
Report to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

9 February 2005

Report of
Head of Corporate Policy

Title

Best Value and Scrutiny Reviews - City Centre strategy

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report updates you on the progress on the Vibrant City Centre and Flourishing Neighbourhoods Plan and the City Centre Strategy Best Value Review.

2 Recommendation

2.1 You are recommended to note the report.

3 Information/Background

3.1 The Best Value review of the City Centre Strategy was presented to the former Scrutiny Board 3 on 24 September 2003. This would normally have then progressed to Cabinet, but this was postponed pending the completion of the Vibrant City Centre & Flourishing Neighbourhoods Development Plan, which was part of the council's Modernisation & Improvement Plan.

3.2 Cabinet approved the Vibrant City Centre & Flourishing Neighbourhoods Development Plan on 27 January 2004 but decided to refer this to Area Forums for consideration.

3.3 The comments received are shown as Appendix 1 to this report. None was considered to have a material impact on either the Vibrant City Centre & Flourishing Neighbourhoods Development Plan or the conclusions of the City Centre Strategy Best Value Review.

3.4 The Council's Corporate Plan 2004/5 - 2006/7 was approved by Council on 20 April 2004. One of the targets in the plan is to achieve 100% of the actions in the Vibrant City Centre and Flourishing Neighbourhoods Plan delivered on time. As such, progress on the plan will be reported regularly to Cabinet. The last report was received on 7 December 2004 when it was noted that performance was 70% as at November 2004.

3.5 In the meantime work has continued to implement the recommendations of the Best Value Review of City Centre Strategy where resources were available and no policy decisions were required. Appendix 2 shows the progress made.

4 Proposal and Other Option(s) to be Considered

4.1 You are asked to note the report.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Location

None

Responses from Area Forums on the Vibrant City Centre and Flourishing Neighbourhoods Plan

1 South East Forum

- 1.1 The report was considered by the South East Area Forum on 5 May 2004 and Members of the Forum were asked for comments either at the meeting or through the Chair, the Area Co-ordinator or Legal and Democratic Services.
- 1.2 An issue was raised regarding the former County Court building which was now being marketed as a public house. This could be used as a public building.
- 1.3 Concerns were expressed regarding the length of the document.
- 1.4 No further additional comments have been received.

2 North East Area Forum

- 2.1 The North East Area Forum considered the report on 6 May 2004 and Members of the Forum were asked for comments either at the meeting or through the Chair, the Area Co-ordinator or Legal and Democratic Services.
- 2.2 On respondent reported incidences where trees had been removed from within the area which he represents for development purposes, and requested information as to whether a replacement Programme had been put in place. Reference was made at the meeting to the City Council's tree planting policy and it was agreed to let the enquirer have the appropriate information in response to his question.
- 2.3 No further additional comments have been received.

3 South West Area Forum

- 3.1 The South West Area Forum considered the plan on 11 March 2004 and a further opportunity to make comments was extended at the meeting on 13 May 2004.
- 3.2 A resident expressed the view that individual areas of the City are isolated from the totality, that the problems can be seen but communities are not given what they need and very little has been spent on addressing this in the past forty years. The Council should be turning things round – not only in the City Centre - and should be aspiring to change people's perceptions so that they can share it with visitors to the City. Councillor Batten indicated that this is being addressed in the context of the priority neighbourhoods identified in the Plan.
- 3.3 Concern was expressed that the Council does not have an overriding strategy to deal with its subways. It was suggested that they should be closed, and, where practicable, low-cost "pedestrian crossing" phases should be introduced at corresponding traffic signals. Councillor Batten explained the City Council's approach to this matter.

4 North Area Forum

- 4.1 The report was considered by the North Area Forum on 20th May 2004 and the Chair, Councillor Parker, asked that any comments be fed back to the City Development either through Carl Pearson or herself.
- 4.2 No specific comments were received.

