

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL ON SEAFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE

3.00pm 11 APRIL 2014

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mitchell (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Brown and Davey, Angela Benson

PART ONE

11 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

12 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

12.1 There were no declarations of interest and no party whip.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

13.1 The panel agreed the minutes of the meeting on the 18th March 2014.

14 WITNESSES

14.1 **Kevin Boorman (KB)**, Head of Communications and Marketing, Hastings Borough Council began by telling the panel that their seafront was vitally important to Hastings. The visitor economy generated £245m and provided 5,100 jobs. The council recognised that it had not been playing as important a role in promoting the seafront as it could have done. For the last 10-15 years it had focussed on using the powers under s. 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 which enabled the council to require owners to do up land and buildings in poor condition (acting as 'grot busters'). If the owner refused, then as in one case, the council could do the works in default. These powers were used to try and get underdeveloped amenities to be developed.

14.2 A success since then had been to get the Jerwood Gallery (situated in the heart of the Old Town) built, using £8m external funding and £2m council funding. The Slade Improvement Project, of which the Jerwood Gallery was part, had also provided:

- Community facilities

- A classroom on the coast (a seafood teaching kitchen and classroom – which Billingsgate were interested in)
- A large open space for events e.g. a seafood and wine event which saw 50,000 visitors over a weekend
- A café.

14.3 The Pier was also a major attraction for the city which was why it had reached its £500,000 target for public subscriptions - mainly from local people. It was empty and derelict like the West Pier, but had been awarded £12m Heritage Lottery Funding. The council had to use a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) from the off shore owner of the Pier. The target was to open next Easter.

14.4 86% of all visitors to Hastings go to visit their seafront and for 30% it was their main reason for the visit. If tourism was worth nearly £250m to the town, then one could see how important the seafront was as part of the offer.

Questions from the panel

14.5 **Q: How does community investment work and can you gain a financial return?**

KB told the panel that the council had not owned the Pier, it was owned by an off-shore business registered in Panama but after the CPO the council had handed it straight over to the Hastings Pier and White Rock Trust. It had been a condition of the Lottery funding that there was community involvement and participation in the project, and so a share scheme was set up, to enable people to have a stake in its development. Over 50% of the shares had been bought by individuals, at a minimum of £100 per share. The Lottery funding was worth £11.7m. It was a relatively complicated process, with the Phase 1 bid money being used to develop Phase 2 of the bid. Initially £8m had been asked for, but the Phase 1 process showed that much more money was needed for this project.

14.6 **Q: Was there a need to show that match funding could be found for the project?**

KB explained that 90% was coming from Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) and then it was expected that 10% match funding would come from the community. Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council were named as the guarantors.

14.7 **Q: Did you have to demonstrate a business case for this project?**

KB explained that to secure HLF one had to demonstrate outcomes and outputs in terms of jobs. The Pier had been closed since 2008 (having been previously closed in 1999, then reopened in 2002) and so had gone bust twice in 15 years, so the HLF wanted to see a business plan, including the opportunities it would provide for young people.

14.8 **Q: Was the bid fronted by the Hastings Pier Charity?**

KB confirmed that the Charity made the bid for the funding.

14.9 **Q: Where did you get the figure of 86% of tourists visiting the seafront when they come to Hastings?**

KB explained that the data had been collated from a number of sources for a DEFRA presentation on the importance of the seaside economy last year. 5,100 jobs in the city were supported by tourism, which meant they were the biggest single sector employer; for the most deprived town in the South East and the most deprived seafront town after Blackpool. They now wanted to move on to improve the western end of the seafront; the seafront is three miles long, and Hastings Borough Council was keen to see its whole length being used.

14.10 Q: How are you looking to lever in investment opportunities?

KB told the panel that these following opportunities were being pursued:

- Regional Growth Fund (RGF)
- Coastal Community Funding – being used to restore the 5% of the pier which had not been burnt in conjunction with the HLF funding
- The Economic Development Team were searching for INTERREG and other funding opportunities.

14.11 Q: Were the structural problems due to its Victorian construction?

KB told the panel that the seafront construction dated back to Victorian times, but some problems arose from the 1930s when the structures were developed by Sidney Little 'The Concrete King'. Seawater was used in the concrete that was now facing major structural problems. The seafront had been raised by 7- 8 metres, by concrete, to prevent flooding. There were ongoing discussions with the Highways Agency re: A259. Some of the listed structures have been tackled, whose problems had been compounded by the use of seawater. Cllr Mitchell agreed that the arches in Brighton & Hove had been constructed in a similar way.

