

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 12 February 2014

Present:

Members: Councillor T Skipper (Chair)
 Councillor F Abbott
 Councillor M Auluck
 Councillor D Galliers
 Councillor M Hammon
 Councillor K Maton
 Councillor S Walsh
 Councillor D Welsh

Other Members Councillor L Kelly
(By Invitation):

Employees (by Directorate):

Place D Cockroft, K Gallagher, R Moon, L West

Resources K Larsen, G Paddan, A West

Other Attendees Eva Pascoe, Co-author of Grimsey Review
(By Invitation): Neel Pattni, Local Data Company
 Peter Burns, President of Coventry and Warwickshire
 Chamber
 Linsey Luke, Federation of Small Businesses
 Andy Talbot, Chair of the Business Investment District

Apologies: Councillor K Taylor

Public Business

39. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

40. Minutes

- (a) The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2014 were signed as a true record.

(b) Matters Arising:

- (i) Minute 32/14 (Financial Accountability of CWLEP) – Members requested that the Briefing Note providing a breakdown of funding allocation and details of the projects/schemes funded, be circulated to all Elected Members.
- (ii) Minute 43/14 (Events) – It was noted that Representatives of CWLEP were liaising with Imagineer Productions Limited.

41. The Grimsey Review

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation from the invited guests, which provided an overview and highlighted the key recommendations of the Grimsey Review 'An Alternative future for the High Street'.

The presentation emphasised that the town centre/high street plans must encompass a complete community hub solution and they must embrace radical change if they are to survive in the future. Detailed information on the future and challenges faced by local authorities, high streets and businesses was presented:

- Mobile phone/tablet as a 'platform' location is everywhere and these provide a service which included a location-based element, whether it was to help you find a nearby restaurant or minicab, or simply to push local promotions your way. The space-satellite-based global positioning system (GPS) is the key enabler.
- The growth of online shopping has changed the way people shop and this in turn has had an impact on the cities, towns and shopping centres/retail parks. Large retailers are withdrawing their presence from the high street. It has been recognised that there is already too much retail space in the UK and that bricks and mortar retailing can no longer be the anchor to generate prosperous high streets.
- 'Libraries will need to reinvent themselves in light of future communication/connectivity capabilities as well as being internet access providers they could have work hubs, health centres, and cafes as part of their offer.
- High Street to have residential or other uses within the agreed high street plan with the provision of relocating the successful independent retailers into the main commercial centre.
- Issues surrounding car parking in town centres – reasons why retailers have moved to 'out of town areas'. Parking charges and spaces within centres were reviewed.
- Incentives and discounts for pedestrian and cycle users.
- Business rates and alternative use of empty properties.

The Board discussed a number of matters arising from the presentation including:

- Change of use of empty shops and offices in the City Centre.
- More mutual connections between the network participants (retail, local government and job centres) to strengthen the high street.
- Coventry's new leisure centre – the need to increase footfall; encourage people to come into the centre for shopping and leisure.
- Landlords are required to apply for a change of use and make the premises more productive in the community e.g. housing, health and education facilities.
- Can business rates be used to stimulate economic prosperity and generate more income?
- Pop up shops – short term lease; a starter base for entrepreneurs.
- Investment in Coventry – future events; need of hotels, eateries and meeting spaces. Lifestyle change.
- Shopping hours are currently restricted – the need to move away from the 9-5 shopping hours.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Board (3) notes the presentation

42. City Centre Task Force

The Board received a presentation on the City Centre Task Force; this group was formed by Councillor Kelly in response to Coventry Telegraph's 'Save Our Shops' campaign. It was noted that the City Centre Task Force was linked to Coventry BID, the Meantime Strategy and Corporate Property Management.

The presentation provided a summary of the issues that were being studied and the progress to date:

- Key trends for the City Centre were declining. Footfall was down compared to the previous year, voids up.
- Changes made so far – flags and banners, Coventry in Bloom 2013, events held and farmers markets.
- Window dressing to improve the appearance of vacant units. The number of void units – 22 Council owned and 43 privately owned units.
- Christmas pop up shop and the Charity Shop Tour Shop, together with the Theatre Absolute.
- The need to improve the retail offer, in terms of quality and range.
- The Task Force had a stakeholder workshop session in January 2014 and an action plan had been drawn up for the next twelve months.
- Press release on the work of the Task Force.
- The need to boost tourism in the City.

The Board commented on a number of matters arising from the presentation, in particular the need to protect small independent retailers, possibility of a discount

scheme for residents of Coventry, to encourage people to spend in Coventry, an example was the 'Bristol Pound'. Pop-up shop ability to be explored to support start-up of new businesses.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Scrutiny Board notes the presentations.**
- 2) The Scrutiny Board makes the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) to progress with partners:**
 - i. Investigate opportunities to promote more residential use of properties in the City Centre
 - ii. Explore ways the Council can protect existing retailers as well as encouraging more independent retailers to locate in the City Centre.
 - iii. Look into opportunities for protecting the funding provided for, as well as enhancing the cultural offer in the City Centre
 - iv. Consider using innovative ways to engage with people about the City Centre.

43. Outstanding Issues

The outstanding issues were included in the Work Programme.

44. Work Programme 2013/14

The Board noted the Work programme items for the next meeting 19th March 2014.

45. Meeting Evaluation

The Board commented that having external guest presenters had been very useful and evaluated the meeting commenting that the presentations had been very informative. Comments given by members would be used to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of future meetings.

46. Any Other Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at: 4.30 pm)