

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
23 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present :- Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)
Councillors Nick Barlow, Nigel Chapman,
Mike Hardy, Justin Knight and Jill Tod

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Julie Young (in respect of his-her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

11. Historic Town Centre Improvements

Nick Chilvers addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He had accepted the idea of losing the Bus Station but voiced his concerns as to whether provision would be made for a bus stop in Queen Street. He explained that there was insufficient space for more than one bus to stop in the vicinity of Sainsburys but provision needed to be made for a bus stop large enough to accommodate a number of buses at one time.

Reg Patterson, Regeneration Project Lead, responded to Mr Chilvers by explaining that there was potential for a bus stop in the area of Queen Street, work was continuing but the precise location had yet to be determined.

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration inviting the Panel to note the progress with the Historic Town Centre Improvements work and comment on two presentations:

- Public Realm Strategy, provided by Howard Davies, Town Centre Project Manager
- Lighting Strategy, provided by Reg Patterson, Regeneration Project Lead

The Panel was asked to note that this work was at a draft stage and any comments would be a valuable indicator as the work moved forward.

Both studies considered the unique heritage of the town centre core and

promoted the creation of a “Colchester identity” within the public spaces of the town. It was important that the key linkages between projects were understood and exploited not only to bring about greater benefits but also to demonstrate that all areas within the Council were working together with the common aim of making the town centre an even better place to live, work and visit. These various projects were being brought together following the collation of the key projects already underway or planned within the town centre and an officer Steering Group had been established consisting of both Borough Council and Essex County Council officers to monitor progress and ensure clear links.

In respect of the wider town centre project, the Steering Group would be meeting shortly to discuss key milestones in terms of promotion and public engagement as it was crucial to all of the work packages that they were promoted as part of a common approach to improving the town.

In respect of the Public Realm and Lighting Strategies, both were in early draft format and would be subject to extensive stakeholder consultation before final drafts could be completed. Both would play a key role within the transport package and would be used to inform the consultants of the Council’s aspirations for future public realm, especially when considering higher levels of pedestrian and cycle priority.

The Panel discussed the Strategies at length and gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- Innovative use of paving in shared use areas to encourage driving at slow speeds;
- The extent of the Council’s influence over developers in their use of good quality materials and design;
- The need to bear in mind the inherent ‘Colchester’ identity which already existed;
- A view that one organisation was required to bring together the various elements in the town centre;
- The benefits to be gained from undertaking good quality work to areas such as the underpass in Crouch Street;
- The audit of street furniture which was being produced by Essex County Council in response to discussions regarding duplication of street signs;
- Concerns regarding energy consumption and light pollution;

- The need to balance cost and energy concerns against other social and economic benefits of lighting buildings in the right way for the right amount of time;
- The need to work with Essex County Council in relation to their responsibility for lighting in residential areas as well as local businesses and owners of town centre buildings.

RESOLVED that the progress on the Public Realm and Lighting Strategies within the context of the Historic Town Centre Improvements work be noted.

Councillor Julie Young (in respect of his-her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

12. Night Time Economy

The Panel received a report from the Head of Environmental and Protective Services on progress and initial findings of the Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group had been asked to investigate the perception that in the evening Colchester could feel an unwelcoming place, concerns about dominance of certain types of bars and clubs, inappropriate behaviour by some and a grubby environment despite street cleansing and other initiatives such as night toilets that had been undertaken.

The Group was comprised of Councillors Barlow (Chair), Davies, Naish and B. Oxford, Chief Inspector Adrian Coombs, Dominic Kavakeb, President of the Student Union, Essex University and Beverley Jones, the Head of Environmental and Protective Services.

Two key themes for the work of the Group had been developed:

- To investigate the commercial appetite for increasing the diversity of what was on offer in the town centre together with the need to understand the patterns of use and what barriers prevented people accessing the town and what would entice them in and
- To investigate the responsibilities held across the Council and other partner organisations in relation to enforcement and influence that could be exerted across the town centre, particularly in relation to controlling behaviour of individuals and businesses and to any strategic plans or policies that could help shape or influence what the town looked and felt

like in the future.

In order to consult as widely as possible with stakeholders a workshop had been delivered with invitations sent to businesses, residents associations, various Council services, external enforcement agencies and other organisations such as Destination Colchester, CORBA, Lion Walk and Culver Square Shopping Centres.

The Group had also developed an innovative approach, in the form of Peer Research, to seek insight from a range of residents who may, or may not, use the town centre. Whilst another integral part of the project was to research and understand the developments that other authorities/towns had made in respect of managing their night-time economy and to obtain examples of best practice that clearly related to a holistic approach to dealing with the associated problems.

The work of the Task and Finish Group was drawing to a conclusion with the Peer Research and the best practice commissioned report being the only outstanding elements left to complete. The final report was likely to identify those key actions either short, medium or long term that would have the most impact on delivering a town centre which was safe and welcoming to all in the evening.

RESOLVED that the progress made by the Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group be noted.

13. 20mph Task and Finish Group

The Panel received an update of the work of the 20 mph Task and Finish Group in the form of the notes of the meetings held on 18 February, 26 May and 18 August 2009.

Peter Lynn addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He referred to the notes of the meeting of the Task and Finish Group held on 18 February 2009 which indicated that the Group had agreed that its main objective was 'to reduce road injuries and deaths in the Borough by extending existing 20mph restrictions while also considering other safety solutions' whereas the remit originally identified by the Policy Review and Development Panel in January had identified five objectives relating to encouraging alternative modes of transport, reducing the dominance of vehicles, environmental issues as well as reducing speed. He urged the Panel members to ensure that the Task and Finish Group's work continued in accordance with the remit originally agreed.

In response, Councillor Hardy agreed to refer Mr Lynn's comments to the Task and Finish Group but he also confirmed that the Group had not ignored the original remit but, in the course of its work in relation to the prevention of road casualties, had felt it was appropriate to concentrate on speed reduction issues

RESOLVED that the notes of the meetings of the 20mph Task and Finish Group be noted.

Councillor Julie Young (in respect of his-her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

14. Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisals Task and Finish Group

The Panel received an update of the work of the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group in the form of the notes of the most recent meetings held on 17 August and 7 September 2009 which also included draft consultation components.

RESOLVED that the notes of the meetings of the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group be noted.

15. Work Programme

The Panel considered a report from the Head of Corporate Management setting out the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for 2009/10.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2009/10 be noted.