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**Night-Time Economy Scrutiny Review Task Group** 10 December 2013

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & ICT

**Night-Time Economy Scrutiny Review (Retail & Transport) - Interim Report**

**Summary**

1. This report presents updated information on the work completed to date and asks the Task Group to agree what additional information is now required to progress the review.

**Background to Review**

2. At present at the end of every working day thousands of people simultaneously make the journey home from York city centre, putting pressure on the transport infrastructure. This often leaves a lull of activity in the centre until the Night-Time Economy picks up, resulting in a disconnect between day and night.
3. As a consequence the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) expressed interest in developing a theme around the Night-Time Economy worthy of 'corporate review' and at their meeting on 24 June 2013 received a briefing paper which suggested a number of possible areas for review associated with the Night-Time Economy (NTE) which would support the Council's current key priorities in its Council Plan 2011-2015.
4. The Committee agreed to proceed with the theme and requested each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees identify a suitable review remit in line with their individual terms of reference.
5. In July 2013 the Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECDOSC) agreed to proceed with their NTE review and a Task Group comprising Councillors Hyman (Chair), Semlyen, D'Agorne and Barnes was set up to carry out the review on the Committee's behalf.

6. The Task Group met for the first time in August 2013 to identify a suitable review remit and review workplan – see Annex A.
7. At the full meeting of ECDOSC on 24 September 2013 Councillor Semlyen relinquished her position on the Task Group, and the full Committee agreed the following review aim as proposed by the Task Group:

‘To improve diverse commercial opportunities after 5pm in, and evening transport to and from, York City Centre.’
8. The Task Group met again on 15 October 2013 and agreed the following review objectives:
  - i) Identify barriers to evening retail opening hours by gathering the views of residents and retailers;
  - ii) Investigate solutions to barriers for extended retail opening hours in York
  - iii) Investigate options for improved public transport to support York’s night-time economy
  - iv) Identify suggestions for improvements.

### **Consultation**

9. To support the Night-Time Economy Corporate theme it was agreed that an online survey “Yorkafter5” be undertaken. This ran between 14 October 2013 and 29 November 2013. The survey included questions in support of all the review except the health related review for which separate surveys were carried out. Specifically in support of this review, the survey included a number of questions related to retail opportunities in the city centre and transport preferences. The findings from the survey will be tabled at this meeting.
10. In addition, in support of all the NTE reviews a number of focus group meetings have been held to gather residents’ views.
11. In support of this specific NTE review the Task Group also agreed to meet with all the following relevant organisations – see paragraph 40 below.

## **Background to the Issues**

12. Retailers with later closing times can help to entice town centre workers to stay in the centre a little longer, cutting congestion at peak times, and increasing custom for the retail and service sectors.
13. A study of retail trading hours recently undertaken by the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) stated that sales between 5pm and 8pm are typically 50% more than those between 9am and 11am pointing towards the possibility of retailers opening later and closing later to capture extra spend. The ATCM estimate that revising trading hours to open later and close later will increase sales by 10 - 12%.
14. The ATCM also promotes initiatives such as Alive after Five to create an early evening vibrancy with a good and diverse range of early evening activities to cover the “dead period” between 5pm and 8pm. The aim is to bring visitors to city centres as well as encourage city centre workers to stay after work.
15. Should a need for change be identified it may well be that this would not necessarily result in longer working hours for retail staff – just working hours that are more compatible to the needs of the modern consumer.
16. In addition, getting people safely into the city and home again after an evening out is a prime requirement in improving the night-time economy. It is therefore acknowledged that there is a need in York to further develop a safe, affordable and regular late night transport system to serve the city centre as well as providing secure late night car parks.

## **Initial information gathered**

17. The Task Group considered the findings from the last council review into the night-time economy “York After Dark” which was presented to the former Economic Development Partnership Board in 2007 – see:  
<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=123&MId=3041&Ver=4>
18. At that time the Board supported in principle the development of a vibrant, diverse and inclusive evening economy in York and called for a further report to be presented on a costed action plan to support the development of the evening economy in the city centre.

However, the Board ceased to exist in 2008 and therefore never received the requested action plan.

19. To help their considerations the Task Group requested information on cities similar to York to establish a benchmark for the night-time economy and to look at best practice elsewhere.
20. Colchester: Extending retail opportunities was an ambition they shared but had not yet achieved. There was a need to achieve a “critical mass” of shops opening later but in a recession businesses were reluctant to risk more costs by having staff until 8pm. Some major retailers had tried to galvanise the rest of the centre by having late night shopping on Wednesdays but with little success.
21. Lincoln: Has managed to establish a modest Thursday night retail offer in the city centre but only until 7pm, backed mainly by the top dozen retailers. The numbers of shoppers for this was low but just about enough to make the offer viable and sustainable.
22. Sheffield: Some shops and traders stay open longer, to some degree, with John Lewis and Debenhams opening until 9pm on Wednesday. There has been some success in the city where a cluster of independent shops in The Forum, a smaller shopping hub, stay open until 9pm.
23. Bath: Thursday is the late night shopping day, although it tends only to be the major high street stores which open late every Thursday throughout the year, otherwise most shops open late each Thursday in the run-up to Christmas.
24. Chester: Most shops in the city centre close around 5.30pm although there is late-night shopping in the run up to Christmas.
25. Norwich: The Castle Mall, a complex of 70 shops in the city centre, is open until 5.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; 8pm on Thursday and 6pm on Saturday while the Chapelfield Shopping Centre, another central location housing 90 shops, cafes and restaurants, is open until 6pm weekdays except Thursday when it is open until 8pm.
26. Oxford: The Westgate Centre comprises 40 outlets in the city centre and closed at 5.30pm with a late night until 8pm on Thursday. The Clarendon Centre, again in the city, opens until 6pm and 7pm on Thursday.