14.12 Mike Moon (MM), Head of Operations (Waste and Street Cleaning Services) City Clean told the panel that City Clean were responsible for keeping the seafront clean. Nine full-time staff would be employed here out of season and from Easter to September they would take on extra staff, to reach the following levels, in 2 shifts:

- 15 full time staff working from 5am-2pm
- 18 full time staff working from 2pm-10pm.

14.13 There were over 260 litter bins on the seafront, including those for dog mess and general purpose bins. They were emptied every morning and evening and maintained by barrow operatives. The higher footfall meant a greater amount of litter. There were 18 extra large bins which were emptied once a day, but this could not be done after 9am. In addition 150 pop up yellow square bins were put on the beach at busy times, seven days a week.

14.14 The council had installed five new recycling sites: co-mingled (emptied every day) and glass (emptied a few times a week). Some funding was available to place some more recycling bins on the seafront. Street washing was carried out on the seafront using a jet wash; once a week during winter and twice a week from April to September. Cityclean had taken on the graffiti contract to carry out a patrol twice a week, which gave them an

additional resource to respond to dirty bins and other relevant problems. The service had bought a mechanical sweeper to sweep the lower promenade, but it was not a powerful jet washer. This was used last year down at Hove Lawns and after a week it does begin to make a difference.

Questions from the panel

14.15 Q: Do you think there is a lack of toilets on the seafront, as this was an issue mentioned by the seafront traders?

MM explained that he did not manage the toilet service, so this issue should be taken up with Tracey Phipps.

14.16 Q: It was mentioned at the drop in event we held on the 8th April that your service seemed very stretched in busy periods, especially in the evening sessions. Is this the case?

MM told the panel that when the beach is full, Cityclean were stretched to keep this area clean and it was not possible for them to litter pick then. Barbecues added to this difficulty and an extra 20 of these had been installed this year. It was difficult for Cityclean to get their big vehicles down to the seafront.

14.17 Q: Do you litter pick during the day?

Cityclean did it if they could, but this can be pointless if the beach is full. Then it was more useful to clean the beach in the evening when everyone has left. The beach was then cleaned again from 5-6am and the intention was to have it clean by 9am.

14.18 Q: Why do people think it is OK to leave so much litter on the beach? Had a promotion campaign been run about this?

MM explained that Cityclean had put up posters last year and were currently working with the Communications Team on what to do this year, including balloons and posters. The message they wanted to convey was *'please use the bins, or if they are full please put the rubbish next to the bin'*. They were thinking of using the street artists who had decorated the electricity boxes to encourage people to keep the beach litter free.

14.19 Q: During the dispute, it seemed that people don't want to use communal bins. Do you still need little bins because of this?

MM thought that people were attracted to small litter bins.

14.20 Q: What about the number of commercial bins?

MM explained that if these bins were on the highway, then the council could serve a notice on them to store such bins somewhere, but if there was no space it would not resolve the issue.

14.21 Q: If there was not an alternative place for these commercial bins, what can be done?

MM told the panel that an officer was looking at this issue, for example enforcing bins by the pub near the Sea Life Centre. The service took a pragmatic approach.

- 14.22 **Q: At the drop in event we heard that there were so many commercial bins and communal bins that traders felt stuck between bins and toilets. For example, a business such as an ice cream parlour was not happy to be trapped in this way. What do you think?**

MM explained that the council had moved to large communal bins when asked to by businesses: but were seeking to find a balance.

- 14.23 **Q: Could commercial waste bins be cleaned and emptied more frequently?**

MM explained that the frequency of the collection would be determined by the trade waste agreement. If trade waste was escaping, the local authority had the power to enforce the business to increase the number of bins and frequency of collection.

- 14.24 **Q: When you say that the jet washing is done once a week in winter and twice in summer, is that for the whole seafront?**

MM told the panel that the Colonnades round Madeira Terrace was cleaned at this frequency. The areas under the piers were cleaned twice a week all year round. The Lower Promenade was washed by the street sweep. The jet washing unit was being used twice a week to remove graffiti and the service always responded to a request for jet washing.

- 14.25 **Q: Do you wash the seafront areas in Hove?**

MM said that Cityclean was going to introduce a mechanical sweeper to wash areas such as Hove Lawns, especially near the bins. This had been tried last year. They were replacing a lot of the bins in the area, which it was hoped would make it look smarter.

Brighton & Hove Seafront Association

- 14.26 Then panel next heard from a number of seafront traders who had told the Brighton & Hove Seafront Association they wished to contribute to this meeting.

- 14.27 **Ronnie Smith (RS) from the Bedazzled Gift Shop** told the panel that he had a gifts and souvenir shop opposite the Queen's Hotel. He had been here since the 1980s when the seafront had been derelict, and the council had not seemed very interested in letting out the Arches. They had produced a Seafront Development Initiative (SDI) and invited potential traders to contribute and this took a number of years. He had only taken on his seafront business because of another person telling him, rather than from information produced by BHCC.

