

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 15 May 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor J McNicholas (Chair)
Councillor R Auluck
Councillor G Crookes
Councillor L Harvard
Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor H Sweet
Councillor K Taylor

Other Members: Councillors J Clifford, R Lakha, M Mutton and J O'Boyle

Former Member: Mr M Hammond

Other representatives Nick Cleaver, Canal and River Trust
Alan Dyer, Coventry Canal Basin Trust
Ian Lane, Canal and River Trust
Robert Nash, Coventry Canal Society
Elaine Tierney, The Tin

Employees:

C Coyle, Place Directorate
G Holmes, Place Directorate
L Knight, Place Directorate
G McKelvie, Place Directorate
R Moon, Place Directorate
D Nuttall, Place Directorate
A Walster, Place Directorate

Apologies: Councillors J Innes (Cabinet Member for City Services) and
B Singh

Public Business

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th April, 2018, were signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 43/17 headed 'Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)' the Board were informed that, at their meeting on 18th April 2018, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee had agreed to the Board's request that the Committee lead on LEP

scrutiny for the Council, and had agreed to invite Jonathan Browning, Chair, and Martin Yardley, Chief Executive, to a future meeting of the Committee.

49. **St Mary's Guildhall**

The Board considered a briefing note and received a presentation of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which informed of the current activity in relation to the development of the St Mary's Guildhall offer and the establishment of shared office space in the Council House. Councillor O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Councillor Clifford, Deputy Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.

The briefing note indicated that in January, 2018 the café in the Undercroft at St. Mary's closed to enable works to take place to improve the physical environment and customer experience. Works were carried out to the staircase, bar area and lighting in the café. In March 'The Undercroft at St Mary's' was relaunched offering an improved café experience, a new menu and a re-focused promotional campaign. The Board were informed that customer numbers had improved since the relaunch and the performance of the café was being closely monitored to support its ongoing success.

The Board noted that Coombe Abbey Hotel had been engaged around providing insight and/or advice around the customer offer and experience across the wider St Mary's complex.

As part of the work on implementing Coventry's Cultural Strategy and to support the City's preparations for being UK City of Culture 2021, a review of potential cultural capital projects had commenced. This included exploring the capacity of projects to contribute to widening access to the city's cultural offerings and growing culture and leisure tourism. The work would support the ongoing work on the development of a new Coventry Destination Management Plan.

In relation to the wider commercial opportunities at St Mary's Guildhall and the Council House, in March, 2018 initial proposals for the Wheelhouse to open a partnership co-working community space were progressed into a preferred option for delivering the opportunity within the Council House. The Wheelhouse (Coventry) opened in April, 2018 within the former Communications Team offices which had been converted to offer dedicated desk spaces; co-working desk spaces; relaxed working spaces; and meeting room spaces. The Board were informed that the Wheelhouse reported that they were on course for achieving targets in membership growth.

The presentation provided further details on the relaunch of the Undercroft at St Mary's; the events potential at St Marys and the engagement with Coombe Abbey Hotel; the cultural capital opportunities and the Destination Management Plan; and the opening of The Wheelhouse.

Members raised a number of issues in response to the briefing note and presentation and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- An update on the recent petition concerning the option to white wash the ceiling at the Undercroft, a decision on which had not been made

- Support for the relaunch of the Undercroft but a concern that existing customers were being lost
- An assurance about the Wheelhouse, that the Council would not be incurring costs
- Any future plans for the old police cells at the Council House
- The requirement to get a cross section of visitors to St. Mary's Guildhall
- The requirement for visitors to know when they can access St Mary's Guildhall
- The need to manage the Council buildings/ facilities in a successful and different way to ensure that the best use is made of them and there is not a drain on the Council's financial resource.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The Board noted the content of the presentation concerning developments in the St Mary's Guildhall offer and the establishment of shared office space in the Council House.

(2) A progress report outlining the potential opportunities to further enhance the St Mary's Guildhall offer and an update on the Wheelhouse be submitted to a future meeting of the Board in September, 2018.

50. Recommendations from the Canal and Basin Task and Finish Group

The Board considered a briefing note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator which set out the recommendations from the Canal and Basin Task and Finish Group which had been established to look at creating the canal and canal basin as a destination point. Councillor O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Nick Cleaver and Ian Lane, Canal and River Trust, Alan Dyer, Coventry Canal Basin Trust, Robert Nash, Coventry Canal Society, and Elaine Tierney, The Tin. Councillor Mal Mutton, Radford Ward Councillor and Member of the Task and Finish Group and Councillor Clifford, Deputy Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee were also in attendance.

The briefing note indicated that at their meeting on 20th September, 2017 the Board had considered an item on the canal and canal basin and had agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to facilitate improvements to and better use of the canal and canal basin. The scoping document for the Group was tabled at the meeting. The Group comprised Councillors Auluck, Hammon, Mal Mutton, McNicholas and Bally Singh.

The briefing note set out the history of the canal and the Board noted that many of the buildings and the site of the canal basin were restored between 1993 and 1995 with the canal and surrounding area from the basin to Hawkesbury junction being designated as a conservation area. Coventry's Green Space Strategy was in the process of being refreshed and the canal was to be considered as a 'blue corridor' as part of the strategy.

