

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 22 March 2022 in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm
Concluded 7.45 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Mohammed Kamran Hussain Cunningham Hussain	Heseltine Herd Felstead	Ahmed

Observers: Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw

Apologies: Councillor Marcus Dearden

Councillor Kamran Hussain in the Chair

86. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interests of transparency, Cllr Cunningham declared that he was an employee of the Bradford Culture Company (minute number 90)

Action: City Solicitor

87. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 be signed as a correct record.

Action: City Solicitor

88. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

89. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted to review decisions to restrict documents.

90. CULTURE IS OUR PLAN

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “V”**) was submitted to the Committee to provide Members with an update on the progress made during the first eight months of activity on the new 10-year cultural strategy for the District. The presentation to members came in light of the announcement that Bradford had been shortlisted for the 2024 City of Culture status award.

A new cultural strategy was launched in March 2021. ‘Culture is our Plan’ was made up of 10 ambitions/actions and was adopted by the Council Executive.

The report was broken down into headings for each ambition giving an overview of the aim of each one, a ‘What we’ll do’ and ‘progress to date’ section.

Officers advised that the District would not have been shortlisted for the City of Culture award without the ‘Culture is our Plan’ strategy and stated that the ambitions were ‘living, deliverable and active.’ The plan included feasibility studies to attract funding as and when it became available. The strategy would redefine what culture meant and would represent the District’s demographic. Members were also shown a short film called ‘Bradford Unlocked’

The 10 ambitions were:

- Creativity thrives in every corner of the district
- Making the most of what we have
- Making the most of who we are
- Network capacity
- Thinking big
- Live life better
- Creating an explosion of opportunity
- Having fun
- Bradford will know itself better
- We will tell our own story

The meeting was attended by local representatives who each addressed Members providing them with their own view on the impact the plan is having on them as they were directly involved. They each explained how they were enabled to be involved.

The people Powered Press representative explained how it had evolved and defined it as ‘what it is to be the North’. The press had been relocated from Leeds to Shipley which reinforced the potential impact the strategy was having and could have going forward. A Community Interest Company (CIC), the People

Powered Press was working with 16 different community groups across the district and had an open door for all every Friday. Paid workshops would subsidise non-income generating activities.

A 'music instigator' also attended and provided a passionate and animated presentation of what was being done. These included working on busking guidelines for professional level buskers, supporting artists and linking them up with industry professionals and providing advice on grants and funding opportunities, supporting promoters and work with Bradford Football Club and BCP Radio among a number of other projects. She further stated that music had the power to bring people together and wanted live music to continue, to inspire young people and give performance opportunities.

The next presenter was a Social Designer from a company called Fayakunu who explained how the work undertaken would help address some issues specifically aiming to help young men, refugees, and provide space for the senior community members to improve mental health through the Arts. His presentation included details of a space that was being created to facilitate this sustainable work in a derelict basement that was undergoing renovation to be ready for the summer. Details of the various cohorts who could benefit was provided and how this would look, which included, amongst other things, opportunities to become self-employed.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, the details of which and the responses given are as below.

- The opportunity to inspire and influence others was key and Members would want to see it spread across the District, how would those not already participating be engaged?
- Officers advised that they also wished for a District wide offer and to start to grow it out, it needed partnerships as it could not be done by one group of people only
- Members stated that they could look at the pipeline of projects to see whether they considered that anything was missing and Officers welcomed the idea of that dialogue taking place
- A question of representation of the Kashmiri community was raised and if not, could something new be considered to address this?
- Officers advised that the breakdown of statistics had been provided by LEAP but further conversations could take place outside of the meeting if needed
- The Chair commented that it was key to consider protecting versus losing culture and to understand Bradford as a whole. Asian figures should be broken down.

Resolved –

- 1. That special thanks be extended to those involved in the cultural strategy and especially to those who attended the meeting.**

2. That the report be noted

3. That another update report on activities be presented to the Committee in 12 months' time

Action: Strategic Director, Place

91. **ACTIVE TRAVEL - SCHOOL STREETS AND PLAY STREETS**

The report of the Strategic Directors of Health and Wellbeing, Place and the Acting Strategic Director for Children's Services (**Document "W"**) was submitted to the Committee to provide an update on Active Travel – School Streets and Play Streets from the last report that was submitted in 2020.

