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## Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

15<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Report of the Director of City Strategy

### **PETITION FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES REQUESTING THE PEDESTRIANISATION OF FOSSGATE**

#### **Summary**

1. This report advises the Executive Members of the receipt of a petition from residents and businesses of Fossgate requesting that the street be pedestrianised. The report recommends feasibility work be undertaken to investigate whether such a scheme is possible and the potential implications should it be introduced.

#### **Background**

2. The 38 page petition was passed to the meeting of the full council on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2006 by Councillor Janet Looker and contained 785 signatures.
3. The wording of the petition is as follows;  
“This is a petition once gain(sic) to have Fossgate pedestrianised and traffic free from 11.00am to 10/11.00pm in order to create a more continental and safer shopping environment with removable bollards for emergency access.” A copy of the front sheet of the petition is included as Annex A.
4. A similar petition was submitted to the council by the licensee of the Blue Bell Public House towards the end of 2003 and was reported to the Planning & Transport (City Centre) Sub-Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The recommendations made in that report were that Members should note the receipt of the petition and approve the inclusion of Fossgate in any future consultation on the expansion of the city centre footstreets, also that the lead petitioner be informed of this decision.
5. In the preparation of the council’s latest Local Transport Plan, which was submitted to the Department for Transport in March 2006, one of the schemes which was suggested in the five year capital programme was to investigate whether the Footstreets pedestrian priority zone could be further expanded. The two streets specifically mentioned as having the potential to be included in this were Fossgate and the, currently, non-pedestrianised section of Goodramgate.

6. An artist's impression of how a pedestrianised Fossgate could look has also been provided by the petitioner, this is shown in Annex B.

## **Consultation**

7. A consultation exercise was undertaken with the businesses and residents of Fossgate as part of the 2003 report but had a poor response rate with only 44 of the 87 questionnaires being returned. Of these responses only 39% were in favour of some form of pedestrianisation.
8. The Guildhall Ward Members have been consulted on the proposal, their comments were as follows:
9. Cllr. Watson – “Personally I would support it but not to the hours wanted, there are businesses that sell large items of goods , i.e. McDonalds so people must be able to collect them, so I would prefer the hours to be in line with rest of the city.  
Also there was muted by the Bluebell that the idea was for some of the restaurants to go along with their idea to use the street for extra tables to allow outside eating and drinking, I think that is why you have these hours quoted, besides the fact that emergency vehicles wouldn't be able to get down Fossgate if this happened there are people who live down the street and I feel this would cause disturbance if it went on after 4pm.”
10. Cllr. Looker – “I think Fossgate cries out for pedestrianisation, down to and including Foss Bridge; it would be very easy for most traffic to divert down Piccadilly and then cut through to join Walmgate below the bridge. I would hope your review (which is probably quite overdue, not having been really looked at much since the whole thing was first done) might look at some extension of hours. I can appreciate that Fossgate which is now increasingly attracting eating places might want to be closed much longer than normal pedestrian hours. But I think, on the basis that we are having a review, I would probably settle for just going in for the standard pedestrian hours, and see how it works out first (might definitely need a bollard at the top to stop people ignoring it like there is at the top of High Petergate otherwise folk will just continue going down, as they do now when it is meant to be access only).”

## **Options**

11. There are only two options available to members:
  - to investigate the feasibility of the scheme and any implications it may have on the city centre, also the likely costs of converting the road and any infrastructure alterations needed, or;
  - to reject the proposal.

## **Analysis**

12. If feasibility work were commissioned this would enable the scheme to be properly investigated both in terms of the impact on businesses and residents, the hours of operation and the administration of the road closure points and would enable reasonable estimates of the scheme costs to be calculated.

These costs would then feed into the scheme prioritisation process to enable it to properly assessed against other proposed pedestrian schemes.