The briefing note referred to the Group's visit to the Canal where they heard from Alan Dyer, David Moore from Valley Cruises, Elaine Tierney and representatives from the Canal and River Trust. The main activity and infrastructure issues raised

by these representatives were outlined. Reference was made to the meeting with the CAN project, with Helen Cuthill from Coventry University and representatives from The Tin. The plans for developing the building owned by the Canal and River Trust was discussed and was to be part of the vision for the Canal Basin to be a creative hub for the city

Members of the Task and Finish Group went on a journey from the canal basin to Swan Lane to experience the canal from the water which gave a different perspective on the canal. Members identified a number of issues as part of the visit which were highlighted. Councillor McNicholas, Chair of the Group, also had several meetings with the Chair of the West Midlands Partnership, Canal and River Trust, and the Waterway Manager to discuss some of the issues that had arisen during the Task and Finish Group meetings.

The briefing note concluded with comments from the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services and the Director of Highways and Infrastructure along with comments from the Cabinet Members for Jobs and Regeneration and City Services and the Cabinet Member/ Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport who met on 10th April, 2018 to consider the progress and emerging findings of the Task and Finish Group.

The representatives present addressed the Board regarding their aspirations for the development of the canal and the canal basin, outlining their support for the work of the Task and Finish Group. Reference was made to 2000 – 2005 when a Group co-ordinated with dedicated Council officer support brought all the organisations at the canal basin together. A £20,000 budget was available from the Council and everyone worked together to plan and host a number of successful craft and food festivals involving the local community.

Members raised a number of issues in response to the issues and recommendations set out in the briefing note and the matters raised at the meeting and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Support for the recommendation to change the car parking, increase signage and remove the wall at the entrance to the canal basin
- Using Camden Lock as an aspiration with lots of activities/ entertainment for visitors
- The opportunities to attract students in their leisure time, particularly in light of the new student accommodation in the vicinity of the canal basin
- The importance of community involvement with any future development at the canal basin
- The importance of improving the linkage between the city centre and the canal basin
- The balancing act between encouraging the creative sector to operate from the canal basin and a retail offer to attract visitors
- The potential for financial support from Coventry University via Section 106 funding from the new student developments
- Support for making the canal basin a destination with cafes, entertainment and short term attractions
- A suggestion that people with businesses at the canal basin could provide additional funding towards the costs of any improvement works

- The potential for a cycle track alongside the canal
- The importance of ensuring that any proposals for the canal basin were sustainable for the future
- Improvements to the security for boats moored at the canal basin thus enabling their owners to go off and visit the city centre
- The importance of improvements being introduced to coincide with the City of Culture 2021
- The need to consider transport connectivity between the city centre and the canal basin.

The Board noted that a report detailing the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group would be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet in the new municipal year.

The Chair, Councillor McNicholas placed on record his thanks to the Members for all their work while serving on the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that:

(1) Coventry City Council work closely with the Canal and River Trust to review the use of the canal and canal basin to create a clear vision and aspiration for the increased use of the canal and the canal basin in Coventry

a) The review should recognise the cultural and heritage contribution the canal has and can in future make to the city

b) The review should maximise the public health potential and contribution the area makes as a lung of the city, which is recognised as part of the Council's Green Space Strategy

c) The review should assess the current use of all of the buildings at the Canal Basin to ensure that they are appropriate to the renewed vision and aspiration for the canal and canal basin in Coventry

d) The review should involve all partners and organisations with an interest in the canal and canal basin

e) The review should consider transport connectivity between the canal basin and the City Centre.

2) Cabinet Members should meet with representatives of the universities and other health and sports related organisations in the city to maximise the contribution to improved health outcomes the canal can make.

3) Coventry City Council consider 'quick wins' such as changing the long stay car park at Leicester Row to a short stay, improved signage to the basin, improved lighting, and the removal of the wall at the entrance to the Canal Basin on the junction of St. Nicholas Street and Leicester Row, to improve ease of access.

4) Coventry City Council work closely with the Canal and River Trust to address issues of cleanliness and maintenance, as well as formally recognising the contribution made by the Coventry Canal Society to this work.

5) Coventry City Council support the Canal and River Trust in getting local businesses located on the canal side involved to support the work in increasing the use of the canal and canal basin.

6) Coventry City Council formally recognise the appointment of an Elected Member to the West Midlands Canal and River Trust Board of Trustees.

51. Outstanding Issues - Report back on a Recommendation from the Transport Select Committee

The Board noted a briefing note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator concerning a recommendation approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 4th October, 2017 'that the Cabinet Member for City Services undertake a review of Council vehicle usage, particularly during school hours, to see whether the vehicles could be used to support the transport requirements of vulnerable, ill and elderly people in the city'. The recommendation was one of the recommendations arising from Transport Select Committee. Councillor Lakha, Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services carried out the review and his report outlining his findings was set out at an appendix to the briefing note. Councillor Lakha attended the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Arising from his review, the Deputy Cabinet Member concluded that there was not a big vehicle capacity available for supporting other Coventry residents outside of the Council's current remit. In addition, there were complexities associated with the passenger operator's licence that would be required to do additional works, the Council currently operated using a permit system. Also the situation was further complicated by a current Department of Transport consultation on the permit system with potential proposals for change.

RESOLVED that the content of the report by Councillor Ram Lakha, Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services be noted.

52. Work Programme 2017/2018

The Committee noted their final work programme of the year and that any outstanding items would be carried forward to the new work programme for 2018/19.

53. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.05 pm)