The aim of the project was intended to improve the safety and quality of the streets around 9 pilot schools in different areas of the District and to have a positive impact on local residents, parents and children.

The project had been introduced following a motion at the Council meeting in July 2019 and was being explored by 3 key services; Health and Wellbeing, Place and Children's Services.

Following the motion, a report was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the proposals for the scheme and it was resolved that a further report be submitted on the outcome of the pilot.

School Streets proposed to address the congestion and pollution around schools at the start and finish of school days. This involved a street being closed to traffic temporarily to encourage alternative modes of travel. It was hoped that it would increase the numbers of children walking to school or using an alternative mode of travel for all or part of the journey to and from school.

There were a number of factors that were considered when choosing the pilot schools including the pre-existing air quality, highways constraints and engagement with Active Travel partners and 'matched funding' support.

Following consultation with the schools, residents and other stakeholders, the 9 schools began the pilot in June 2021.

Officers reported that there was a significant presence on site at the start of the scheme and zones were mostly well adhered to. Positive feedback indicated that there was a feeling of better safety with a more pleasant and calmer environment.

Since the launch, however, it had become clear that signage was not enough and Officers were engaging with schools to see what can be done to sustain the project.

A representative from public health also attended and addressed the committee and reiterated the aims in terms of the safer and calmer start and finish to the school day. Expectations needed to be managed and that traffic would be reduced but the issues would not be alleviated completely. There was a concern that some drivers were complying but some were not, leading to potential conflict.

Officers from Bradford were working in partnership with Tower Hamlets to bring school streets in to share best practice and ideas. Traffic counts and surveys had been carried out before the start of the scheme and would be done again at the end of the pilot. Children were also wearing sensors to monitor air quality and an evaluation of the scheme would be carried out at completion.

Play Streets – draft guidance had been drawn up but the scheme had not gone ahead due to Covid 19 but it would be reviewed.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, the details of which, and the responses given are as below.

- A Member commented that the traffic was ‘school traffic’ but parents were driving children to school as they considered the journey was unsafe for them to walk. There were laws relating to engine idling which had been around for some years but were not enforced. It was a difficult message if parents were not interested and it was not enforced or drivers were not reminded about idling. Parents wanted the improvements but did not want to do anything to achieve it.
- Officers stated that it was a difficult situation when parents needed to be elsewhere but some had been trying to keep the scheme going. It needed to become a behaviour change. Children could be strong advocates to remind parents with the focus being on those making the change to recognise it and celebrate it, rather than focussing on the negative. Expectations on what was possible also needed to be managed.
- A member asked how schools who wished to introduce School Streets could do it.
- Officers advised that constraints existed and highways would need to approve it and that they were already aware of the particular school in question
- The issue of the impact of the scheme was raised, how to police school streets zones and how to safeguard children who walk to school
- Officers stated that there needed to be a realistic view of what could be achieved in the vicinity of schools that could still provide relatively convenient places to park and walk. There had been little time to carry out surveys and evidence would need to be collated from all programmes as there was not a great deal of data available at the present time but the pilot would provide an opportunity to learn from it.
- In relation to the positive feedback gained initially, what had happened since?
- Officers stated that there had been a lot of presence on site when the schemes started but compliance had since dropped along with this. With only the police having enforcement powers, it needed to be encouraged rather than enforced

- The aim was to work towards safe and clean routes but if roads were closed and behaviour had not changed, was the traffic problem simply being shifted? Idling was still an issue, even if was 2 streets away and enforcement was not happening unless by the Council
- Officers stated that each site was unique but with traffic diverted it did dilute traffic problems. The school gate was where pollution and idling were concentrated so moving it away was an important factor
- How was work being done with schools to encourage parents to take part, had a rewards system been considered, as children's health was the key factor
- Officers stated that a rewards system had not been considered and as the fault was not the child's it would not be an appropriate option. No idling campaign had been carried out and was being looked at for the next set of school streets
- Not all children attended their local school due to allocation of places, had any conversations taken place with admissions?
- Even with school streets in place, parking was still relatively close to schools

In response to a comment relating to village schools and children attending from outside the immediate area, it was stated that the scheme had yet to be evaluated. There also needed to be a behaviour change to tackle childhood obesity which was estimated to be slightly higher than national figures.

