

Meeting	Night time Economy (Retail and Transport) Scrutiny Review Task Group
Date	10 December 2013
Present	Councillor Barnes, D'Agorne and Hyman (Chair)

### **1. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have had in respect of the business on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

### **2. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

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

Members of the Task Group considered an Interim Report for the Review. This report contained information and analysis of the night- time economy asked Members what additional information would be required to progress the review.

Representatives from the Retail Sector and Transport Sector in York attended the meeting, in order to share their views on what could be done to improve the city's night-time economy.

Data from the Yorkafter5 survey was shared with attendees at the meeting and formed part of the basis for discussion.

The meeting was told that the consultation had been highly successful and the responses showed that there was willingness for people to stay in or visit the city centre after 5 pm.

Some Members concluded that to increase the numbers of those using the city between 5pm-8pm, an approach was needed to make sure that those who worked within the city centre remained in the centre rather than going home.

Discussion took place around retail issues in the Night Time Economy, including why Late Night Shopping had not been as successful over the past few years and the barriers for this. These barriers included;

- That perhaps the day set aside for Late Night Shopping, Thursday, was not suitable.
- Car Parking Charges. Free Parking had been offered recently but late promotion had hampered the public knowledge of this.
- Pedestrianisation in the city centre streets ended at 5 pm, as a result, the streets did not look attractive.
- There is a diverse range of shops in the city centre, but many have different closing times, so there was a need for co-ordination on this to make late night shopping more attractive.
- That retailers had requested for the Park and Ride to be open on Boxing Day, but the leaflet that informed residents of Boxing Day services had incorrect times on it.
- That in some cases, such as at Monks Cross, where there had been extended trading hours, it had taken a long time for businesses to turn a profit.
- That more people were staying at home and not coming into the city centre for entertainment purposes.

General conclusions that were drawn from the discussion were that Late Night Shopping had not been as successful as hoped due to a clear lack of promotion, and a definite start date for promotion needed to be set so that there could be a longer time to attract customers. Some Members suggested that the run up to the Tour de France in summer 2014 could be a good time to start promotion, as during the summer months light evenings might encourage more people to stay within the city centre for longer.

In response to a question about how the Internet had affected business within the city centre, one retailer stated that they could not compete on price with online retailers, but they could offer a 'positive' experience.

Discussion took place in regards to issues around Transport and what improvements could be made in this area to help the Night Time Economy. Representatives from Taxi and Private Hire companies attended the meeting, and they shared their thoughts and observations with the Committee. These included;

- That they were at their busiest in the hours between 5 pm- 8 pm, so they would need to employ more drivers to support proposed improvements to the Night Time Economy.
- That traffic was not particularly detrimental to their trade, as they tended to take more people out of the city centre at this time than bringing them in.
- Rising bollards on some streets in the city centre had been problematic for access to pick customers up.

Further barriers that had been encountered had been;

- The remodelling of the pick up area for taxis at York Railway Station.
- That Private Hire cars could not use official ranks.

Officers informed the Task Group that the Council could not change the location of the taxi rank at the railway station. This was because it was under the responsibility of the Railway Operator, who ran York Railway Station. It was also noted that the station management franchise was being renegotiated which could lead to change.

Representatives from bus companies in York then shared their thoughts with the Task Group. They stated that;

- There was a need for more one-off large events to take place in the city centre to increase passenger numbers on the buses.
- That Late Night Shopping was risky for buses as they could not predict demand clearly enough. They could include advertisements for retailers on their buses, but they were not kept informed about what hours retailers were open or if they were taking part in Late Night Shopping evenings.

Further discussion took place around the perception and reliability of public transport in the city.

It was noted that there tended to be a negative amongst some people of using public transport during the evening. This was not helped by cuts in bus services on the periphery on the city. However, some Members felt that cuts to rural bus services could increase demand for and strengthen the Park and Ride service. They pointed to the fact that there had been increased usage during the Illuminate York event, when late night buses had been put on.

Officers informed Members that the majority of evening buses were commercially run but the Council did subsidise some services. Therefore these subsidies would be under the same pressures as any other service funded through the Council Budget.

Further discussion took place on a suggestion highlighted in the report to identify a cluster of shops in the city where extended opening hours could be trialled. The Scrutiny Officer explained that evidence from other cities indicated success in extending retail opening hours had been achieved in smaller shopping hubs.

Some retailers disagreed and felt that extended opening hour trials needed to operate firstly on a stepped approach and then rolled out city wide.

Resolved: That the report and survey results be noted.

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

Councillor K Hyman, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.30 pm].