

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE RESIDENTS' ACTION GROUP

Minutes of meeting held 04th October, 2016 at Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, Mappin Street

PRESENT:

Steve Lee (Vice Chair), Olusola McKenzie (Secretary), Paul Blomfield MP, Wendy Zealand, Mark Booth, Maxine Biggin, Cllr Douglas Johnson, Cllr Rob Murphy, Graham Chidlaw, Cllr Moya O'Rourke, Stuart Barkworth, Rupert Wood, David Hussey-Yeo, Donna Ding, David Pears, Tracey Ford, Francesca Opondo, Babak Kouravand, Andrew Dempsey, Nigel Slack and April Marshall

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Steve welcomed everyone and our guest speaker, Paul Blomfield MP. SCCRAG was hosting an open meeting with Paul Blomfield MP for Sheffield Central as part of his autumn 'The Big Conversation' series of events.

1.2 Apologies were received from Peter Sephton (Chair) and Amber Wilson.

2. Guest Speaker

2.1 Paul mentioned his e-newsletter and encouraged those attending to sign-up. He had designed a survey to help him to understand the most urgent issues faced by his constituents which he would take to Parliament.

2.2 Questions and Answers Session

A question and answer session commenced with the purpose for attendees to raise concerns with Paul.

2.2.1 Q. What are the potential opportunities for improving our transport infrastructure? Since Sheffield's transport system seems static and there has been no expansion when compared to Manchester.

A. Network Rail is committed and there have been 3 announced delays on the rail project though it is a live project.

An investigation to a road link and tunnel through the Peaks as the greater priority is being discussed to improve our connectivity.

Paul supports HS2 proposal not because it saves journey time about 15 minutes but because it meets the increase in demand of people wanting to travel by rail. Furthermore, an expansion to the current lines we have is cheaper and less disruptive than building new lines.

We might have won the campaign to have the lines to go through the City Centre not Meadowhall although this is still in the proposal stage.

Q. What has been done to engage with the people in Doncaster and Barnsley who don't want HS2 in the City Centre?

A. There has been an independent economic impact assessment which states clearly that it was better for HS2 to go through the City Centre. He takes a more strategic view with those people who do not want the HS2 line in the City Centre but focuses on winning the argument with the Government.

There is a future HS3 proposal which will involve Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester and include Hull. We need to focus on how to balance the economic imbalance in the North.

We need to reduce the journey times to some of these places to bring down the journey times so that it is quicker to travel around these places.

HS2 will go through parts of Doncaster but there are no stops which decreases journey times from Leeds and London as well as Newcastle and London. It will bypass Doncaster so will not increase capacity.

Q. Is there space also for mobility access for people who are retired but would be able to travel on the train? Accessibility is very difficult if you are disabled from the train to the exit of the station and the pricing structure is complex. Also, are we looking at integrating transport nationally and making different forms of transport available for different purposes?

A. A system of transport that enables people to take bikes onto the trams and trains will be integrating the forms of transport.

A concern raised was regarding a lady's son who had to decline work which he had been offered because he couldn't get transport early enough.

Paul responded that private transport companies have had cuts to their services and as a result there is no subsidy to put on more services. Also, Adult social care is another where the Local Government overall public spending has been cut by 9%.

2.2.2 Q. Are we going to continue to pay into the EU?

A. The funding by UK will continue as we still get money out of Europe. South Yorkshire is one of the net beneficiaries as our GDP is 25% below the European average. The finance we receive from Europe has been used in the renewal of the City Hall, the heart of the City Centre, Zest, AMP Waverley and 50% of the universities research funding is funded by the EU.

When that stops, we will receive £1billion over 30 years which is less than what we get for infrastructural funding.

2.2.3 A concern was raised about the Sheffield's Retail Quarter development.

The development project which is happening in the Sheffield Retail Quarter must not involve too much of outside developers but prioritise local residents and those who live in Sheffield who become stakeholders.

There is increased student housing creating a transient population which is affecting the neighbourliness of our City Centre.

The plan for the City Centre was to have shops and offices but getting the balance right has become more difficult. The vision has got to be where the two co-exist however this is less attractive for people who live in the City Centre.

The Council lead on this but Paul has worked with the council to encourage the independent retail sector which will distinguish us from other places.

Regarding the night time economy, this can sometimes become intrusive to the lives of those living in the City Centre. A twilight economy which is present in Birmingham and Manchester is been proposed. However, there are tensions to get a balance between the two i.e. the night time economy and twilight economy.

Sheffield BID is investigating how to encourage people to stay in the City Centre during the twilight period and for the night time economy, we want something that gives us something of an identity not just the chains and brands.