5 North West Area Forum

- 5.1 The report was circulated to the North West Area Forum with the documents for the meeting on 19 May 2004. Owing to a shortage of time the Forum were given an outline of the report and advised that specific comments should be forwarded to James Russell, City Development Directorate or to the North West Area Co-ordination office.
- 5.2 No specific comments were received.

6 South Central Area Forum

- 6.1 The report was considered by the South Central Area Forum on 13 May 2004 and Members of the Forum were asked for comment.
- 6.2 Former Councillor Windsor, whilst recognising the good intentions of the Plan, expressed his concerns regarding consultation and how communities will be involved in the developments.
- 6.3 The Forum noted the report.

Best Value Review of City Centre Strategy

Service Improvement Action Plan - progress report

Environment – protecting & improving the environment				
Theme – streetscape				
	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
1	Undertake a survey of all roads, footways, subways and other surfaces throughout the City Centre to identify existing condition and implement a programme of improvements as necessary.	Many roads and surfaces not included within current schemes of renewal in poor condition	Capital resource to be identified through PPR process and existing programs	Information from ongoing city-wide surveys has been incorporated into the annual programme of maintenance. Areas within the city centre requiring specific attention have been identified (by CV One, amongst others) and built into the above programme. City Services has commenced the delivery of a Highway Asset Management Plan. This work will involve the collection of data on all highway assets (including the City Centre) and allow better management of the highway service.
2	Review Streetscape Strategy to incorporate up to date requirements for litter bins, lighting, bus shelters, advertising, signs and public toilets for the whole of the City Centre	Streetscape Strategy presently limited to Phoenix Initiative and PRIORITY Square development proposals	To be included within individual scheme funding / existing resources	Streetscape Strategy (which incorporates provision for new signage) is being adopted as new schemes are rolled out, subject to resources/viability.
3	Increase provision and quality of planters and hanging baskets within the City Centre	Good existing provision, but limited density against hard background.	Existing resources attracted by CV One.	City Centre provision is being provided through CV One. 2003/04 PPR approved ongoing £100k pa for planters and flowers on main roads. The proposed Business Improvement District, if approved in the Ballot, will provide additional planting in the city centre.

Environment – protecting & improving the environment				
Theme – streetscape				
	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
4	1. Undertake a review of visitor signage between car parks / bus hubs / coach park / bus station and the shopping centre / attractions.	We have inadequate & uncoordinated signage.	1. Within existing resources.	CV One audit completed – it identified signs requiring repair, renewal and/or re-positioning. Costings are being produced by March 2005 for a city centre wide strategy. Some signage has now been renewed to reflect new corporate design. Variable Message Signing is being introduced on the Ring Road.
	2. Implement programme of improved signage as identified		2. Within existing resources and attraction of advertising revenue.	See above comments. CV One and City Services are working jointly to install traffic island and lamppost advertising and sponsorship within the city centre incorporating corporate signage.
5	Revise existing cleansing contract specification / cleansing methods to identify improvements required and deliver high standards of cleanliness.	Public perception (Citizen's Panel Survey) is that cleanliness of City Centre is poor. Recent Encams survey indicated a 63% (i.e. average) rating for St Michaels Ward, of which the City Centre forms a significant part.	Within existing resources	CV One has hired new equipment and introduced an early morning cleansing shift. The proposed Business Improvement District, if approved in the Ballot, will provide additional cleansing services. Reconciliation of Encams scores with the Tidy Britain Group standard by calculating the average ratio of scores from a random selection of inspections under both regimes shows an average annual score for 2003 of 73.51 – an improvement of 4.3% year on year.
6	Develop a programme for the removal of chewing gum on a regular street-by-street basis.	High level of chewing gum staining on streets and pavements.	Additional revenue resources to be identified / re-allocation of existing resources	This is now being done by CV One on a hot-spot basis within existing resources. A comprehensive programme of removing gum from all streets once a year would require initial capital of circa £40k and ongoing revenue of circa £90k pa.

