

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience



**NORTHAMPTON**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Please find enclosed the agenda and supporting papers for **Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience**

Date: **Thursday, 5 July 2012**

Time: **6:00 pm**

Place: **The Jeffrey Room, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE.**

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer on 01604 837408 or email [ttiff@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:ttiff@northampton.gov.uk) who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding **Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience** please visit the website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

## Members of the Panel

Chair	Councillor Matthew Lynch
Panel Members	Councillor Tony Ansell Councillor Sally Beardsworth Councillor Elizabeth Gowen Councillor Dennis Meredith Councillor Suresh Patel Councillor Danielle Stone
Co-opted Member	Sheridan New

## Calendar of meetings

Date	Room
8 August 2012 18 October 2012 5 December 2012 14 February 2013 24 April 2013	All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated.

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience

## Agenda

Item No	Title	Pages	Action required
1	Apologies		Members to note any apologies and substitutions.
2	Minutes	4 - 8	Members to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2012.
3	Deputations/ Public Addresses		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a Public Address Protocol and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
4	Declarations of Interest (including Whipping)		Members to state any interests.
5	Town Centre Challenge Event	9 - 11	The Scrutiny Panel to consider a briefing note regarding the Town Centre Challenge Event.
6	Core Questions- Expert Advisors	12 - 15	<p>The Scrutiny Panel to devise a list of core questions to be put to the expert advisors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member (Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise) evidence</li> <li>• Cabinet Member (Environment)</li> <li>• Northampton BID</li> <li>• Mr Everall, former Director, Northampton BID</li> <li>• Various local businesses and retailers</li> <li>• NCC - Highways</li> <li>• Northampton Community Forums</li> <li>• Enterprise Management Services</li> <li>• Northants Police</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Warden (town centre), NBC</li> <li>• ACTM</li> <li>• Chair, of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire</li> </ul>

## Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience

			<p>Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Safety Manager, NBC</li><li>• University of Northampton</li></ul> <p>A copy of the scope of the Review is attached to aid the Panel.</p>
7	<b>University of Northampton</b>		<p>The Scrutiny Panel to receive a briefing detailing information and research papers available to the Panel.</p>

## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 -RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Wednesday, 27 June 2012

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillor Matthew Lynch (Chair), Councillor Suresh Patel (Vice Chair) Councillors Tony Ansell, Sally Beardsworth, Elizabeth Gowen, and Danielle Stone

**CO-OPTED MEMBER:** Sheridan New Former Manager, Grosvenor Centre

**Officers** Marion Goodman Head of Customers and Cultural Services  
Derrick Simpson Town Centre Manager  
Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer  
Joanne Birkin Democratic Services Officer

#### 1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

#### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### 3. DEPUTATIONS/ PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

#### 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

#### 5. BASELINE AND PERFORMANCE DATA

The Panel considered data on: -

- National and local statistics
- Demographics- Local and National
- Definition of the Town Centre
- Vision for the Town Centre
- Town Centre Footfall
- Car Park Statistics

The main points of the discussion were as follows: -

There are lots of different statistics available and the Panel needed to determine which ones would be most useful to the aims of the Review.

Vacancy rates will not just give a number of vacant shop fronts, the town centre now encompasses a wide range of businesses, alongside shops there are cafes, restaurants, leisure providers, and service industries. All of these make up the attractions to draw people into the town centre.

Specific events can bring a lot of people into the town centre. The safari event in 2010 attracted over 500,000 people in a very short period of time. There were visitors from overseas and the event was featured on news programmes, including Japanese television. Many people were made aware of the event through Facebook and there had been a lot of positive feedback.

Although the statistics show that quality events will bring people into the town centre there are no statistics available to see if that then meant that any more money was spent and if so by whom and what they spent it on.

Footfall statistics show that there has been an ongoing decline since 2008. Market Square numbers have also been declining, but to a lesser extent.

There are a number of variables affecting footfall, for example April 2012 was exceptionally rainy which will have affected the footfall numbers. This did not necessarily mean that there were not any people in town; they may have chosen to stay in the Grosvenor centre.

