans issued 185 of which 17 are current.

INCIDENT FORMS

236 incidents recorded during quarter.

STORENET

Various stores have received one to one training.

Recently Carphone Warehouse, New George Street and Holland &

Barrett, Royal Parade have joined Storennet, staff have received radio training

PARC continues to arrange visits to CCTV control room as part of the induction.

COMMUNICATION

All 250 plus Storennet users were contacted immediately following discussion with police in respect of riot procedures in August.

3 CCTV operators were put on standby in case there were riot problems in Plymouth.

OPERATION DRAKE PROJECT

Together with PCSO Katy Fisher PARC has been involved in the above named operation relating to foreign students.

Over the past five years we have seen in Plymouth, especially the city centre area, a large influx of foreign students. Feedback received from retailers has been that they have experienced an increase in shoplifting and anti-social behaviour from foreign students, incurring large financial losses.

Action Plan

1. Special cards for foreign students to carry with them at all times with useful contact numbers.
2. Special stickers to be displayed in retail premises bearing Operation Drake logo limiting the number of students allowed in at any one time.
3. Posters displayed in all language schools explaining Operation Drake.

CCTV

	July	Aug	Sept
Shop Thefts	25	21	22
Assaults	32	35	33
Arrested			
Drugs	12	13	14
Arrested			
Drunk &	3	5	3
Disorderly			
Criminal	3	3	2
Damage			
Violent Acts	27	31	30
Police	1	0	1
Operations			
No Of	221	199	180
Visitors to			
CCTV			
No Of	8	8	8
Groups to			
CCTV			
Radio Trng	1	1	2

Public Art Activity

Full time project management support of British Art Show 7. Installation and delivery of first two weeks of the show in five venues across the city.

Big Blueprint – new banner image selection and install on the back of the Big Screen created by local Artist Lee-Anne Hampson and depicts a swimmer underwater.

Fotonow – West End Gallery. Photography group Fotonow took residency of an empty shop unit (125 Cornwall Street) for three months showcasing a regularly changing programme of work produced by local artists and community workshops. The project finished with a wider West End Exhibition in October.

British Art Show 7 Fringe activity, support for local artists carrying out city centre based public arts activity focused around the Big Screen. Projects included Sylvia Rimat, Imagine Us, interactive performance piece and Beth Emily Richards, the Handcuff King - a commissioned film piece inspired by Houdini and regularly shown on the screen throughout the exhibition.

Auto Art – a partnership with Artsmatrix, Plymouth College of Art to deliver a city centre art fair, featuring the work of twelve local artists selling and showcasing unique handmade work including prints, interior accessories and clothing.

Woolworths –window vinyl's now installed.

PCA & City Centre Company shop – 109 Cornwall Street opened with Design2Sell project.

Plymouth City Centre Company Response to 'The Portas Review'

A lot of noise has been made over recent months about Cameron's decision to commission Mary Portas as a retail expert to provide a report of the future of the nation's high streets. The report is finally with us as we head into what is one of the most difficult trading periods that the countries retailers have ever seen. With wind and rain lashing our shop fronts will this report finally give retailers the answers they have been looking for – or will it crystallise the best practice that is already out there?

Mary Portas is eminently qualified to comment on our High Streets she has over 30 years of retailing experience and has spent the last seven months researching, meeting with retailers and organisations and it has to be said that no one can doubt her passion for the subject – like all of us she understands that High Streets are and have always been the heart of our communities. She also recognises that they are well placed to deliver something new, dynamic and exciting for those communities. Whether it be 'Swap-shops' or 'Market Days' – these are all things that organisations like the ATCM and British BIDS have been talking about at conferences and meetings for years, and implementing locally with limited success. Hopefully what this report will do is place the issues which High Streets face at the forefront, not only of the

national and local political agenda, but also in the minds of the nation's shoppers. High Streets need people and shoppers to survive.

In this blog I have pulled out the summary points and offer a comment and Plymouth City Centre perspective on those that are relevant.

1. Put in place a "Town Team": a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets

Plymouth City Centre Company exists for this very purpose, we work to deliver a 5 year business plan on behalf of the retail community. We deliver operational management of the High Street along with a strong and strategic marketing focus. Our structure already means that the Council and landlords are involved and that retailers are part of all decision making and delivery.

2. Empower successful Business Improvement Districts to take on more responsibilities and powers and become "Super-BIDs"

We already have more powers and responsibilities than many BIDs across the country because of our strong working relationship with Plymouth City Council – obviously we would welcome any further powers and incorporate them into our strategies.

3. Legislate to allow landlords to become high street investors by contributing to their Business Improvement District

We already have strong relationships with many of Plymouths retail landlords and generate a significant amount of match funding through voluntary contributions to the BID.

