

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021

A MEETING of the REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the , DONCASTER on TUESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Duncan Anderson

Councillors Iris Beech, Steve Cox, Sue Farmer, John Mounsey and Gary Stapleton

Invitee: -

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Phil Cole – Cabinet Member for Finance & Trading Services

Councillor Jane Kidd – Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Debbie Hogg – Director of Corporate Resources

Dan Swaine – Director of Economy & Environment

Hayden Ferriby – Director of Market Asset Management

Chris Dungworth - Head of Service, Business Doncaster

Andrew McMahon – Development Officer, Business Doncaster

Drew Oxley – Head of Trading Services

Mark Whitehouse - Unite Union Representative

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Majid Khan, David Nevett and Sophie Liu

		<u>ACTION</u>
9	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items on the agenda.	
10	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations made.	
11	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13TH OCTOBER 2021</u>	

	That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2021, be agreed as a correct record.	
12	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS - [A PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING 20 MINUTES FOR STATEMENTS FROM UP TO 5 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEES REMIT, PROPOSING ACTION(S) WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED OR CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMITTEES WORK PROGRAMME].</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
13	<u>UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF MANAGEMENT OF DONCASTER MARKETS</u>	
	<p>The Panel received a report that provided an update on the progress and delivery of Management of Doncaster Markets, this included KPI's, contractual matters and notable events.</p> <p>In addition to support the report, an overview was provided by Drew Oxley, Head of Trading Services and Hayden Ferriby, Director of Market Asset Management. The areas highlighted to the panel were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the markets traded safely throughout Covid.</li> <li>• Occupancy trends and the changing occupancy throughout the pandemic, highlighting successful expansions for some traders.</li> <li>• Footfall and footfall trends since 2018 including throughout Covid.</li> <li>• Turnover for the market traders over the last few years.</li> <li>• Marketing – the types of marketing used eg. Social media in partnership with traders, and the expansion of the marketing team.</li> <li>• New projects for the market including some new events planned for the future.</li> <li>• Maintenance and operations of Doncaster market – including a staffing restructure across the market estate.</li> <li>• New building works and the upgrading and maintenance of all the existing sites including Mexborough markets and plans for the future.</li> <li>• Development of new proposals to transform under-utilised areas of the market, and how to make best use of those spaces.</li> </ul> <p>Councillors thanked Officers for the presentation and then explored the following topics in more detail;</p> <p><u>Events</u> – Members were keen to understand the events that MAM had arranged at the markets and it was explained there had was an Record</p>	

Fair that took place regularly throughout the year, Makers Markets and smaller pop-up events around people starting their own business, and Asian markets. It was reported that all events were well attended and that that the Makers Market and a Christmas Market were planned for 2022.

Communications – The Panel were informed that there was a messaging system used between MAM and stall-holders where traders could communicate as individuals or a group, and they could use this to direct message any of the Markets Senior Management Team. In regards to advertising events, social media was the preferred method of communication, with newspapers and printed material used occasionally.

Footfall – It was explained that to help encourage a higher footfall, scheduled events at the market would themselves help to bring more people into the market estate. Reference was also made to the new concept as part of the Wool Market and new signage as described in the presentation. It was hoped that by encouraging more people to attend events this would also in turn strengthen links with the wider community, so that more people from the borough see the different businesses on offer.

It was explained how the management and onsite team have established wider links by engaging with community groups or local businesses who use the space for promotional work or to make bookings for events in the markets.

Leisure Zone – With regards to a question about the costs for creating the leisure zone, it was noted that it had been procured by MAM, and was being paid for by Doncaster Council. It was clarified that these financial transactions adhered to Doncaster Council procedure rules and procurement process. Members were informed that an ODR with a breakdown of costs had been published.

In terms of the revenue, it was clarified that the income generated by the leisure zone was received by MAM to finance the ongoing running costs of the market and concessions (although the assets themselves belonged to the authority). It was explained that once the markets begin to make a profit, then Doncaster Council would share those profits with MAM.

Members heard that consultation had taken place on changing the site within the market from retail to leisure. It was clarified that the consultation had taken the form of engagement with traders to discuss the new leisure zone concept. It was added how work was being undertaken to identify trends within the market and hospitality industries to help agree the best route for Doncaster's wool market.

It was confirmed that there would be a mix of full and part-time

employment required for the running of the leisure zone.

Occupancy – In response to a query about the occupancy levels of stalls within the market, Members noted that there were more stalls occupied now than when MAM first took over the running of the markets.

Statistics/data – It was explained that town centre footfall information was sourced and measured by a national camera system called Springboard and not by MAM themselves.

It was confirmed for Members that the parameters for the KPI's in the report provided, was the amount of units in the market that were taken up and the footfall figures are the figures provided by Springboard, and recorded and graphed every month.

Market Management – In response to a question, it was confirmed that MAM had been selected further to the Council undertaking a complete procurement a tendering process which had gone out to the whole market, and resulted in three companies reaching the final presentation stage.

Rates of Pay - The Panel noted that MAM had signed up to the Real Living Wage Foundation and therefore employees pay was above both the national recommended living and minimum wage.

