

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CULTURE, TOURISM & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 30 SEPTEMBER 2010

CULTURE, TOURISM & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 30 SEPTEMBER 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Councillors Kennedy (Chair); Drake (Deputy Chairman), Davis, Harmer-Strange, Marsh, Randall, Theobald and Turton

20 LEGIBILITY STRATEGY

Mr Jim Mayor, Project Manager, gave a presentation about the Streetscape Design Guidelines which had been approved in July by the Environment CMM. The purpose was to ensure a consistent and high quality approach to street furniture and materials. It was one of the key documents that would support delivery of the Public Realm Strategy - alongside the Public Space Public Life Study (vision), Public Space Public Life Delivery Document, the Materials Database (for ensuring consistent reinstatement of materials) and the Urban Characterisation Study. The overall aim of the Public Realm work was to ensure that all work in the city was coordinated and sought to improve things for all residents – historically the focus has simply been on accommodating traffic.

The Guidelines had been developed with people across the organisation and benefited from the input of critical friends such as Graham Smith and CABE. Living Streets would be using the document as a good practice benchmark in their autumn campaign. The document would be published in editions to provide the opportunity to update it. Guidance was offered on considering, specifying, siting and installing street furniture and materials, the latter included the need to improve quality of workmanship. Another objective was ensuring the needs of all users were properly balanced in street design. Brighton Station was used as an example of a poorly balanced space: for example 74% of the station's users arrive on foot but only 23% of space was allocated to pedestrians, whilst 4% of users arrive by taxis which were allocated 27% of the space.

Research had found that if you limit the guidance offered to drivers, this resulted in increased care and reduced the number of accidents. An example was New Road, where drivers drove slowly and there had been no accidents. An example of pointless street clutter was white centre lines on roads: introduced in the 1920s to remind early drivers which side of the road to drive on yet still added automatically on most roads today, even though research showed that they encourage drivers to drive faster and more closely together

The Cabinet Member for the Environment had emphasised that the benefits of these guidelines included; attracting more people into the city, improving safety and sustainability and reducing the amount of money spent unnecessarily. The Committee heard that the guidelines would be turned into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and then incorporated into the Core Strategy after August 2011.

When asked if these guidelines took enough account of the needs of those with disabilities, Mr Mayor confirmed that they had incorporated the suggestions of Jon Hastie at the Brighton & Hove Federation of Disabled People, but that a general theme of the Streetscape Design Guidelines was that compliance with guidance such as DDA regulations should not be seen as the sole quality benchmark of a scheme. In many instances a scheme would need to surpass minimum DDA recommendations to be of value to users. For example, the required width between items of street furniture would depend on aspects of wider street context, such as pedestrian volume – not just what the DDA cites as the minimal acceptable width to allow wheelchair access.

Although wide consultation had taken place about New Road, they had found it hard to engage with the disabled community. The Council was working with the Federation to make sure that the needs of people with disabilities were better represented in the future, including a workshop next week. It was not always possible to design spaces that work absolutely perfectly for everyone, as everyone had slightly different needs. Mr Mayor promised to look at the work being done on Lifetime Neighbourhoods suggested by a member of CTEOSC.

A question was asked about how these guidelines would be policed. Mr Mayor said that whilst the Public Space Public Life study recommended that 2 dedicated Public Realm posts were needed, one to lead realisation, and the other to enforce the standards of the Public Realm vision, the exact implementation of this would be incorporated into the current restructuring.

The Chair suggested that Councillor Marsh to send a letter to the Environment CMM which outlined her concerns about bus shelters. It was agreed that an extract of the minutes of this meeting would be sent to the Leader of the Council, alongside a letter from the Chair and the Deputy, to welcome these guidelines and urge this issue to be included as part of the restructuring process.

RESOLVED: That the Chair of the Committee writes to the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council and forwards a copy of the minutes from this meeting.