

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CITY CENTRE FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House on **3 JUNE 2013** at

Loxley House from 3.35pm to 5.35pm

- ✓ Councillor Azad Choudhry
- Councillor Jon Collins
- Councillor Georgina Culley
- ✓ Councillor Michael Edwards
- ✓ Councillor Chris Gibson
- ✓ Councillor Brian Grocock
- Councillor Jon Hartshorne
- Councillor Nicola Heaton
- Councillor Nick McDonald
- Councillor David Mellen
- ✓ Councillor Dave Trimble
- ✓ Councillor Jane Urquhart
- ✓ Councillor Steph Williams

(✓ indicates present at meeting)

Business Sector / Other

- Mr Jeff Allen)
- ✓ Mr Steve Pashley)
- ✓ Mr Tom Waldron-Lynch) Retail/Leisure BID
- To be confirmed)
- Mr Jim Taylor - IIN Retail Forum
- ✓ Ms Jennifer Spencer - Experience Nottinghamshire
- ✓ Ms Janine Bone - Intu Victoria Centre
- ✓ Mr Andy Rooke - Nottinghamshire Police

(✓ indicates present at meeting)

Also in attendance

- Ms Kathy McArdle - Creative Quarter Company
- Ms Nicki Jenkins - Head of Economic Development) Nottingham
- Mr Noel McMenamain - Constitutional Services Officer) City Council

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Michael Edwards as Chair for the 2013/14 municipal year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to defer appointing a Vice-Chair, pending further discussion within the retail/business sector.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Nicola Heaton – leave
Councillor Nick McDonald – leave
Councillor David Mellen – other Council business
Jeff Allen – Nottingham BID

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5 MINUTES

Subject to noting Councillor Michael Edwards' absence because of other Council business, the Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2013 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

**6 VACANT SHOPS ACTION PLAN
(Presentation of Head of Economic Development)**

Nicki Jenkins, Head of Economic Development, introduced the presentation to the Forum, which included the following key points:

- (a) the City Council's February 2013 vacancy survey showed a vacancy rate of 18% (235 properties) within the extended boundary closely aligned with the BID. This figure included both retail and non-retail units. The survey also recorded a slightly lower vacancy rate of 17.7% within a tighter City Centre boundary area. Long-term vacancy rates had declined since the previous survey in November 2012;
- (b) vacancy hotspots included Derby Road, Upper Parliament Street and the Hockley area, while longer term vacancy hotspots included the Broadmarsh Centre, Carrington Street, West End Arcade, Hurts Yard and Wheeler Gate/Friar Lane;
- (c) the City Council had launched the Vacant Shops Grant Scheme, providing match-funding grants of between £500 and £5,000 to assist property owners to improve the function and appearance of empty shops;
- (d) targeted intervention on a unit-by-unit basis, both through the High Street Innovation Fund and the Vacant Shops Grant Scheme, was proving effective. Derby Road and Wheeler Gate/Friar Lane were the first areas to see significant reductions in vacant units since November 2012. The next area to benefit from intervention would be the Hockley area;

- (e) a tender had been issued to provide a business mentoring programme while work continued to identify specific opportunities for appropriate 'pop-up' or temporary retail use. The launch of both a start-up retailers competition and an independent retail business network was scheduled for later in the Summer of 2013.

In response to several questions and comments from Forum members, Nicki Jenkins provided the following information:

- (f) partners were working to develop the City Centre's technology offer, including augmented reality, increased WiFi coverage and maximising the retail opportunities of smart phone technology. The Victoria Centre's transactional website was going live in mid-June 2013;
- (g) the Vacant Shops Grant Scheme required landlords to provide matching funding for improvements under the Scheme, payments were staged and invoices were required;
- (h) a One Point of Contact service, based within the City Council's Economic Development function, had been launched.

RESOLVED to note the presentation and to receive further information on the development of Nottingham's technology offer at the Forum's September 2013 meeting.