Collaborative Working – It was explained that the better the market provision within a town, the higher the performance of the town centre could be and in order to achieve this Doncaster Council had worked collaboratively with MAM to increase the competitive edge over other towns. The markets were seen as a place of creation to encourage locals and tourists to attend, and to create an atmosphere of a safe zone for all to enjoy.

Accessibility – Members noted that in terms of how accessible the markets were, there had been a number of negative comments made on social media concerning buses and bus routes. It was explained that there was a Bus Service Improvement Plan that could involve a possible move to an enhanced partnership. It was felt that whilst this brought its own challenges, there was good ongoing dialogue about future bus service provision and the route network.

It was stressed by Members that in order for the markets to be successful it required improved accessibility and improved public transport system.

The Panel acknowledged that the opening times of the stalls at the Markets were down to the traders themselves, and whilst they were encouraged where possible to open later, it was understood that their opening times could be governed by the opening times of wholesalers.

	<p><u>Development of the Corn Exchange</u> – It was confirmed that in relation to the Levelling Up Fund bid, MAM had worked with the authority to put forward the best case for the development, which had been awarded. Members heard how the part of the Corn Exchange that was to be developed was currently unused and would be expanded upon and diversified, hopefully supporting the recovery of the town centre recovery post pandemic.</p> <p><u>Trading Republic</u> – A Member of the Panel queried whether a company called Trading Republic Ltd was part of MAM and would that company would be involved in running a section of the market. Members were informed that Trading Republic Ltd were separate company to MAM, with no plans to use it in Doncaster.</p> <p><u>Contract Modification</u> – It was noted there was a modification made part way through the contractual period with MAM as there was recognition by the Council that due to the challenging economic position arising from the Covid crisis, further investment was required in order to support the many small businesses through the pandemic, and help them to move forward.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> that the report be noted.</p>	
14	<u>TOWN CENTRE ECONOMY</u>	
	<p>The Director of Economy and Environment, Dan Swaine introduced the report and highlighted that information presented at the meeting was a comparison in terms of town centre activity between pre-Covid and the current year, with data on footfall, night time economy, public spend and retail voids.</p> <p>The Development Officer for Business Doncaster, Andrew McMahon responded to questions raised during the previous item (Doncaster Markets) on the location of the cameras in the town centre, noted by Members as being in St Sepulchre Gate, High Street, Baxtergate, and on the corner of High Fisher Gate.</p> <p>Areas that were then highlighted to Members included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decline of retail in Doncaster town centre was down to numerous factors that were beyond the authorities control including a nationally outdated business rates system.</li> <li>• High streets would have to adapt to compete with the online offer, and its three main challenges were; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public perception – that Doncaster’s town centre had image could be improved and Members examples were provided of negative comments made about the town centre through social media.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- Covid – that there was a need to create the town centre as a safe destination, make best of what Doncaster has, and be willing to consider new options.
- Changing demand – adapt the Doncaster offer to meet changing consumer habits, acknowledge the threat of online shopping, work with businesses to relocate where needed and embrace the need to change.

The Panel thanked Officers for the presentation then explored the following areas in more detail;

Attracting New Business – It was explained to Members that Business Doncaster took a proactive approach and worked nationally to try and encourage new businesses in both the retail and leisure industries to trade in Doncaster and fill voids.

Reopening of Civic Office – Members recognised that the Civic Offices being opened would help to increase the footfall in the town centre, however, it was noted that that was a corporate decision taking into account national public health guidance.

Homelessness – In regards to rough sleepers in Doncaster, it was advised that they were vulnerable people who required varying levels of support, and that some engaged with the appropriate support systems and some choose not to. It was recognised that it could be difficult to transition rough sleepers with more complex needs back into mainstream housing whilst they still required support from various organisations.

Other Doncaster Town Centres – Members were reminded that the authority does focus on other town centres across the borough and that last year there had been a town centre recovery plan in Mexborough that had now been extended to Thorne. The Panel were pleased that there were plans to broaden this to other towns even further next year.

Transport - It was advised that officer led groups were looking at a regenerative and revised Town Centre Masterplan taking into consideration buses and bus routes, reducing the number of cars and also car parks and the land they utilised. Members stressed that the transport system around the area was not fit for purpose and that the infrastructure needed to be improved as a priority, however it was recognised that the routes and quality of buses provided were at the operators discretion.

Office Space – The Panel was reminded that in previous years Doncaster had a lack of office space and the area was unable to attract big companies to use offices in the town centre. It was explained that due to Covid-19 pandemic, working practices have changed considerably, and there was now an opportunity for Doncaster to build offices fit for the future to reflect need.

	<p><u>Cleaning</u> – In regards to cleaning the town centre, Members were told that there were schedules in place to help keep the area clean, and it was noted that Covid had increased the amount of waste. There was a recognition that education may be key to changing people’s behaviour regarding dropping litter.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> that the report be noted.</p>	
15	<p><b><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCILS FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></b></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny work plan and highlighted a meeting due to take place in March about Employment Opportunities post-Covid and an update on local plan.</p> <p>In terms of the Council’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions there was nothing to highlight to the panel.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> that the report be noted</p>	