Improving The City Centre				
Theme – Economic Development & Living Environment, Leisure Facilities				
	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
7	Bring Draper's Hall into service through refurbishment of premises.	Long term void historic building requiring refurbishment and suitable use.	1. Resources to support feasibility work through the City Council & CV One. 2. Capital resource package to be identified on completion of stage (1)	CV One has completed an initial feasibility study into bringing the property back into use. They are currently exploring the potential for procurement of external funding to resource refurbishment.
8	Improve public access to St Mary's Hall linked to refurbishment of Draper's Hall. Relocation of some business use to Draper's Hall.	Public access restricted to summer months and part of the week only due to civic arrangements and wedding receptions.	1. Revenue bid from 2004 PPR 2. Capital for development of Draper's Hall.	This Action is dependant upon a favourable outcome to Action (7).
9	Improvement of signage, literature & publications relating to public toilet facilities, together with location of all publicly available toilets in the next publication of the existing Mini-Guide (subject to owner's consent).	Good public provision of toilets in central area but lack of public awareness. Perception is of poor provision.	Within existing budgets.	CV One Mini-Guide publication now revised to incorporate identification of publicly available toilet accommodation. This is subject to approval of private owners e.g. toilet facilities in retail units.

Improving The City Centre				
Theme – Tourism & Marketing				
	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
10	Produce a marketing strategy for CV One in partnership with the City Council, to deliver a campaign for marketing / promoting the City on completion of the Phoenix Initiative.	No formal strategy in place for marketing the City on completion of the Phoenix Initiative.	Within existing resources	This is now part of CV One Tourism Strategy Action Plan. The proposed Business Improvement District, if approved in the Ballot, will provide additional promotional services.

Community Safety – Making The City Safer

Theme – Crime & Safety

	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
11	1. Undertake safety and viability audit of access routes from car parks / bus hubs / bus station to City Centre.	1. No recent audit carried out.	Within existing resources.	Additional resources required to implement. Because these were not part of a successful PPR bid, no further action can be taken to implement an audit. However, CCTV coverage augmented by CV One Customer Services Assistants and Evening Ambassadors aids safer pedestrian routes.
	2. Implement improvements identified	Potential for signage, lighting, surface improvements.	2. Additional resources required to implement improvements	See above comments
12	1. Undertake a central area access audit to identify lighting “hot spots”.	Some locations poorly lit and potentially unsafe.	1. Within Risk Mgt & Community Safety resources.	Central area lighting survey completed. Lighting deficiencies are being addressed as part of wider projects as appropriate. Where deficiencies lie outside of current schemes, they can only be addressed through further funding.
	2. Implement programme of lighting improvements as appropriate		2. Capital resource to be bid for through PPR process.	No additional resources outside of project schemes. City Services are currently exploring the potential for PFI proposal for the city.

Transport – So That Everyone Can Go Where They Need To				
Theme – Cleansing & Maintenance				
	Improvement Action	2003 Baseline Position	Resource Implications	Progress
13	Introduce programme of dropped kerb repair.	Many kerbs damage through lack of repair / disruption.	Capital resource to be identified through PPR process and existing programs	This is being addressed as part of repair programme referred to in Action (1). Cabinet are shortly to consider adoption of Coventry's first Highway Maintenance Strategy. This strategy will drive the delivery of improved services and, subject to increased budget provision for highway activities, will deliver an improved highway network.
14	1. Undertake feasibility of evening on-street car parking viability in central area.	Lack of evening on-street car parking policy potentially inhibiting commerce / vibrancy with the City Centre	1. Within existing resources.	This is now part of decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement proposals
	2. Recommend implementation as appropriate.		2. Implementation subject to self-financing.	See above comment.
15	Improved promotion of Park & Ride to coincide with completion of new developments and attractions	Two existing Park & Ride Sites 1. South (Memorial Park). Well used. 2. North (Austin Drive). Under-used.	Within existing budgets.	This is included within CV One promotional material