

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 22 September 2016 in Committee Room 3 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 6.00 pm
Adjourned 7.25 pm
Reconvened 7.35 pm
Concluded 8.25 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN	INDEPENDENT
Heseltine Mallinson	Farley Green H Khan Pullen	Fear	H Hussain	K Hussain

Observers:

Councillor Sarah Ferriby (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sport and Culture) and
Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport)

Councillor Farley in the Chair

14. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Green disclosed an interest in Minute 19 as he had been a member of the Executive when the decision was made to undertake restoration and development work at St George's Hall and therefore would not take part in any discussion about the works.

ACTION: *City Solicitor*

15. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June and 28 July 2016 be signed as a correct record.



16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

17. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Committee.

18. CITY CENTRE REGENERATION

Previous reference: Minute 16 (2015/2016)

The Strategic Director, Regeneration submitted **Document “H”** which updated the Committee on progress with city centre regeneration since its scrutiny hearing in October 2015.

The Economic Development Programmes Manager delivered a presentation on the improved retail offer in the city centre, the City Centre Growth Scheme and Priority Streets, during which she reported that footfall had increased in the city centre by 24.5% since the Broadway Shopping Centre opened in November 2015. Darley Street and the top part of the city centre were recognised as challenging areas and Members were informed of work being undertaken to bring back in to use vacant ground floor units in key streets as part of Priority Streets. It was reported that the Season of Light 2016 was due to be launched soon with the Forest of Light in City Park on 6 October and that it also aimed to attract footfall up to the top end of town.

It was agreed that the 2015 and 2016 footfall figures for Market Street, which had an increased footfall of 82%, would be circulated to Members.

The Markets Manager addressed the Committee and stated that the Oastler Centre had seen a decrease of an average of 5,000 shoppers per week since the closure of the Morrisons store in the city centre in April 2016. He outlined the temporary time limited support, as detailed in paragraph 6.6 of the report, that the Council were offering to support market traders whilst a new user was sought for the Morrisons building. It was reported that the markets' footfall had not been impacted upon when the Broadway Shopping Centre opened, but had decreased significantly when Morrisons had closed and the Broadway Shopping Centre had reduced their car parking fees. He also highlighted the reliance on footfall from the Oastler Centre to Kirkgate Market of which there had been a stable reduction.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and welcomed the update.

A discussion took place regarding the City Plan. The Assistant Director, Economy and Development Services informed Members that it had been endorsed by the Executive and that an internal review was considered necessary given the changes that had taken place this year. Consultations were currently being undertaken with stakeholders and she agreed to present a detailed report



to the Committee on the City Plan.

A Member expressed his disappointment at the lack of a robust strategic plan for the city centre markets. He also raised concerns about what would happen in the city centre once the short term plans and assistance to businesses had come to an end.

In response to a Member's question, the Markets Manager stated that, following a consultation with market traders, the Council had decided to keep both city centre markets operational and that this decision had been made prior to the opening of the Broadway Shopping Centre. Investment in the Oastler Centre was due to take place but had been put on hold due to the closure of Morrisons and until the strategic direction of markets had been assessed. It was agreed that a report on city centre markets would be presented to the Committee in six months for further scrutiny.

In response to a Member's question about what was being done to attract new businesses and boost footfall on Darley Street, it was reported that it was part of Priority Streets which included business rates rebates and support packages.

A Member questioned what conversations were taking place with property owners in order to get dilapidated buildings into an appropriate state for letting. In response it was reported that officers were engaging with property owners but not all were willing to engage in discussions and that some of those buildings were listed or had heritage issues. It was highlighted that if the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Townscape Heritage Initiative for the City Centre was approved, funding would be available to bring those buildings back into use; a decision on the funding bid was expected in January 2017.

Whilst welcoming the work of SkillsHouse, a Member queried what the cost had been of helping 628 unemployed people into jobs. It was agreed that this would be circulated to Members after the meeting. The Chair reminded Members that an update report on SkillsHouse was due to be presented to the Committee in March 2017.

