

## **Economy Scrutiny Committee – District Centres Subgroup**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2017**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair  
Councillors Farrell [ESC/OSG/17/02 - ESC/OSG/17/03], Hacking [ESC/OSG/17/02 - ESC/OSG/17/03], Richards and A Simcock

Professor Cathy Parker, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University

Professor Dominic Medway, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University

Professor Simon Quin, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University

#### **ESC/OSG/17/01                      Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2016.

#### **ESC/OSG/17/02                      Review and Reflect Next Steps** **ESC/OSG/17/03                      Terms of Reference and Work Programme**

The Subgroup received a report of the Chair which provided some interim observations from the Subgroup's work so far and recommendations for future actions. The Subgroup received a report of the Strategic Director (Development) which responded to the Chair's report, setting out how the issues and actions suggested could be addressed through a programme of work. The Subgroup also received the Subgroup's Terms of Reference and work programme. The Chair advised that she had proposed that officers, in collaboration with the Deputy Leader, take forward the Subgroup's suggestions on district centres and that the Subgroup reconvene in approximately six months' time to review the work that had taken place. She advised that the Deputy Leader was unable to attend this meeting but was in agreement with this approach.

A member advised that different areas of the city, including non-retail attractions outside of the city centre, should be promoted to both visitors and residents. The Chair agreed, advising that this was referred to in her report and highlighting that funding for this would need to be identified. Members discussed how this work could be cascaded to all ward councillors and incorporated into ward plans. The Chair agreed that it was important to involve local ward councillors and other stakeholders in the development and promotion of their district centres.

A member highlighted that some district centres crossed ward boundaries and that residents from a number of wards could access the same district centre. He advised that connectivity was a key issue, particularly ensuring that residents could access

district centres by public transport. The Chair agreed that connectivity should be considered as part of the work on district centres, including connections between centres, not just a 'hub and spoke' model. The Strategic Director (Development) commented that a well-connected bus network was particularly important and noted that many residents did not own a car. He reported that the issue of connectivity would be embedded into the work on district centres. He further advised that this issue should be considered in the context of proposed changes to public transport, including the new franchising powers within the Bus Services Bill, which was currently going through Parliament. He advised that the Economy Scrutiny Committee might also want to include this on their work programme, as it would be a key issue over the next 18 months.

Professor Quin advised that district centres needed to serve their local community but should not replicate one another. He reported that people wanted choice and would travel to different centres if the centres complemented one another, people were aware of what the centres offered and there were good transport links between them. A member agreed, reporting that Didsbury and Chorlton each provided a distinct offer and that people would catch the tram to visit the other centre because it offered something different.

Members discussed how the areas which would be the focus of detailed work over the next six months, as part of the pilot project, should be selected. A member requested that members have the opportunity to scrutinise this. The Strategic Director (Development) proposed that officers develop clear criteria for the selection of pilot areas and that these then be provided to members. The Chair agreed, suggesting that this could be considered by the Economy Scrutiny Committee if it needed to be considered before the District Centres Subgroup was reconvened. A member who was also the Chair of the Economy Scrutiny Committee requested that the Committee receive a timeline for the work on district centres.

Professor Parker advised that one of the pilots should be aimed at producing quick results to benefit traders so that the traders who had contributed to this work could see that they were being listened to. A member suggested that a "toolkit" of targeted interventions which had worked in similar centres could be produced. He advised that this would provide quick results for traders while the more long-term work was ongoing. The Chair agreed that this should be considered.

Professor Parker advised that members were welcome to visit her and her colleagues at the Institute of Place Management to discuss their work further.

A member commented that the traders who had contributed to the previous meeting had highlighted business rates as an important issue and that this should be acknowledged. Members commented that the Council did not set business rates but that their impact on traders and on the changing nature of district centres should be considered. Members discussed other ways in which they could influence district centres, such as planning powers.

Members discussed the Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document which was due to be considered by the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 28 February 2017. Members supported the adoption of this document.

The Chair recommended that the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee be informed that the Subgroup supported it.

Members recommended that officers, under the guidance of the Deputy Leader, progress the work on district centres, taking into the account the Subgroup's views. They recommended that the Subgroup be re-established in the new municipal year to review the work that had taken place, with its next meeting being held in September or October 2017.

## **Decisions**

1. To recommend that officers, under the guidance of the Deputy Leader, progress the work on district centres, taking into the account the Subgroup's views
2. To recommend that the Economy Scrutiny Committee re-establish the Subgroup in the new municipal year and that the Subgroup meet in September or October 2017 to review the work that has taken place.
3. To recommend that different areas of the city, including non-retail attractions outside of the city centre, be promoted to both visitors and residents.
4. To note the importance of involving local ward councillors and other stakeholders in the development and promotion of their district centres.
5. To recommend that consideration be given to transport connectivity, including the opportunities presented by the Bus Services Bill.
6. To recommend that members be given the opportunity to scrutinise the criteria for selecting which district centres will be part of the pilot project and to request that this include consideration of one pilot which will produce quick results, such as a the development of a "toolkit".
7. To request that the Economy Scrutiny Committee receive a timeline for the work on district centres.
8. To recommend that the impact of business rates on traders be considered in this work and to recognise the powers the Council does have which impact on businesses.
9. To recommend that the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee be informed that the Subgroup supports the Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document.

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