4. Establish a new "National Market Day" where budding shopkeepers can try their hand at operating a low-cost retail business

Plymouth has a thriving City Market, which is currently 98% let, it also offers day benches for hire. We also operate markets such as Flavourfest and our Christmas Market which allow local traders to access the City Centre for a reasonable fee. In the future we are already looking at bringing back 'Market Day' to Plymouth as part of our 'Shop Local, ShopPlymouth' campaign in the New Year.

5. Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not

We would support any easing of legislation which made it easier for budding entrepreneurs to trade.

6. Government should consider whether business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers

We would support any such considerations.

7. Local authorities should use their new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses

Anything which helped new business startups would be wholeheartedly supported by us. Plymouth City Council already offers hardship relief, administered through rates, for existing local businesses. We have raised awareness of this by offering support in application to any business that needs it. However, any other discretionary powers would need to be balanced against the financial problems currently facing local authorities.

8. Make business rates work for business by reviewing the use of the RPI with a view to changing the calculation to CPI

This move would bring business rates in line with other forms of direct taxation and is therefore recommended.

9. Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table

Parking is an eternal bugbear for City Centre retailers. The reality is that we are unlikely to ever be able to convince the Council to offer completely free parking in Plymouth. However, it is clear that parking is important to consumers and therefore we will continue to lobby on behalf of retailers to ensure that the cost is kept down.

Many towns and cities are already offering 'Free After...' campaigns or specific days when parking is free. We will speak directly to the authority about these schemes with a view to implementing something similar in Plymouth.

In the meantime, we currently have some of the best value car parking in the South West of England – not least of all with Western Approach Car Park offering all day for £5.

10. Town Teams should focus on making high streets accessible, attractive and safe

'Clean and Safe' are two core components of our BID. We employ and have operational responsibility for a City Centre Specific 'Clean Team' and we work with the local Policing teams to ensure that the High Street is safe. We also pay a contribution towards the provision of two additional PCSO's who work specifically in the City Centre.

11. Government should include high street deregulation as part of their ongoing work on freeing up red tape

Any deregulation and reduction of red tape would be welcomed by PCCC.

12. Address the restrictive aspects of the 'Use Class' system to make it easier to change the uses of key properties on the high street

We continue to work locally with the planning services to ensure that this type of issue is easily resolved for businesses wanting to invest in Plymouth. Any national review of this system would bring benefits at a local level.

13. Put betting shops into a separate 'Use Class' of their own

We do not have a major issue with excessive amounts of betting shops in the City. However, this proposal will protect the City Centre from an influx in future years.

14. Make explicit a presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework

The 'Town Centre's First' approach to development is wholeheartedly supported by PCCC. With plans for development in Derriford already being drafted it is vitally important that the City Centre remains central to the sustainable planning for the City. This is reflected by the local authority in the Area Action Plan for the City Centre Area.

15. Introduce Secretary of State "exceptional sign off" for all new out-of-town developments and require all large new developments to have an "affordable shops" quota

This seems, in principle, to be a realistic proposition for new out of town developments.

16. Large retailers should support and mentor local businesses and independent retailers

We are already working on a mentoring and training scheme for BID members, following the success of our 'Mary Portas Master-Class' sessions earlier this year. We have a huge amount of retailing experience in the City and it is vital that we share this knowledge if we are to remain vibrant.

17. Retailers should report on their support of local high streets in their annual report

This will encourage businesses to be more forward thinking about their impact on the local High Street and could lead to potential investment (albeit potentially 'in kind' rather than through cash) into the BID.

18. Encourage a contract of care between landlords and their commercial tenants by promoting the leasing code and supporting the use of lease structures other than upward only rent reviews, especially for small businesses

We have long believed that 'Upwards Only' rent reviews do not meet the needs of either landlord or tenant in today's market. We would encourage any move towards 'turnover based' reviews as essential to encouraging new and exciting businesses onto our High Street. We are already empowered through the BID to support both tenant and landlord and will often assist in the amicable resolution of issues between parties. This is part of our remit which we are keen to develop over future years.

19. Explore further disincentives to prevent landlords from leaving units vacant

This is an especially important point for Plymouth – whilst our vacancy rate is below the National Average, many of the properties are in the middle of otherwise well let areas. This definitely has an impact on the overall perception of the area and therefore impacts upon our ability to encourage new retailers, and indeed shoppers, into the City. It is vital that landlords continue to maintain property and actively seek to redevelop or rent the premises.

20. Banks who own empty property on the high street should either administer these assets well or be required to sell them

Agreed! Anyone who is not actively marketing and managing their portfolio should be brought to account. The Community Right to Buy could very well provide a workable solution to this and could lead to some exciting Community led projects reducing vacancy rates in City Centre's.