A Member referred to the significantly higher footfall at Forster Square Station in comparison to the Interchange which indicated that the city centre was attracting people from the valley line but struggling to do so from Leeds, Halifax and the Calder Valley. He queried whether any marketing work was being undertaken to increase visitors via the Interchange routes. In response it was stated that the Broadway Shopping Centre was carrying out research into where their customers were coming from and that the Council would need to work with them to promote the city centre.

A Member spoke of the need for a longer term plan with regard to the property market in the city centre which would give property owners the assurance that there was a long term commitment from the Council no matter what political changes there were. He referred to rents charged in some properties in the city centre which were incredibly high and that some were not fit for purpose.



The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport acknowledged the need for a longer term strategy and stated that the Council would continue to support and add to the short to medium terms measures as outlined in the report.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that:

- The city centre vacancy rates of neighbouring local authorities were not publically available and therefore a comparison to Bradford's could not be made.
- Bradford based retailers located outside of the city centre were not drawn to the city centre partly due to rental figures and car parking charges. However, there were specialist retailers in the Broadway Shopping Centre, albeit not Bradford based ones.
- A review of Priority Streets was taking place to see if there were other areas that could be supported in the city centre.
- 'Meanwhile' uses were being supported in vacant city centre units to help maintain footfall.
- Further information on the Jacob's Well building would be provided to the Committee within the Asset Management report due on 24 October 2016.
- There was no marketing budget for the city centre; marketing was undertaken in conjunction with the Kirkgate Centre and the Broadway Shopping Centre. The Assistant Director, Public Affairs and Communications was in the process of commissioning a piece of work on place marketing.

A Member stated that businesses were being encouraged into areas where buildings opposite had windows missing. He considered there was a need for more enforcement action, such as compulsory purchases, in order to get dilapidated city centre properties back into use, particularly where the property owners were not engaging in discussions with the Council. In response, the Assistant Director, Planning, Transportation and Highways stated that there were challenges around this type of enforcement relating to the cost to the Council and the time the process could take.

In relation to paragraph 3.1.6 of the report, stating that 72 empty city centre units had been brought back in to use, a Member requested comparative figures of what space had been lost. He also stated it was frustrating that the Council would not be receiving any business rates for empty properties and considered the same rates method should apply as it did to council tax on residential properties. In response, the Assistant Director, Economy and Development Services stated there was a sensitive balance between the 'carrot' and 'stick' approach and that business rates consultation meetings were taking place to look at the measures the Council could adopt.

A Member stated that he hoped all options would be considered and reported back to the Committee in future reports.

A Member questioned why pre-prepared vegetables were bought in from a private



company and supplied to schools in the district rather than being bought from Bradford markets. In response, the Assistant Director, Economy and Development Services stated that this was due to cost savings.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee thanks officers for arranging the tour of regeneration sites within the city centre that took place prior to the meeting.**
- (2) That the progress on city centre regeneration, since the Committee's meeting in October 2015, be welcomed.**
- (3) That an update on the city centre markets be presented to the Committee in 6 months.**
- (4) That a report on the City Plan be presented to the Committee on 24 October 2016.**
- (5) That information on the purchase of empty shops in the city centre be provided in the Asset Management report scheduled for 24 October 2016.**

ACTION Strategic Director, Regeneration

19. ST GEORGE'S HALL RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In line with Council Standing Order 4.4.1 all contracts with an estimated value of over £2m must be reported to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee before inviting tenders.

The Assistant Director, Sport and Culture submitted **Document "G"** which reported on the requirement to procure a construction contract to undertake the works to restore and refurbish St George's Hall.

The Chair expressed his disappointment at the delay in the report being presented to the Committee.