27. York: A sample survey (Annex B) was taken of the closing times of business premises in some of the main shopping streets in York city centre on Friday 1 November 2013. The businesses surveyed included 83 businesses that advertise opening and closing times at the front of the shop. A significant proportion of shops gave no indication of opening or closing times.

## **Analysis**

28. The Task Group may want to publicise the findings of the ATCM retail study which notes a significant increase in sale in the early evening compared to mornings - see paragraph 13.
29. In regard to the ATCM promotion 'Alive after Five' detailed at paragraph 14, whilst this does not fall within the specific remit of this review it should be noted that many cities acknowledged the biggest boost to the night-time economy is when special events are held. For example, Hull's Freedom Festival attracted 75,000 people for three days of live music, dance, theatre, comedy, street entertainment, eating, drinking and markets.
30. The brief study of the other cities (paragraphs 20-26) seems to indicate that few have been able to demonstrate any real success in extending retail opening hours in their city centres at night. However some success in extending retail opening hours has been achieved in areas where there are clusters of shops in city centres.
31. In comparison to elsewhere the predominant retail closing time in York's city centre appears to be 5.30pm or 6pm. The sample survey shows that of the 83 businesses, 37 close at 5.30pm and 33 close at 6pm or later. In addition 12 businesses close at 5.30pm but with at least one late night of 6pm or later. Only one business was found to close at 5pm.
32. In comparison, Monks Cross advertises its opening hours from 9.30am until 8pm (with the exception of supermarkets); the Designer Outlet from 10am until 6pm with late-night opening until 8pm on Thursdays while stores at Clifton Moor (with the exception of supermarkets) generally close at either 6pm or 8pm.

## **Further Information Gathered**

33. In light of the evidence from the survey of other cities which showed that opportunities for businesses to extend their opening hours was most easily achieved where there are clusters of shops, the Task Group agreed it would be useful to identify an area of the city centre containing a cluster of retailers where this approach might be further investigated.
34. With this in mind, the Chair of the Task Group met with the manager of the Coppergate Centre on 15 November 2013. As well as being the home of the Jorvik Centre, Coppergate is a shopping hub featuring major high street stores including Top Shop, Boots, Fenwicks, Body Shop, and Clarks as well as smaller shops and cafes and is soon to be the site of a Primark store in the premises currently operated by Marks and Spencer.
35. The Chair was encouraged by the enthusiasm and positivity of the centre manager towards extending retail opening hours. The manager confirmed this is something that has already been discussed with tenants including the managers of Fenwicks and Top Shop.
36. It was agreed that a further meeting be arranged with the centre manager and some of the store managers – this is likely to take place early December 2013 and feedback from the meeting will be included in a future report to this Task Group.

## **Further Analysis**

37. In view of the information above the Task Group should note that York appears to be doing as well as, if not better than, similar cities with regard to extending retail opening hours after 5pm. However, to further develop the night-time economy, the Task Group may wish to consider how the Council may better encourage retailers to collaborate and co-operate in order to:
  - a) Optimise their opening hours
  - b) Capture maximum spend (see paragraph 13)
  - c) Benefit from working as a shopping hub e.g. like Coppergate
38. Evidence from the Chair's meeting with manager of the Coppergate Centre shows that one perceived barrier to extending retail opening hours in Coppergate is that Piccadilly Car Park closes at 6.30pm.

The committee may wish to investigate whether the opening hours of all the council's city centre car parks could be extended (i.e. those that currently close before 8pm). Also, what would be the positive and negative effects of offering free car parking after 5pm on late night shopping evenings.

39. In light of the analysis above and in agreeing that the transition from day to evening needs to become a more profitable period for the city centre, the following have been invited to attend this meeting to discuss the findings to date (including the survey results), and to identify ways of developing the evening retail offer and any other potential barriers:

- Representatives of York Retail Forum
- The Federation of Small businesses
- City Team York
- Representatives of Bus Companies
- Taxi and private hire federations

40. The findings from this meeting will be fed into a future report to this Task Group.

### **Options**

41. Having taken account of the information provided above and provided by the attendees at the meeting, the Task Group are asked to consider the review workplan and agree any necessary changes in order to further progress the work on this review.

### **Council Plan**

42. The review would contribute actively to the following priorities identified by the Council in its Plan for 2011-15:

- Create jobs and grow the economy;
- Build strong communities;
- Get York Moving

### **Implications**

43. There are no known implications associated with the report. However, implications may arise as the review progresses and these will be addressed accordingly.

## Risk Management

44. There are no risks associated with this report. Any risks arising from the recommendations in the Final Draft Report will be identified and addressed accordingly.

## Recommendations

45. Having considered the information provided within this report, Members are recommended to:
- i. Note the survey results
  - ii. Gather the views of the attendees at the meeting
  - iii. Agree what additional information is required to progress the work on the review.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and the committee's annual workplan.

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**Report Approved** ☒ **Date** 2 Dec 2013

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all* **All** ☒

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### Annexes:

**Annex A** – Review Workplan

**Annex B** – Sample Survey of city centre closing times

### Report Abbreviations:

**ATCM** - Association of Town Centre Managers

**CSMC** - Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee

**ECDOSC** - Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**NTE** - Night-Time Economy