



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 26th January 2015

PRESENT : Cllrs. Lugg (Chair), S. Witts (Vice-Chair), Gravells (Spokesperson), Haigh, Hanman, Wilson, Dee, Taylor, Toleman, Pullen

Others in Attendance

Cllr. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture

Mr Anthony Hodge, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Lewis, Ravenhill, Field, Beeley and Hansdot

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gravells declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy, by virtue of his role as a County Councillor at Gloucestershire County Council.

Councillor Susan Witts declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy, by virtue of her employment at Gloucestershire College.

73. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record subject to the following addition:-

'The Committee placed on record its disappointment with the performance of the representative of Amey and also wished to have it minuted that the monitoring information which had been requested on two occasions had not been presented to the Committee.'

74. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

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There were no questions from members of the public.

75. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

76. GLOUCESTER CITY CENTRE STRATEGY 2015-19

The Chair welcomed Councillor James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture and Mr Anthony Hodge, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, to the meeting.

Members were presented with a report which sought to establish the basis for the creation of a co-ordinated City Centre Strategy for Gloucester in order to develop a thriving 21st century City Centre. The document included seven strategic priorities and key actions which would be shared with stakeholders as part of a wider consultation exercise.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report subject to any comments Members wished to make to Cabinet.

The Committee discussed the following matters:-

1. 'Develop and Strengthen the City's retail niche (affordable fashion) – Strategic Priority 1'

Members asked why Gloucester wanted to increase the amount of 'affordable fashion' instead of attracting high end designer stores. Councillor James explained that advice had been taken from Stanhope, the prospective developer for King's Quarter, in this regard. Councillor James said that Stanhope had consulted with leading experts in the field. He stressed the importance of building on Gloucester's strengths and remarked that this did not mean that the stores would be unfashionable. He added that Gloucester Quays provided the designer labels and contributed to the Gloucester offer. Members pointed out that it was important to have the 'high end' stores as well as the 'affordable' ones for residents and visitors alike to avoid losing potential shoppers to cities such as Birmingham, Bristol, Worcester, Cardiff and Cheltenham. A Member expressed disappointment that the City had not attracted a John Lewis store and remarked on the small size of the new Marks and Spencer's store in Eastgate Street. Councillor James replied that the size of the Marks and Spencer's store was beyond his control and reminded Members that the company had invested £25M in the City. Mr Hodge advised the Committee that Stanhope intended to invest £60M in Gloucester and that they were committed to the success and prosperity of Gloucester's City Centre.

2. 'Enhance the City's indoor and outdoor market offer, so it appeals to a wide audience and generates increased footfall' – Strategic Priority 1

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Councillor James clarified that this related to all the markets which took place in the City. He confirmed the Cabinet's commitment to finding a long term solution for the indoor market traders.

3. Planning application for King's Quarter and for the Bus Station

In response to a query from a Member, Councillor James confirmed that the planning applications would be in two parts with the Bus Station being presented first. A new development agreement would be drawn up to include a timetable aimed for Christmas 2018. Milestones would be set in the new agreement in order for Stanhope to demonstrate their commitment. Members were advised that funding was already available for the new Bus Station and that Stanhope had appointed architects. There would be a public consultation exercise on the design of the new Bus Station prior to submission of the planning application. Councillor James confirmed that the new development agreement would be brought before Council in due course.

4. 'Comprehensive audit of the City Centre' – Strategic Priority 1

In response to a query from a Member, Mr Hodge confirmed that this process had already started.

5. 'Investigate options for establishing a new cultural venue in the City Centre' – Strategic Priority 3'

In response to a query from a Member, Councillor James reported that Stanhope was looking to have a strong leisure focus in the scheme and that this was likely to be completely different to the Guildhall.

6. Independent Review by the Javelin Group ranking Gloucester as the second fastest growing retail destination in the UK and now a top 100 retail destination

A Member stated that it was important to highlight the positive elements of Gloucester rather than the negative ones and referred to the review by the Javelin Group. The Committee concurred with this remark. A Member commented that research had demonstrated that Gloucester had the potential to do a lot better and that there was a desire by all elected Members to make Gloucester a great place. A Member suggested that Gloucester could be promoted as a 'Wedding Planning City' and also as a good place to buy outdoor clothing and equipment. All Members agreed it was important to get the balance right and that the number of betting shops and discount shops needed to be kept under control.

7. Role of Partners and Stakeholders in contributing to the success of Gloucester

A Member referred to the Committee's Task and Finish Group on the Evening Economy in 2013 which had highlighted the role of the Railway Station in welcoming and attracting visitors to Gloucester. Councillor James

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was pleased to point out to the Committee that a positive outcome from the study had been the installation of a leaflet rack at the Railway Station which was extremely popular with visitors. The rack was managed by Marketing Gloucester.

8. 'Street Art'

A Member asked if there was a policy governing the length of time street art would be on display to ensure it did not become dilapidated and unsightly. Mr Hodge confirmed that this would be examined.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

77. REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Councillor James introduced a report which set out the proposed draft Regeneration and Economic Strategy 2015-2010 for the City of Gloucester. The Strategy identified six key regeneration and economic development objectives which would be delivered over the next five years. Councillor James outlined the key headlines of the document and advised Members that a public consultation exercise would follow as soon as Cabinet had approved the strategy.

Overview and Scrutiny was asked to note the report and make any recommendations it considered appropriate to the Cabinet.

The Committee discussed the following matters:-

1. Blackfriars

A Member sought clarification on the bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Memorandum of Understanding which had been signed with the County Council and asked whether there was more than one masterplan. Councillor James explained that the agreement drawn up with the County Council allowed both Councils to bring their respective landholdings together at the site. He confirmed that work on the masterplan had already started, that there was only one masterplan, and that he hoped to be able to share the proposals with Group Leaders shortly.

Members were advised that the purchaser of the Prison was keen to engage with the City Council and would be seeking the views of other stakeholders in the City.

Another Member asked why this particular scheme was more likely to succeed than others that had been mooted in the past. Councillor James explained that factors such as potential funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership, the securing of landholdings and the deliverability of the masterplan all contributed to the belief that the scheme would succeed.

A Member referred to previous plans to bring the Dominican library to Blackfriars as its showcase setting would attract a lot of visitors to Gloucester

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and asked if this could be looked into again. Councillor James agreed to consider this.

2. City Centre Boundary

A Member noted that the Gloucestershire College did not feature on the map of the City Centre. Councillor James responded that the City Centre boundary would be extended to include the Docks and Quays area and that there would be consultation in this regard and that the map which appeared in the report was also contained within the current version of the City Plan for Gloucester. Under this heading the role of the Council's City Centre Manager was discussed and Councillor James stated that the Manager's attention would be focused on the historic City Centre.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

78. BRIEFING NOTE ON JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS AND STRATEGIC STREETCARE PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

The Chair briefed the Committee on the outcomes achieved from the meeting held on 15 January 2015.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

79. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the latest version of the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme. Items identified as being of interest to the Committee were added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet's Forward Work Programme be noted.

80. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the latest version of its work programme. Amendments to the programme were made in accordance with the Committee's discussion.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted.

81. MEMBER UPDATE ON OUTSIDE BODIES' ACTIVITIES

There were no updates on this occasion.

82. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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Monday 23 February 2015 at 18.30 hours.

Time of commencement: 18:30 hours

Time of conclusion: 20:00 hours

Chair