The General Manager of Bradford Theatres outlined the details of the contract, which included the following works:

- Stonework, window and roof replacement / restoration
- Front of house re-modelling and re-decoration
- Purchase and installation of a passenger lift
- Glazed front entrance
- Re-wire and fire alarm
- Improvements to the stage and auditorium seating

He stated that the Heritage Lottery Fund grant was £1.5m and gave a breakdown



of the costs of the proposed works which totalled approximately £5.4m. The improvements would make the venue fit for purpose and there would be a seating capacity of 1350 with restricted viewing seats being reduced to single figures.

The Deputy Manager of Bradford Theatres apologised for the delay in presenting the report to the Committee and stated that the Pre Qualification Questionnaire stage had taken place through the tendering process and four submissions had got through the shortlisting process. She explained that a decision had been made to appoint a single contractor due to the timescales and complexities of the different elements of the required works. She reported that a minimum of two apprenticeships would be offered in the specialist area of stone work. Whilst there had been delays, as stated in the report, works were scheduled to commence in early December 2016.

In response to Members' questions, it was reported that:

- As part of the restoration works there would be more environmentally friendly facilities in relation to lighting in public spaces, windows, the boiler, the heating system and a system to collect rain water for recycling.
- St George's Hall was currently closed. There was a 12 month timescale from December 2016 for the appointed contractor to undertake the works.
- Bradford's annual Festival of Remembrance which usually took place at St George's Hall would be held at Bradford Cathedral during the closure.
- Difficulties with booking tickets for the Festival of Remembrance would be looked into as well as difficulties raised of buying tickets from some local halls that did not have an online booking system in place.
- During the closure, a higher volume of events were taking place at the Alhambra Theatre to absorb some events that would normally have taken place at St George's Hall.
- Whilst it was not possible to provide the operating cost associated with each seat, the cost was expected to decrease due to the opening of a restaurant and works to make the bar areas bigger. Following the works, higher ticket sales were also expected due to the number of restricted viewing seats being reduced; ticket sales over the last five years had dwindled which was considered to have been due to difficult seating arrangements.
- The turnover for Theatres was £7.9m.
- The biggest saving in relation to employing one contractor was in relation to time. It was difficult to evaluate a cost saving.
- The hall delivered a number of education programmes with local schools and would still have an emphasis of working with local people/communities when it re-opened.

A Member stated he would be interesting to see the figures in relation to refreshment sales prior and post refurbishment and information on how the works, once the venue had re-opened, had impacted on the surrounding area e.g. spend on car parks/food.

Members welcomed the apprenticeships being offered as part of the works and



queried whether it could be built into the contract that they be offered first to local people, given that the opportunity for these types of apprenticeships was so rare.

A Member suggested that a formal response be requested from the Assistant Director to explain why the procurement process as stated in the Council's Constitution was not followed and that the City Solicitor be asked to ensure the procurement process rules in relation to presenting information to Scrutiny Committees were adhered to correctly in future. The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sport and Culture stated that she would also be speaking to officers in relation to why the report was late.

A Member spoke of the legal requirement for public sector bodies to consider social value in the tendering processes. In response it was stated that this was part of the procurement policy.

It was agreed that a report of the Theatres Strategy would be added to the Committees work programme; date to be advised following discussion with the Assistant Director, Sport and Culture.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress with the tendering exercise for the project as detailed in Document "G" be noted and a further written update be circulated to the Committee once the key contractor is appointed in November 2016.**
- (2) That the City Solicitor be requested to ensure that rules relating to procurement within the Council's Constitution (presenting information to Overview and Scrutiny) are complied with in a timely manner.**
- (3) That the Assistant Director, Sport and Culture, and the Assistant Director, Commissioning and Procurement, be requested to provide a written response to explain the delay in submitting the report to the Committee.**

ACTION **City Solicitor (2)**
Assistant Director, Sport and Culture/Assistant Director,
Commissioning and Procurement (3)



**20. REGENERATION AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Chair of the Committee submitted the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/17 (**Document "I"**).

Resolved -

That the 2016/17 Work Programme continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead Officer

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