21. Local authorities should make more proactive use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to encourage the redevelopment of key high street retail space

Negligent landlords who allow buildings to fall into a state of disrepair should be challenged. CPOs could form a part of this challenge – but it is important to think about the impact this could have on the local economy in a wider sense. It seems better to bring the buildings back into use and up to code than simply transfer ownership unless a developer is waiting in the wings with a sympathetic redevelopment plan for the area.

22. Empower local authorities to step in when landlords are negligent with new "Empty Shop Management Orders"

This idea strikes a chord with us as we are currently developing a scheme to do exactly that! We want to address the problem of empty units and have come up with a package response. Our initial plans involve asking landlords to give us permission to utilise the window space for a collaborative project with the Plymouth College of Art to promote local artists and courses. Alongside this we would like to encourage landlords to spend a small amount improving the overall look and feel of their empty units and potentially providing a contribution towards window / fascia cleaning etc. If there were powers that could be enacted to assist us in the implementation of this type of project then that would be great – however, in the meantime we will continue to try and do this ourselves.

23. Introduce a public register of high street landlords

The local authority has a register of landlords. We have access to this because of our working relationship with PCC. If this were to be made public it would encourage landlords to take a more active role in the High Street – especially if they were receiving regular comments from the general public!

24. Run a high profile campaign to get people involved in Neighbourhood Plans

At a recent British Bids conference we discussed the impact that Neighbourhood Plans could have on City Centres and BIDs in particular, it is important that if any of this review is to be beneficial then the local community needs to be engaged in the process. Neighbourhood plans are integral to this. Local people connected to their local high Street – it is, if you'll pardon the phrase, a no brainer! We need to understand who uses our City Centre, how they use it and what they want to see if we are to be representative of the Community. The challenge here is who will lead on the development of these plans as it will inevitably be time consuming and may lead to some serious challenges on existing planning frameworks and business plans. There is also the risk that because of the potentially small number of people involved these plans are not truly representative – however, none of these issues are insurmountable!

25. Promote the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood Plans

See above.

26. Developers should make a financial contribution to ensure that the local community has a strong voice in the planning system

Again – agreed! The community does deserve a stronger voice when it comes to challenging planning applications, as with any legal system the ball is all too often in the court of those with the most money. However, that said, Plymouth has an excellent planning department who do listen to the needs of the community and through our strong working relationship with them, and because of the powerful voice of the BID, we are able to put forward serious challenges to planning applications when required.

27. Support imaginative community use of empty properties through Community Right to Buy, Meanwhile Use and a new "Community Right to Try"

We already support this – in the last year we have used several shops in the West End of the City for arts projects. Any additional support that becomes available through potential new 'Empty Shop Management Orders' or the localism agenda would be welcomed, as long as the proposal for meanwhile use was in keeping with the locality and complimented the existing retail offer.

We have recently undertaken a project with Plymouth College of Art to develop 109 Cornwall Street into a learning hub and retail shop which aims to reduce the number of NEETs in the City. Whilst also giving local art students and artists a space to sell their work. We are keen to investigate other such partnerships.

28. Run a number of High Street Pilots to test proof of concept

We want to be a pilot City! Plymouth is already leading the way in terms of City Centre Management and we are keen to be pushed further. We are willing to test this proof of concept and I honestly believe there is a willingness throughout the City to be part of this. I invite Mary Portas and her team to come and visit us, to see the work we are doing and help us understand the broader ramifications of this review,

to help us to embrace it and to help our High Street develop and grow over the coming years.

As expected 'The Portas Review' has delivered the messages that many of us in the Industry had been expecting to hear. As I mentioned earlier, the difference between the past and the present is that we have now been given a national voice, this report will bring the issues facing High Streets to the forefront of the national psyche.

The High Street is not dead – but as Mary rightly points out '*the public sector alone cannot create vibrant High Streets*'. The community needs to have a sense of belonging and public respect and this will only happen if '*we roll up our sleeves and just make things happen*'. I think that in Plymouth we are already doing this, not only through work directly with retailers but also with the innovative range of events and activities we bring into the City Centre – but there is always more we could be doing.

Our role now is to ensure that these recommendations, where appropriate, become part of our daily roles. Where there is a local opportunity to challenge or deliver any of these recommendations we need to be leading the discussion. This report should not be seen as a flash in the pan or a glamorous Band-Aid to the problems we are facing, rather City and Town Centre managers and the retailers they represent and support should take the information and direction they have been given and wield it to their advantage.

We live in an age where it is so easy to consume, to purchase online, to 'socially network' using the internet instead of taking the time to visit the heart of our community. It is our job, our challenge to encourage people back to their roots – but in order to do this we need to offer them something compelling and convenient, something different and ultimately something which will meet their needs and expectations. What this ultimately looks like I cannot say – but with the help of the review we at least now have a national template to work towards!