

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	26 January 2015
	Cabinet		28 January 2015
Subject:	Gloucester City Centre Strategy 2015-19		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture		
Wards Affected:	Westgate		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester City Centre Strategy 2015-19: Strategic Priorities and Key Actions (indicative)		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 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.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that the report be noted, subject to any recommendations the Committee wishes to make to Cabinet.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that
- (1) The development of a draft City Centre Strategy for Gloucester be approved;
 - (2) The indicative strategic priorities and key actions (for wider consultation with stakeholders) outlined in Appendix 1 be noted; and
 - (3) The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development Service, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture, be given delegated responsibility to co-ordinate and work with other stakeholders who have an interest in the city centre, to prepare a draft City Centre Strategy for Gloucester.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The nature and role of town and city centres across the UK are evolving as behaviours on the way we shop and interact with our centres are irreversibly changing. These are challenging times for city centres, and it is important that we respond and adjust to the impacts of the economic downturn, the rise of Internet shopping and mobile retailing, the speed and sophistication of the major national and international retailers and competition from out of town retail centres.

- 3.2 In order for city centres to survive and thrive, they need to diversify their offer as a destination, and better utilise their assets in order to take advantage of the opportunities being generated by the changing environment. City centres can no longer focus purely on retail, as consumer expectations have adapted to focus on value, service, entertainment and experience but also need to consider their broader offer for culture, leisure, events, tourism and city centre living.
- 3.3 The above issues were highlighted in a Government commissioned report, the Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets (December 2011). The report's author, Mary Portas, commented in the review that, "Fundamentally ... our high streets are uniquely placed to deliver something new" and "Can be lively, dynamic, exciting and social places that give a sense of belonging and trust to a community".

4.0 Supporting a Thriving City Centre

- 4.1 Gloucester has seen significant growth and investment over the last few years with over £700 million of private sector investment secured to date with over 1,000 new jobs and 700 new homes created. In addition, it has achieved some notable successes in attracting footfall and diversifying the city centre's image and cultural, leisure, tourism and residential offer, including:
- Progression of the £60 million Kings Quarter Scheme. Key milestones include:
 - Development agreement signed to create 200,000 sq ft of new shops, leisure venues, public open space and a new transport interchange
 - £8.8 million secured to deliver a new transport interchange to include a new bus station
 - Acquisition and demolition of strategic property by the City Council
 - Major public realm improvements - £7 million scheme linking the Docks and the city centre, implementation of hanging baskets and planters and improved signage and lighting
 - The City Council's £2 million City Centre Investment Fund to deliver a number of improvement projects to help support the attractiveness, vitality and viability of the city centre including car park and lighting improvements, cladding of unsightly facades, a new Tourist Information Centre and business grants
 - £1.6 million grants to support city centre daytime and evening businesses and residents, which has contributed to the improvement of the centre by attracting new businesses and improving the local environment
 - Development of city centre residential units including the £25 million redevelopment of the former college campus – Greyfriars Quarter scheme will create 250 apartments and town houses.
- 4.2 Currently, Gloucester city centre is performing fairly well as a retail centre and has showed resilience through some very challenging market conditions. There have been some notable positive signs of confidence in city centre retail, evidenced by the significant investments made by Marks and Spencer, Debenhams and the Eastgate Shopping Centre.
- 4.3 Vacancy rates in the core city centre have fluctuated but there has been an improving picture and positive signs of recovery over the last 2 years, which is showcased by a recent independent review by The Javelin Group (2014), which

ranks Gloucester as the second fastest growing retail destination in the UK and now a top 100 retail destination.

- 4.4 However, whilst there are signs of optimism, there are still a number of underlying issues requiring attention and intervention. We must not lose sight of the fact that, in bigger picture terms, Gloucester has for some time been underperforming in terms of where it should be for its size and catchment profile. This is particularly evident when focusing on the city centre's evening and night time economy offer.

5.0 Plan for Growth

- 5.1 With the city's young demographic and population set to expand by more than 20% over the next 20 years, it is imperative that the city plans for growth and has a city centre that meets the needs of its residents, businesses and visitors.