7 LATE NIGHT SHOPPING PLANS (Verbal Presentation of the Nottingham Retail/Leisure BID)

Steve Pashley of the Nottingham Retail/Leisure BID gave a verbal presentation to the Forum, which included the following key points:

- (a) current 'late-night' shopping was only until 7.30pm. The Retail/Leisure BID planned to build momentum and consensus to have City Centre retail hours extended to 8pm on Wednesdays from early November 2013, and to continue with 8pm opening on Wednesdays for 6 weeks into 2014 (12 weeks for larger organisations);
- (b) if successful, further roll out would be considered from early 2015;
- (c) a key element in the success of extended opening hours would be evening transport arrangements, both in terms of public transport provision, which currently trailed off after 6pm, and favourable parking charges to facilitate out-of-town evening visitors;
- (d) it was recognised that there was a cost to extended hours, especially for the independent sector, but extended opening could be seen as a long term investment in increasing the offer to Nottingham citizens, with resulting economic benefits for both the retail and wider leisure sectors.

Arising from discussion, the following issues were raised:

- (e) several councillors gave a robust defence of existing public transport services provided by Nottingham City Transport (NCT), while acknowledging that the BID

needed to engage directly with NCT on how changes to its service provision might support extended opening;

- (f) a Forum member pointed out that the extended opening hours planned for early 2015 coincided with the expansion of Nottingham Express Transit services to the south and west of Nottingham;
- (g) a Forum member highlighted the importance to Nottingham's retail and leisure economy of the 'ABC1' economic demographic, pointing out that this economic grouping was more likely to drive from beyond the City boundary to benefit from extended opening in the City Centre.

RESOLVED to note the presentation and to support in principle the Retail/Leisure BID's late night shopping plans.

8 CREATIVE QUARTER (Presentation of Chief Operations Officer)

Kathy McArdle, Chief Operations Officer of the Creative Quarter Company, introduced the presentation to the Forum, which included the following key points:

- (a) the Creative Quarter Company's Vision is to provide an information hub which connects all the Enterprise and Innovation hubs across the City to create a genuine ecosystem of enterprise and innovation, and to provide a vibrant place at the heart of the City supporting enterprise and innovation;
- (b) its key aims are:
 - (i) to connect enterprise and innovation activity so that it functions as a coherent ecosystem which maximises impact;
 - (ii) to co-ordinate and focus existing economic development activity into the Creative quarter so that it can have particular benefits for businesses in that area;
 - (iii) to provide a ladder of business support with a particular focus on the priority sectors and those wanting to locate in the Creative Quarter;
 - (iv) to build on the existing assets and activity in the Creative Quarter area to revitalise the old heart of the City;
 - (v) to create an information hub for those interested in enterprise and innovation in the city to access the various support available;
- (c) significant work to date included transport and public realm improvements in the Creative Quarter area, and the establishment of the Creative Quarter Loan Fund and other funding streams, such as the Growth 100 programme and the N'Tech Fund;
- (d) next steps in developing the Creative Quarter included:
 - (i) engaging with local businesses and stakeholders to connect and co-ordinate activity;
 - (ii) providing business support and development to maximise property use, signpost advice and develop apprenticeships;
 - (iii) developing the Quarter's events and animation offer;
 - (iv) building effective communications, with contact list, website, social media programme and e-newsletter;

- (v) developing the Creative Quarter Company Board, establishing policies and procedures and identifying means to generate income.
- (e) there was a common misconception that the Creative Quarter Company had large funding reserves, that it's only concern was within the creative and arts sectors and that it was driven only by the City Council, none of which were the case.

In response to several questions and comments from Forum members, Kathy McArdle provided the following information:

- (f) there was a mix of both grant and loan funding available to develop the Quarter, with loans the primary source of funding for those needing working capital;
- (g) there is a lot of ongoing engagement and consultation with both existing and prospective businesses across all sectors in the area, with positive feedback from both traditional and emerging sectors;
- (h) the Creative Quarter development will boost the student population in the City Centre, which was very important to the City Centre economy in terms of footfall, tax-free shopping by overseas students and creating a vibrant atmosphere within the Quarter and beyond.

RESOLVED to note the presentation.