- 14.28 Following the SDI, the council could see the revenue potential of the Arches and so did them up and put the premises out to tender. He believed that the owners and the private investors had made the Arches what they are today. The SDI was very good. He felt

that the state of the seafront was not perfect, but has improved a great deal. The popularity of the Arches was shown by the waiting list for these units.

- 14.29 RS had been running his business for nearly 30 years. In that time he had seen a lot of changes and improvements. He felt that the key area which had slipped was in the relationship between the traders and the council. Good communication and trust between the council and the traders was really important and key to a good future.
- 14.30 He liked what the council had done since the SDI, the seafront was a much more vibrant area. Once there had only been cafes on one side of the pier. The other side had been derelict until the Fortune of War had been set up. The area had been gradually rejuvenated and the beach began to fill up. It was because of the businesses there, that the beach is open. Visitors expect there to be fish & chips and drinks when they visit the seafront.
- 14.31 **Mike Palmer from the Lucky Beach Café** then told the panel that his business had been open a year. His background was in running a big restaurant brand. He believed that there was not enough of a pro-business environment in relation to the seafront. Traders did have a good understanding of the seafront and good ideas that very often were not listened to by the council. He thought it was problematic that the traders had found out in the press about the structural issues facing the seafront. The lack of regular information from the council about the future of the seafront structures made it very difficult to run his business and plan ahead. He had also been asked for a 75% uplift in rent after a year of operation.
- 14.32 He felt that the amenity levels were not great on the seafront and while Cityclean operated both bins and toilets, more should be done to encourage residents and visitors to keep the seafront clean.
- 14.33 **Neil Sykes (NS) from the Modern Gallery on Madeira Drive** told the panel that his observations related just to this location. He arrived at Madeira Drive early and left late, but had never seen a jet wash being carried out there. He knew of another café which paid for a private jet wash service.
- 14.34 Events held in this location do have a major impact on trade. For example with Sports Relief, why did the whole of Madeira Drive need to be closed for the whole of a Sunday? Only 200-300 runners had made use of the area and his shop had taken only £2.50 in sales that day. Such an event could have been held anywhere else in the city, but instead it was situated right outside a parade of galleries.
- 14.35 NS felt that traders did not have enough input into decisions being made about seafront events. The council does abide by its legal limits and obligations but there needs to be better liaison. There were good event days for traders, such as the Marathon, which represented a great boost to the city. He had tried to liaise with the council's Events Team but had been unable to gain any input. His business had lost four days trade as a result of the Marathon, as Madeira Drive was closed for all of those days. He wondered why this had been necessary. Traders were not given any information on the detail of events and their possible impact, which he suggested should be a requirement built into the contract with event organisers.

- 14.36 Cllr Mitchell told him that these views had also been passed onto the panel by traders who had attended the drop in event.
- 14.37 NS also raised the issue of lack of change for parking. He was concerned that there was not one sign on Madeira Terrace explaining where one could get change, so traders are bombarded with requests for information and change by those trying to park in the area.
- 14.38 Other parking issues included: that while there were designated bays for coaches to drop off and wait, more needed to be done to control this. There were also coaches which double park near the pier and there needed to be patrols to check this. He also had to regularly contact the police about the problem with speeding on Madeira Drive that seemed to be exempt from the 20mph limit. Madeira Drive still has a 'boy racer' problem, both day and night. The cars and bikes zoomed up and down, so he wondered why there were no speed humps or cameras to address this.
- 14.39 **Q: Haven't obstacles been put in the road to address the speeding issue?**
- NS felt that these obstacles had helped with the Sunday driver, but the boy racers knew where they were. In addition, the obstacles are removed for events and often not put back until a week later.
- 14.40 **Mark Brady from the World Famous Pump Room** told the panel that he had been operating here for 10 years. He arrived early every morning and had to use a mop to sweep water away from the café. He felt that the drainage system had been put in wrongly and he was also concerned about the fabric of the interior of his building. He explained that he had been a Systems Analyst with a background in making 3-5 year plans for businesses. He wanted to know where were the 3-5 year business plans for the seafront? There did not seem to be a maintenance plan. It got to you, because the seafront seemed to be so badly run as a business. He was concerned by the lack of disabled access toilets on the seafront and the Portakabin toilets for general needs. He felt that the council needed to give the seafront higher priority and support its staff so that they could do their jobs appropriately.
- 14.41 **Russell and Tina Haynes from Concorde 2** told the panel that since the Arches round Madeira Drive had been covered by barriers, visitors had to enter the venue on the road often in the pitch black. This venue has over 1m visitors each year who were affected, with over 600 visitors coming to each show (sometimes two shows were held in a night). The venue had made repeated calls to ask if the lighting could be put back on in this area. There had been a 20% reduction in footfall to the venue since the Arches had been closed. He felt that Madeira Terrace had become a desert, a car park. He had suggested to the council that a bus service could be run which stopped at this area.
- 14.42 He felt that the Concorde 2 was in a difficult site and it could become a desolate venue because of the state of the Terraces. It attracted musical acts that would otherwise not come to the city. In figures produced by the PRS it ranked 53 in the venues, compared to 63 for the Brighton Dome. Regular maintenance of the venue was problematic and sometimes it was necessary to close the ladies toilets as a result. He had spent £10,000 improving the backstage area. They ran the lift at a cost of £15,000 a year and were expected to maintain the public toilets. Therefore it cost the venue £75,000 to sit closed. The venue was also concerned because it seemed increasingly difficult to attract bands