- 5.2 The Gloucester City Vision (2012-2022) outlines the following five aims, as identified and chosen by Gloucester's residents:

- A flourishing economy and city centre which meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors
- A vibrant evening economy
- A city which improves through regeneration and development
- A city where people feel safe and happy in their community
- A healthy city with opportunities available to all

- 5.3 In order to achieve the City Vision's aims and ensure Gloucester city centre remains the focal point for growth, it is important for the City Council to take the strategic lead in the preparation of an overarching City Centre Strategy that co-ordinate and embrace all key partners plans and activities and effectively utilise resources. This paper aims to outline the strategic priorities and key actions for the city centre.

6.0 City Centre Strategy 2015-19

- 6.1 *City Plan: Places, Sites, City Centre Strategy Consultation* (Gloucester City Council, May 2013) sets out the following vision for Gloucester city centre:

- 6.2 'Gloucester will build on its strengths as one of the country's most important historic cities to create a city centre in which Gloucester people are proud, that makes the most of its past and is positive about its future. It will have regained its position as a top performing city centre and will be a strong and connected destination for shopping, leisure, cultural, business, as well as a place for living and entertainment throughout the day and evening. The city will provide a vibrant, exciting and enjoyable experience for its communities and visitors, drawing on its unique and varied heritage'.

Strategic Priorities

6.3 In order to develop a draft City Centre Strategy a series of draft proposed strategic priorities along with some indicative key actions are set out below and in Appendix 1 for consideration – these will be fully consulted upon with key stakeholders in the formulation of the draft Gloucester City Centre Strategy. By focusing effort and resources on these, the city will be able to drive forward its plans to be a thriving and prosperous city for the future.

- To create a thriving, diverse and sustainable commercial, retail, leisure and cultural city centre that meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors throughout the day and night
- To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of the city centre
- To draw on Gloucester's strengths as an historic city to create a hub for culture, tourism and leisure
- To maintain and enhance the city centre as a location for business, skills and learning
- To meet transport needs within the city centre, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport whilst providing well located car parking
- To positively manage the city centre environment, ensuring it's clean, safe and accessible
- To increase the availability and quality of homes within the city centre through new build and utilisation of existing premises

6.4 In addition, the draft City Centre Strategy's development will be informed by a comprehensive audit of the city centre to assess what is required to improve the look, feel and structure of the city centre in the short, medium and long term to make it more attractive / user friendly.

7.0 Alternative Options Considered

7.1 The report provides a thorough overview of the strategic priorities and key actions required to support Gloucester's city centre and is considered to represent a well balanced approach to achieving the best outcomes for the city.

8.0 Reasons for Recommendations

8.1 The report looks to address and seek endorsement on some of the key priorities for the city. This will enable the City Council to maximise the co-ordination of its effort and resources, as well as those of key stakeholders and partners, and to also explore and secure further external investment.

9.0 Future Work and Conclusions

9.1 Following approval of this report, a considerable amount of further specific work will be required in order to progress the City Centre Strategy. Importantly, the report will act as a mandate to encourage partners to support the development of a Gloucester City Centre Strategy.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 There are no specific financial implications arising out of this report

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

11.0 Legal Implications

11.1 Whilst there is no specific requirement for the Council to have a City Centre Strategy, the Council does have a variety of duties and powers that are relevant to the indicative Key Actions identified in this report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

12.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

12.1 Delivery of the City Centre Strategy will be dependent upon each stakeholder delivering against the agreed actions, which will be set out in the forthcoming action plan.

12.2 Appropriate risk management will be assessed for each activity as they arise

13.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA)

13.1 The PIA Screening Stage considered whether any of the work to be carried out under any of the Strategic Priorities would discriminate against any particular group or characteristic.

13.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact. Therefore a full PIA was not required.

14.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

14.1 The City Centre Strategy's Strategic Priorities will co-ordinate key actions for the city centre and will help maintain the profile of community safety issues as part of a thriving and prosperous city centre.

Sustainability

14.2 The City Centre Strategy's Strategic Priorities will co-ordinate key actions for the city centre and will help raise the quality of the shopping and leisure environment to achieve a thriving city centre.

Staffing & Trade Union

14.3 There are no staffing issues arising out of this report.

Background Documents: None