Over the past five years there has been a change in the demographics of the town. There have been some major employers who have left the town centre, for example the loss of Barclaycard removed 3,000 office workers from the town centre.

Individually there are some very good businesses in town, which are good at being able to identify and serve their customers, however work needs to be done in bringing that together.

There has also been a change in the culture surrounding after work activities. Before the relaxation of licensing hours then the pubs and clubs opened earlier and there was less of a break between the daytime and the evening town centre activities. Now that nightclubs and pubs are open longer then people are not returning into the town centre until later, affecting the earlier evening leisure based activities.

### **Car Parking Statistics**

The Panel received statistics regarding the numbers of cars parking off street, the total numbers using the one hour free parking and a breakdown by car park.

Free parking is having an impact on the numbers of people using the town. Every survey that has ever been conducted by the Town Centre management has referred to the perception that parking is expensive. Often this is not the case and parking in several other towns is more expensive than Northampton.

Currently there is work going on with the County Council to expand the free parking scheme to off street parking.

There has also been a perception that there are problems with anti social behaviour in the town centre. There have been problems with beggars and drunks in the town centre and youngsters pursuing inappropriate activities such as skateboarding on the town centre streets. It is hoped that the skateboard park will provide an alternative venue.

It was strongly emphasised that more has to be done within partnerships. Obviously the Police are key partners in controlling anti social behaviour in the town centre. Comparisons were made between the town centre and the Grosvenor centre in terms of cleanliness and security, but it was pointed out that to maintain the shopping centre standards in the rest of the town centre would require a massive increase in resources. Rugby was mentioned as a town which was very clean and had dedicated teams of wardens within the Town Centre. The Panel were advised that these town centre rangers were paid through by additional monies raised through the town centre businesses and their BID programme.

Members of the Panel felt that it was important that any negative perceptions of the town centre were dealt with, but at the same time everyone should be made to feel welcome in the town centre area, it was particularly encouraging to see activities such as the Northampton by the Sea event which had been held in summer 2011 as it encouraged families into the town centre.

Members also felt that the local shopping areas around the town displayed a much wider range of cultures than seemed to be available in the town centre and considered that it would be useful to talk to some of these retailers.

Members also asked for information on business rates to see whether they posed barriers to certain retail types setting up in the town centre.

Members were well aware of the threats to traditional retailing that has already come from the expansion of the Internet for shopping. It was emphasised that there would be further threats due to forthcoming changes in technology.

It was suggested that further background data be provided to a future meeting:

Details of business rates

Age analysis of footfall data

**AGREED:** - (1) that the information be included in the evidence base for the Review.  
(2) That further background data as detailed above be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

## **6. BRIEFING NOTE: POTENTIAL SITE VISITS**

The Panel considered a report on potential site visits.

The purpose of the site visits would be to allow the Panel to assess the offer of the city/town centre its profile, image and catchment. The Panel was keen to find somewhere

which most closely matched Northampton in terms of population size. They felt that Cambridge would not be a good choice as it was too closely associated with the historic sites connected to the University and people would visit there for a wider experience than retail.

It was also felt that it would be useful to visit places that had similar problems or experiences. To this end it was believed that Peterborough had built a bus exchange similar to the one proposed in Northampton, Walsall would experience specific difficulties in attracting shoppers because of its proximity to Birmingham, reflecting the proximity of Northampton and Milton Keynes.

It was considered that it would be useful if the Scrutiny Officer undertook some desktop research on a couple of the proposed sites in order to give the Panel some additional insights.

Panel members were also encouraged to make their own visits to other towns and if to note those aspects that they particularly liked. It was emphasised that it should be borne in mind that not all places can adopt the same strategies and that sometimes what works well in one area will not work somewhere else with a different population make up or geographical location.

**AGREED:**

- 1 That the Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Panel members arranges site visits to Norwich and Peterborough.
2. That the Scrutiny Officer undertakes desktop research on Stoke and Walsall.
3. That a report back on the findings of the site visits be presented to a future meeting of the Panel

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE REVIEW**

The Panel considered the draft Equality Impact Assessment for this Scrutiny Review.