Resolved –

1. **That the report be noted**
2. **That a further update on School Streets projects, to include information on the development of a Play Streets policy, be added to the Committee's 2022/23 programme of work.**

Action: Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing, Strategic Director, Place and Acting Strategic Director, Children Services.

92. CITY CENTRE REGENERATION

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document "X"**) was submitted to the Committee to provide Members with an update from the report submitted in February 2020. Bradford District's ambition was to be the UK's fastest growing economy over the coming decade. Covid 19 had adversely impacted footfall in the city centre, which remained the focus for the Council as part of the wider approach to economic growth across the whole District. In order to compete, the city centre had to be a liveable and vibrant place to attract and retain businesses.

The report contained details of projects undertaken and completed as part of The City Centre Growth Scheme which was created in 2012 to address challenges

being faced in the city centre, focussing on a number of sectors which are listed below:

- Retail – The Broadway Shopping Centre, despite the impacts of Covid the Broadway shopping centre continued to report increasing visitor numbers
- Sparkling Bradford – the campaign was shortlisted for the Travel/Leisure Content Campaign of the Year aiming to boost the region’s economy, as well as showcase visitor experiences across the District
- The Cultural Offer – major refurbishment to St George’s Hall
- The evening and night time economy – helping to create a safe, vibrant and well balanced offer

- Bradford UNESCO City of Film – in its eleventh year and still going from strength to strength

- City centre developments – major transformation of the centre over the following 3 years

- One City Park – to help address the shortage of grade A office space in the city centre

- City centre markets – demolition and development of a state of the art building to deliver a modern, multi-level market offer

- Bradford Live – redevelopment and conversion of former Odeon Cinema building to strengthen the range of live cultural and conference events hosted

- Station Gateways – both city centre stations redeveloped to provide high quality gateways to the city

- New state of art Coroners Court building - a vital provision for families and communities of Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale.

- City centre residential developments – to provide an excellent city centre place to call home

- Townscape Heritage Scheme - Centred in the “Top of Town” area of the Bradford City Centre Conservation Area, to support property owners to improve heritage buildings

- Top of Town Public Realm Improvements - Building on the public realm improvements being delivered as part of the Townscape Heritage scheme, the proposal would enhance the streetscape at North Parade, Rawson Square and Northgate

- Transforming Cities Fund - funding has been made available by the Department for Transport to enable core cities and regions to bid for projects that improve productivity by investing in public and sustainable transport infrastructure across the City.

Following the Officers’ presentation, Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, the details of which, and the responses given

are as below.

- What was there in the plans for children and young people e.g. playgrounds – was it part of ‘Transforming Cities’ for families, children and young people?
 - Officers stated that it was the start of an integrated offer which could expand into additional elements. The portfolio holder for Regeneration was also present who then provided a brief summary and stated that there would be more details to follow
- What area was being classified as the city centre as footfall should be included from further out?
 - Officers advised that there were 2 major development frameworks, range of uses, spaces, reviews of historic designations and flexibility of systems being offered. So defined lines were not fixed. The range of development would change how it was viewed
- Children defined city centres differently, and defined differently depending on what sections of the community were interested in. Was there scope to incorporate this?
 - Officers responded that we needed to understand our assets and do a re-set within the framework of investment and the people coming into the city to work. The range of communities was underplayed and the change of dynamics would need to be understood. The portfolio holder addressed the Committee stating that there was a growing appetite to recognise other sites in their own right. The city centre would be the first focus followed by towns and attempts would be made to anticipate trends to keep going and stay ahead of them
- What was being done to attract big businesses to the city?
 - Officers stated that we were not competing with Leeds and inward investment was now being targeted to expand Bradford’s strength. Business start-ups had changed significantly and SME and microbusinesses had not been showcased to get them to stay and expand etc.
- In the context of reducing school run traffic, how did it fit in with the reduction in footfall? In relation to empty shops, where were people shopping?
 - Officers stated that footfall was returning to pre-pandemic levels, but shoppers may not be visiting the same places or outlets, a change in trend. The city was doing well in comparison on the number of vacant premises, providing the right environment for businesses to succeed. Multiple forms of lower carbon transport modes being used rather than cars
- What was being done to make Bradford a safe place to visit?
 - Officers responded that footfall was up, creating an environment where the perception was more positive – the issue was around perception

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

***Action:* Strategic Director, Place**

Chair

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

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