

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Town Centre Vitality

Thursday, 24 September 2009

Present: Councillor Peter Wilson (Chair) and Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, Pat Haughton, June Molyneaux and Stella Walsh

Also in attendance: Cath Burns (Head of Economic Development), Louise Finch (Acting Head of Communications), Conrad Heald (Town Centre and Markets Manager), Andrew Daniels (Senior Communications Officer) and Tony Uren (Democratic and Member Services Officer).

09.TCG.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Iris Smith.

The Task Group was informed that Councillor Iris Smith had resigned from the membership of the Group owing to her Mayoral commitments. It was likely that the Conservative Group would be nominating another Member or Members to serve on the Group.

09.TCG.19 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the members of the Task Group in any of the meeting's agenda items.

09.TCG.20 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group on Town Centre Vitality held on 20 August 2009 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

09.TCG.21 SCOPING OF THE REVIEW

The Task Group received for consideration the project outline for the overview and scrutiny inquiry, which set out the terms of reference and aims and objectives of town centre review, as agreed at the first two meetings of the Task Group.

It was **AGREED** that the scoping document, as now presented, be agreed for endorsement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

09.TCG.22 REDEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT PALL MALL/BOLTON STREET

The Task Group members referred to the recent announcements regarding the possible redevelopment of the QS Fashions site at the junction of Pall Mall and Bolton Street by an ASDA superstore. The plans for the projected development were shortly to be placed on deposit for public consultation.

It was **AGREED** that the Task Group requests to be kept aware of the future negotiations and outcome of the current consultation exercise in the light of the significant implications any redevelopment of the large site would have on the vitality of the town centre as a whole.

09.TCG.23 MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

The Chair reminded the Group that the primary purpose the meeting was to consider issues relating to the marketing and promotion of the town centre.

The Chair welcomed Louise Finch (Acting Head of Communications) who presented a note prepared by the Head of Communications, Marketing and Tourism on the work and action that had been instigated by the Council's Communications and Marketing Team since the publication of the findings of the last scrutiny review of the Markets in 2004. The measures and initiatives which had subsequently been implemented included:

- a provision for market traders to apply for stalls and pay stall rental online;
- an extensive programme of marketing to advertise Chorley Markets, including advertising in local and regional press, national press features, advertising in trade papers such as 'Market Trader News' and radio campaigns;
- a much improved web site, with sections aimed specifically at both traders and visitors;
- a new logo, strap lines and advertising tools and merchandise (eg leaflets, shopping bags, etc) to promote the markets;
- a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign around the markets, with posters and flyers to support themed markets and other individual events.

The Task Group accepted the benefits that had accrued from the enhancement of the marketing of the Markets and considered that future strategies should aim to encompass the whole of the town centre.

The Members' debate focused on several issues and aspects of the Council's current advertising and promotion campaigns and strategies, including:

- ideas for the introduction of a corporate colour and/or design scheme for market stall canopies;
- provision for coach parking in the town centre;
- procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of current marketing campaigns and the occupancy of market stalls;
- incentives to attract new businesses to the markets and town centre shops in order to increase diversity and enhance shoppers' choice;
- the effectiveness of the promotion of themed markets;
- the current location of the Flat Iron Market; and
- the need for an improved network of directional signage throughout the town centre, with the possible use of generic terms for certain events.

During a comprehensive and useful discussion, the following suggestions for future initiatives and actions to complement and improve current advertising and marketing strategies were put forward by the Task Group:

- the introduction of a standard pattern for market stall canopies, with a choice of colours being available for individual stall holders;
- that selected coach operators (eg Shearings) be reminded of the Markets and other attractions within the town centre and requested to contact the Town Centre and Markets Manager for information on available coach parks;
- effective methods of calculating and monitoring the impact and effectiveness of promotional campaigns need to be formulated;
- promotional leaflets need to be more widely distributed and available throughout the town centre;
- more effective promotion of the themed markets in advance of the events;
- the handles of the Chorley Markets shopping bags to be strengthened before the next run;
- support of the feasibility study to be conducted into the Flat Iron Market;
- examination of the means of enhancing the localised nature of the Farmers' and other themed markets to improve their distinctiveness by, for example,

naming the 'Chorley's Farmers Market' or linking them to relevant themes (eg Cake Fairs, etc);

- a recommendation to the Lancashire County Council for the erection of a brown motorway advertising sign to promote the Markets and other visitor attractions in Chorley;
- a review of the directional signage in the town centre;
- the expansion of the present marketing and promotional campaigns and strategy to encompass the whole of the town centre.

It was **AGREED** that the ideas and suggestions as outlined above be considered and reviewed by the Task Group at a later stage, with a view to firm recommendations on the marketing and promotion of the town centre being formulated.

09.TCG.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED**:

1. That the next two meetings of the Task Group be held at 6.30pm on Thursday, 8 October and Thursday, 5 November 2009.
2. That the 8 October meeting consider issues around the improvement of the cultural offer within the town centre.

Chair