

A-Boards Task Group Scrutiny Review

Notes from public consultation event held at West Offices on 5 February 2014

Issues raised:

- Clarification was sought as to why a full ban on A-Boards was not being considered. An explanation was given as the decision made by the Executive regarding this matter.
- It was noted that currently A-Boards tended to be tolerated unless a complaint was lodged. This resulted in problems if complaints were made against one business and not others as there was a perception of unfairness.
- The city centre shouldn't be sterile but people needed to be able to move around.
- There shouldn't have to be a complaint before action was taken – the DDA required anticipatory action to be taken.
- There were places where A-Boards could be placed safely without causing an obstruction – eg against the walls of shops.
- Need to avoid a slalom effect.
- They could be required to be removed during footstreets
- The problems in enforcing guidance were noted.
- What evidence was in place from business that A-Boards were essential? Businesses were asked if they could provide evidence (eg asking their customers).
- Businesses stated that they needed the flexibility provided by A-boards. Listed buildings and planning regulations meant that some premises could not use lights, signage etc.
- Issues experienced at particularly busy times eg St Nicholas Fayre.
- Often the A-boards were not advertising particular offers or events or were advertising businesses that already had queues.
- Problems caused for parents with buggies
- Need to exercise discretion and not go overboard.
- Noted that there was other street clutter – not just A-boards
- Could signs be attached to railings or walls instead?
- If one business uses an A-board others feel they must also do so.
- Guide dog owners in York had been asked about their views. They said the problems were not as bad in the outer parts of the city as there was more space on the pavement. A real issue in the city

centre. In some parts they had to step on the road – dangers of traffic.

- Does the council have the capacity to enforce a policy?
- Other towns, eg Hull, have banned A-boards.
- Needs to be some sort of guidance so can identify who is in contravention.
- Some businesses would welcome guidelines.
- Some businesses are responsible in their use of A-boards eg remove them at night, do not cause an obstruction.
- Some businesses would be prepared to pay for a licence.
- Attention was drawn to the very difficult economic climate over the last three years. The situation was desperate for retailers. Shops were closing in the city centre. A-boards have a significant impact.
- The difficulties in gaining planning permission for other forms of signage (and the costs involved) were noted. A-boards were a cheap and effective alternative.
- Officers are being placed in a very difficult situation in trying to tackle complaints about A-boards – there is no guidance for them to apply.
- Attention was drawn to the requirements of the Highways Act.
- Who would be responsible if an accident occurred and the LA had put a policy in place?
- It was not only independent retailers who used A-boards. National companies were also using them.
- Some A-boards were sited some distance from the business involved.
- Lots of blind and partially sighted people use the building line for guidance although some prefer to use the kerb. Guide dogs tend to go down the middle of a path.
- If the A-boards are bigger they are easier to see.
- It was agreed that a blindfold walk would take place to raise awareness of the problems.
- A holistic approach needed to be taken to address this issue eg highways and planning departments working together.
- Some concerns were raised as to whether the suggested alternatives to A-boards were a suitable alternative. Independent traders were already working together.
- Other options could be considered eg advertising on bikes etc.
- A-boards are cheap to produce, mobile, easy to update and effective advertising.

- Clarification was sought as to whether all members of the public had been invited to attend the group, including representatives from older people's groups.

Details were given of the process for the review and the opportunities for further input from the public.