**AGREED:**

- (1)A full impact assessment is not required as any changes proposed as a result of the review will be impact assessed before implementation.
- (2) That the Equality Impact for this Scrutiny Review be approved and published on the Scrutiny page of the Council's website.

**8. BACKGROUND DATA- EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES OF PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS**

The Panel considered a series of précis's of published documents.

It was pointed out that the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy for Northampton 2008-2011 were both in the process of being reviewed. When they are available summaries will be made available to the Panel.

The Panel was informed that the Town Centre Managers Association had produced a 10 point action plan in response to the Portas Review. This would be made available to a future the meeting.

**AGREED: -**

1. That the information be included in the evidence base for the Review.
2. That a summary of the updated documents referred to in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7 of the report be provided to the Panel when available.
3. That details of the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) – 10 Point Plan be provided to a future meeting of the Panel.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 pm





## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

#### SCRUTINY PANEL 2– RETAIL EXPERIENCE

5<sup>th</sup> JULY 2012

#### BRIEFING NOTE: SEMINAR – THE TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGE

##### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Representatives of the Panel attended a Seminar hosted by Skillsmart Retail on the Town Centre Challenge: Building a thriving high street for the future.

##### 2 Information

- 2.1 Skillsmart Retail is the Sector Skills Council for retail. It reports that it acts as a catalyst to increase investment in skills to improve productivity and profitability, sets industry-wide standards for retail skills and career paths to enhance the reputation of retail careers, delivers products and services which are fit for purpose and accessible to all and operates a sustainable business that promotes continuous professional development in retail.

- 2.2 The aims of the Seminar were:

- Introduce how Skillsmart Retail can help towns and cities build a more profitable and thriving retail sector
- Emphasise the need for partnership working between stakeholders
- Launch Skillsmart Retail's new Retail Apprenticeship Training Agency

- 2.3 A number of key facts and statistics were provided such as:

- Retail continues to be the UK's largest private sector employer with 2.77 million employees
- The UK's top 75 retailers employ 2/3 of the total workforce
- The turnover of the retail sector in 2011 was £343 billion, equating to 8% of UKS GVA
- 188,000 retail enterprises, operating in around 286,000 retail establishments in the UK

##### Current challenges:

- Shop vacancy rates 14.6%
- Independent retailers struggling
- Low skill levels in retail
- High youth unemployment

- 2.4 The Seminar received a presentation from the Head of Economic Regeneration, London Borough of Newham around "Why shopping centre doesn't have to mean the decline of the town centre".

- 2.5 The presentation focused on London and statistics such as average output area price 2010, young and diverse statistics and public transport routes were provided.
- 2.6 The Seminar was informed of the London Plan: 25 Year Regeneration Priority is Newham, which includes 35,000 new homes, 110,000 new jobs and £22 billion investment.
- 2.7 The vision for the Royal Docks is currently being prepared by the Mayor of London and the Mayor of Newham.
- 2.8 Canning Town was highlighted, as was the priority for Metropolitan Master plan for Stratford which includes:
- 340 shops
  - 5 million square feet of offices
  - £1.8 billion investment
  - Casino
  - Stratford/Newham is the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest retail destination in London
- 2.9 The Seminar received a presentation from the National Skills Academy for Retail, The Learning Shop, Bluewater on “The Y Factor: Keeping Young People in your area.”
- 2.10 Some reported key points:

#### **Apprenticeships**

- Work based training programmes designed around the needs of employers, which lead to nationally recognised qualifications
  - Designed to attract 16-18 year olds
  - Can be used to train new and existing staff
  - Retailers provide one year, full time job placement
  - Effective way to attract and keep people in employment
  - Economic benefits
  - The number of retail apprenticeships over the past five years has increased by 190%
  - The majority of retail apprenticeships are currently via larger retailers
  - The Retail Apprenticeship Training Agency helps to resolve issues such as independent retailers offering apprenticeships
- 2.11 A short film, including interviews with current retail apprentices, was shown.
- 2.12 The Seminar heard about Land Lease from the North West Kent College that reported the value of retail as:
- Over 8% of UK Gross Value added
  - 28% of UK business rates are paid by retailers
  - Over 150,000 sole traders in the sector
  - A third of the workforce are under 25 and a quarter are 50+

2.13 Some reported key facts around Town Centre Management: *A tried and tested formula....*” were given:

- The right people around the table
- A shared vision for the future
- The Plan
- Actions (not just words\_
- Sustainability
- Communicating success

2.14 Skillsmart Retail is teaming up with local retailers up and down the country to celebrate Independents’ date on 4 July which it reports flies the flag for local retailers and encourages the public to buy at least one item from an independent retailer on the day to celebrate diversity on the high street.