There was concern raised regarding the amount of dead space in the city and the lack of engagement at street level.

In response, it was stated to get a sense of engagement we require active street frontage i.e. shops on the ground floor.

The Universities are playing their part as they have an interest in different sectors and they are providing their students with the resource to set up their own businesses.

2.2.4 If you are not a life-long Sheffielder there is little awareness of what goes on in Sheffield e.g. The Snooker Championship.

As part of reviving the City Centre and increasing footfall Sheffield BID is introducing Sheffield's Alive after 5 which will see shops open between 5pm and 7pm on Thursdays.

Sheffield is being recognised more as we have also received the Purple Flag status.

The retailers need to be involved as they decided whether to open late or not. An example is Moonko which is an independent business on Division Street that decides to extend their opening times.

2.2.5 Q. What are we to do about the lack of graduate jobs in Sheffield? This is causing graduates to move out of Sheffield and some return to London.

A. We need smaller businesses in the City that want to work with graduates as we used to have the highest student retention rate in the country.

In Sheffield there were 43,000 Steel workers and 3,500 students in city in the past but now we have 2,700 Steel workers and 55,000 students.

With research innovation and connecting more effectively with businesses we can increase the number of start-ups which both Universities are encouraging.

2.2.6 The issue was raised of the disruptions caused by the pedestrianisation work which is been carried out by the University of Sheffield. This is causing a lot of disruptions for drivers. Regents Street, down Fitzwilliam Street and Gell Street are affected.

There is an extra 20 minutes added to journey times when driving from Hallamshire Hospital to Gell Street. Residents have to drive up Regent Street and Regent Terrace to get home.

The paved area on Leavygreave Road has no crossing or lights and installing these could reduce road accidents and help people who are not from Sheffield who will not know about the changes.

2.2.7 We have recently been experiencing a lot of anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol problems in the West Street area and City Centre.

Paul had been out with Matt Burdett and the issue of Anti-social behaviour was an item to be discussed with Rev Dr. Alan Billings as part of the Big Conversation at the Abbeydale Picture House.

We need good street policing but because of the cuts we can't have front line policing.

Tracey Ford informed the group that since the last SCCRAG public meeting, City Centre ambassadors and PCSOs have been allocated to different zones in the Sheffield City Centre.

The multi-agency group which she chairs is currently mapping out what days, when and what zones agencies are covering for outward provision. There is current provision provided by Ben's Centre, Turning Point, Street Pastors and many others.

She mentioned Bobby, a street pastor who is currently involved in outward provision. However, they need better coordination and mapping of resources to avoid duplication.

2.2.7.1 Q. How are the outreach providers funded for their work with street drinkers and beggars?

A. Ben's Centre was successful with funding for their outreach provision work to people sleeping rough. However there is nothing targeting those who are beggars. There are 56 individuals begging and 17 are known to be sleeping rough in the City Centre.

To tackle the problem of street drinkers and beggars students are working on an invention which is an App called 'Spare Change'.

There is a DPPO in place in Sheffield City Centre but there is little evidence that things have changed. The police have powers to take drinks off people if they are causing anti-social behaviour.

On Convent Walk where Places for People homes is located and on Victoria Court, there are people dealing drugs. This is also happening on Conway Street and at the back of Gell Street.

Two arrests were made last week in that area from Victoria Court and next Friday local policing team will have two dedicated officers assigned to the area. The Abbeydale Road corridor is also a priority area.

2.2.7.2 Q. Why is there no clamp down on shops selling drinks on West Street?

A. This is an issue concerning enforcement. The problem is when people get arrested and end up in the courts they get kicked out for a lack of evidence.

A discussion has taken place with Tesco so that it does not become the place where the street drinkers congregate and the discussion is progressing.

In Bargain Beers, high strength single Strong black cans are being sold.

Paul volunteered to liaise with Tracey to find out what the current license is at Bargain Beers. However the problem is further complicated as the street drinkers also use illegal highs.

A suggestion was made to keep the street drinkers occupied by giving them something to do during the day which is a practice adopted by Phoenix Futures. However, this is a choice for the street drinkers to make.

Preventative conditions such as labelling of cans, changes in licensing have been requested as a deterrent. The national policy goes against us as, unless there is a reasonable objection, a licence can't be refused.

2.2.8 Q. How much is the labour party committed to a life after fossil fuels?

In addition, a question was raised about the foul air in the Kelham Island area and pollution which is also a cause for concern for the new build homes. This is a concern for residents of the Little Kelham housing development. They would like more trees, play areas for children and streets that are safe to walk at night.

3. Our **next meeting** will take place on **Tuesday 8th of November**.