13. Further consultation with the businesses and residents needs to be done as part of the feasibility work to properly gauge their opinion especially as the response was low to the last consultation and some of the residences and businesses may have changed hands in the meantime.
14. Road safety does not appear to be much of an issue on Fossgate currently, most probably due to the narrowness of the road restricting traffic speeds. There has only been one pedestrian casualty recorded since 2000 which resulted in slight injuries.
15. If the proposal were to be rejected then this could be a missed opportunity to revitalise a section of the city centre which is often overlooked by shoppers and tourists. It may also reduce the attractiveness for businesses to locate in this area and for pedestrian activity due to a perception of danger because of the restricted nature of the street due to its narrowness and high sided buildings.
16. The proposed scheme, if feasible, should make a contribution to the “improving accessibility” and “enhancing the economy” shared priorities.

## **Corporate Priorities**

17. The scheme, if successful, would contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:

Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport.

*The scheme would make accessibility on foot easier, and would discourage drivers from using Fossgate as a short-cut.*

Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.

*The scheme would enhance Fossgate's attractiveness as both a shopping and dining venue.*

Reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York.

*The scheme has the potential to produce a continental-style boulevard with pavement cafes and complimentary street furniture which may encourage more family-orientated night-time activities which may in turn discourage anti-social behaviour.*

Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.

*The scheme will encourage more walking which will have a knock-on effect for health.*

Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services.

*This is a customer-led scheme with support from many shoppers, diners and residents.*

Improve the way the Council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York.

*This scheme could encourage partnership working between various council departments from Transport Planning, Network management, Economic Development and the Fossgate Traders Association and other businesses and residents. It may also assist in integrating the potential Castle Piccadilly development within a wider area of the City Centre.*

18. Local Transport Plan (LTP) : The scheme would contribute to several of the aims of the recently submitted LTP, namely:
- To reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and encourage essential journeys to be undertaken by more sustainable modes;
  - To improve economic performance in a sustainable manner;
  - To reduce the levels of actual and perceived safety problems;
  - To enhance opportunities for all community members, including disadvantaged groups, to play an active part in society;
  - To improve the health of those who live or work in, or visit, York;
  - To reduce the impact of traffic and travel on the environment, including air quality, noise and the use of non-renewable resources.

## **Implications**

19. This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** - This report has implications for the allocation of the pedestrian element of the LTP capital programme. The potential scheme costs will be assessed as part of the feasibility work, these costs will then be fed into the pedestrian scheme prioritisation process as appropriate. It is estimated that the cost of the feasibility work for the scheme will be in the order of £6000 to £7000
  - **Human Resources (HR)** – there are no HR implications
  - **Equalities** - The main issues that would need to be considered are:
    - Safety - would the pedestrianisation make the street safer to be in? This may impact on certain groups of people in different ways. Pedestrian streets can be safer for some disabled people, for people with children at those times when traffic is excluded, but can cause problems when traffic is allowed along the street as the road is usually less well defined to pedestrians (albeit the slower traffic speeds will reduce the hazard). Also what will the environment be like in the evening. If the pedestrianisation results in more drinking in public in the evening it may be a deterrence to women, older people, BME people using the area in the evening (already a problem in the city centre).
    - Access - Pedestrian areas can improve access for some disabled people but can prove a significant barrier to others (specifically those with

restricted mobility). What impact would pedestrianisation have on those disabled people who rely on transport to the shops they wish to visit and cannot walk for longer distances?

- **Legal** – there are no Legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** – there are no Crime and Disorder implications.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – there are no IT implications
- **Property** – Implications included as Confidential Annex C
- **Other** - None

## **Risk Management**

20. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy the main risk which has been identified in this report could lead to the inability to meet business objectives (Strategic).
21. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score for the recommendation is less than 16 and thus at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

## **Recommendations**

22. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Members to:
  - i. Note the content of the petition, and ask officers to investigate the expansion of the Footstreets Pedestrian Priority Zone and specifically to include Fossgate in that investigation;  
Reason : To enable the proposed scheme to be properly assessed and for accurate costs to be calculated to enable it to be prioritised against other potential pedestrian schemes for potential capital programme funds.
  - ii. Reply to the lead petitioner;  
Reason : To inform them of the panel's decision

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Wards Affected: Guildhall

All


For further information please contact the author of the report

### Background Papers:

Planning & Transport (City Centre) Sub-Committee Report 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003

### Annexes

Annex A Copy of front page of petition.

Annex B Artist's impression, provided by the petitioner, of how a pedestrianised Fossgate could look

Confidential

Annex C Property Implications