2.15 The objectives of the campaign are:

- Increase footfall for retailers on 4<sup>th</sup> July
- Increase awareness of the contribution independent retailers bring to local communities and economy
- Improve perceptions of retail careers amongst the public
- Increase awareness of the support and advice available from Skillsmart Retail and the NSA for retail

2.16 For the Panel’s interest, full details of the presentations given and the film shown to the Seminar can be located [here](#).

### **3 Recommendations**

3.1 That the information gathered from the Seminar hosted by Skillsmart Retail be used to inform the Panel’s evidence base.



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – RETAIL EXPERIENCE

#### 1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community.
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc).
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

#### 2. Outcomes Required

- To enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre
- To provide short, medium and long term recommendations, which supports and develops the retail experience.

#### 3. Information Required

- Context:
  - Local statistics
  - Demographics – local and national
- Baseline data:
  - National statistics
  - Definition of the Town Centre
  - Vision for the Town Centre
- Synopses of various research documents and other published documents

- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from expert external witnesses
- Evidence from residents
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Best practice data
- Site visits
- Desktop research

#### 4. Format of Information

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data such as:
  - Performance data - town centre footfall
  - Vacancy rates
  - Numbers and types of retail within the town
  - Car park usage
- Published reports (precis's) such as:
  - The Portas Review
  - The Right to Retail: Can Localism save Britain's small retailers
  - Understanding High Street Performance
  - Core Strategy – Northampton's Strategic Planning Policies
  - Sustainable Community Strategy
- NBC – Cabinet Member (Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise) evidence
- NBC – Cabinet Member (Environment)
- Evidence from Northampton BID
- Evidence from Mr Overall, former Director, Northampton BID
- Evidence from various local businesses and retailers
- Evidence from NCC - Highways
- Evidence from Northampton Community Forums
- Evidence from Enterprise Management Services
- Evidence from Northants Police
- Evidence from Neighbourhood Warden (town centre), NBC
- Evidence from ACTM
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from the Chair, of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Association
- Evidence from the Community Safety Manager, NBC
- Evidence from University of Northampton
- Expert advice
- Best practice
- Witness interviews/evidence

## **5. Methods Used to Gather Information**

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Site Visits (if applicable)
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-
  - Key Partners as detailed in section 4 of this scope
  - Northampton Town Centre BID
  - Northampton Chamber of Commerce
  - Key Officers – Northampton Borough Council
  - Key Officers – Northamptonshire County Council
  - Cabinet Member (Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise) – Northampton Borough Council
  - Cabinet Member (Environment) – Northampton Borough Council
  - Surveyors/Valuers
  - Director, EMS

## **6. Co-Options to the Review**

- Sheridan New, former Manager, Grosvenor Centre, and Simon Rushden, Legal and General to be approached suggesting that she is co opted to this Review for its life.

## **7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment**

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

## **8 Evidence gathering Timetable**

April 2012 to April 2013

- 25 April 2012 - Scoping Meeting
- 27 June – Evidence gathering
- 5 July - Evidence gathering
- 8 August – Evidence gathering
- 18 October – Evidence gathering
- 5 December – Evidence gathering

- 14 February 2013 – Evidence gathering (if required)
- 24 April – Approval of final report

Various site visits will be programmed during this period if required.

Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

## **7. Responsible Officers**

Lead Officer            Marion Goodman, Head of Customer and Cultural Services

Co-ordinator           Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

## **8. Resources and Budgets**

Marion Goodman, Head of Customer and Cultural Services, to provide internal advice.

## **9 Final report presented by:**

Completed by 24 April 2013. Presented by the Chair of the Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

## **10 Monitoring procedure:**

Review the impact of the report after six months (January/February 2013)