to play in Brighton. He felt that the council could do more to see the opportunities that his venue could provide for the city and there should be better communication over major events that can have a negative impact on his business.

14.43 He felt that the council needed to be more flexible and enable his venue to set up large outdoor events. However the council expected them to give them four month's notice, which was not compatible with booking major artists. In contrast his venue had been closed down for five days by the Marathon.

14.44 **Q: if the Black Rock development and the bathing pavilion were built would that help to draw people down to this area?**

He had been told that the bathing pavilion was a high end members only scheme and so wondered if that would significantly increase numbers. He did feel that anything would help, particularly if the Black Rock development was built. From the Pier there was not public transport to get people from the city centre to Madeira Drive.

14.45 The Kemp Town Slopes and Dukes Mound areas needed to be better managed and made more attractive and this would encourage people to walk down to this area and make use of the space. The only other access was provided by the Madeira Lift and one set of steps. Money should have been spent on improving access and putting a wall up. It was frustrating because so much could be done with this area; both quickly and cheaply. He would really like the council to communicate with the businesses, who could help the council generate the money for the seafront.

14.46 **Adam Chinnery (AC) from Brighton Watersports (and chairman of the Seafront Business Association)** told the panel that there were over 300 businesses on the seafront who came from a range of backgrounds and had a range of expertise and ideas that could be harnessed. These businesses were willing to help the council but felt that the relationship and communications needed to be improved.

14.47 **Q: Do you think the nervousness about large outdoor events is as a result of the Fat Boy Slim concert?**

14.48 AC reassured the panel that businesses were very concerned about lease security.

14.49 Cllr Mitchell had heard at the drop-in event that a number of owners wanted to invest in their businesses but were too nervous to at present because they needed to understand their long-term future options. Surveys had been carried out showing varying conditions of the built infrastructure. The panel were looking at the areas of most concern to see what could be done to attract funding for these properties. Currently the majority of funding was coming from the Local Transport Plan (LTP), but this meant not being able to fund other highway projects. Unfortunately the council did not easily have access to other funds and the concern was that Madeira Terrace was not income generating.

14.50 According to Russell Haynes from the Concorde 2, Madeira Drive seemed to be mainly the place to hold events like the one for 150 Jaguar car owners to look at each others cars. He thought it could be a place to hold significant musical events. If the area was to be shut down for a number of days when events are held, why not choose events which

benefit all the city? For example if an outdoors concert was held which attracted 22,000 visitors, imagine the income generated for the city including hotel stays.

- 14.51 Cllr Davey explained that altering some of the events held on the Terraces would be very difficult, for example the Speed Trials. He could see that benefit gigs, such as for Madeira Terraces, could be held in the area that could create new sources of income. These Terraces were an amazing site and could be used to hold cyclical events to raise funds for this location.
- 14.52 AC told the panel that the Seafront Business Association had access to funding that the council may not be eligible for. They had approached the Heritage Lottery Fund and had been met with some interest. The 300 plus businesses could help with any bids for funding.
- 14.53 KB advised the panel to check the website to find out under what category Hastings had been awarded the HLF. There were different categories for which one could gain major scheme funding, including 'restoration' 'listed' and 'original sub-structure project'.
- 14.54 AC suggested that any potential HLF funding here could contain an educational element or using art to create security or lighting for the Terrace. It could be used to encourage a vibrant night zone and increase the length of the season for the seafront. Presently it felt that the council were great at communicating about rent increases but traders had to find out about maintenance issues in the press.
- 14.55 RS would like to see a more welcoming service provided to them.

15 A.O.B

15.1 Cllr Mitchell thanked all those who came and spoke to the panel and the meeting closed at 4.40pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of