



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Date: **Monday, 29 October 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, telephone 01604 837408 (direct dial), email ttiff@northampton.gov. 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

Members of the Panel

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

Calendar of meetings

Date	Room
5 December 2012 6:00 pm 14 February 2013 24 April 2013	All meetings to be held in the Jeffrey Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated

Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 2 -Retail Experience

Agenda

Item No and Time	Title	Pages	Action required
1.	Apologies		Members to note any apologies and substitutions.
2. 6.00 pm	Minutes	3 - 7	Members to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 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.	Witness Evidence		The Scrutiny Panel to receive the responses to its core questions from key witnesses:
5 (a) 6.05 pm 20 mins	Chair Northampton BID - Stephen Chown	8 - 22	Stephen Chown, Chair, Northampton BID.
5 (b) 6.20 pm 20 mins	Chief Executive, Northampton Chamber of Commerce - Paul Griffiths	23	Paul Griffiths – Chief Executive, Northampton Chamber of Commerce.
5 (c) 6.40 pm 20 mins	Mr Overall, former Director, Northampton BID	24 - 30	Mr Overall, former Director, Northampton BID
5 (d) 7.00 pm	University of Northampton	31 - 35	To receive a written response to the Panel's core questions.
6.	Site Visits	36 - 38	The Scrutiny Panel to receive a progress report on the recent site visit to Norwich.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 -RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Wednesday, 8 August 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:	Councillor Matthew Lynch (Chair), Councillors Tony Ansell, Sally Beardsworth, Elizabeth Gowen and Dennis Meredith	
CO-OPTED MEMBER:	Sheridan New	
Witnesses	Councillor John Caswell -Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Tim Hadland -Cabinet Member for Regeneration Planning and Enterprise. Chris Cavanagh – Head of Regeneration and Development	
Officers	Marion Goodman Tracy Tiff Joanne Birkin	Head of Customers and Cultural Services Scrutiny Officer Democratic Services Officer
Members of The Public	Mr Tony Mallard.	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Suresh Patel and Danielle Stone.

2. MINUTES

The minute of the meeting held on 5th July 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. DEPUTATIONS/ PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Tony Mallard addressed the Panel. He stated that it was no good dwelling in the past, but believed that there were some areas of Northampton that were now looking very run down. He considered that there were too many pound shops and betting shops.

He stated that Northampton did not offer anything unique to attract people in. He was personally taking a coach party to Melton Mowbray who offered a framers market with crafts and antique/ bric a brac stalls. He told the Panel about a town in Massachusetts which when facing severe economic problems decided to concentrate on selling arts and crafts and small artisan tea shops/cafes.

Councillor Penny Flavell, who was unable to attend the meeting, through the Chair, asked that the Panel to consider improving the aesthetics of the approaches to the town centre by planting trees.

The Panel was informed that the provision of trees in tubs was under consideration.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

5. RESPONSE TO CORE QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION ENTERPRISE AND PLANNING , CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE HEAD OF REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

The Panel received a joint written response to the Core questions from Councillor Tim Hadland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, Councillor Caswell Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Regeneration and Development.

The Panel considered the written responses to the core questions, as appended, and the main points of discussion and responses to the supplementary questions were as follows:-

Supplementary responses

How can NBC support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre?

It was considered vital to make information available to any affected businesses as soon as possible. This had been done in relation to the fire damage to Bridge Street, and would be applied to the residents affected by the building of student accommodation at St Johns.

What effective marketing and promotion would benefit the town's retail sector and how do you feel the profile of the town centre could be raised?

Members felt that it was very important to raise the profile of retailing as a career and that it should not be seen as a job of last resort. They referred to the presentation that they had received from Skillsmart who provide retail training opportunities. Since this presentation, Skillsmart confirmed that it would liaise with Northampton BID to see how retail training could be promoted within Northampton.

Members also referred to "pop up shops". These being relatively low cost short term leases to get a retail property back into use. One member had been negotiating with a lettings agent about the possibility of creating some pop up shops on the town centre fringes. It was pointed out that owners of the shops had to agree to them becoming short term lets and that might be more difficult to do in the town centre. There were some negotiations underway in relation to a couple of town centre locations.

It was also pointed out that the pound shops do fulfil a need in times of recession and that in accordance with planning legislation there was not a distinction between retail offers of pound shops or other stores.

It was also felt that there should be work done to make the town centre a more visually attractive place. There is a shop front policy and the Central Area Action Plan but changes can only be implemented at a slow rate when property becomes vacant and with the

involvement of the shop owner. Creating better shop fronts may be an expense that cannot be afforded for some small retailers, it might therefore be necessary to decide which should be given priority getting a shop back into use or having an improved shop front.

How can retailers, landlords, prospective developers and agents develop the town's retail sector?

There are very few retail properties directly owned or controlled by the Council and none within the primary retail area.

Work can be done with developers with regard to shop fronts as and when opportunities arise and there may be monies available from Section 106 Agreements but these are dependent upon the timing of developments.

The Council can also make direct impact by improving the Public Realm.

How can regulations and advice regarding the retail sector be utilised and accessed more by retailers?

The purpose of BID is to encourage the retail sector to access advice. The BID is still in its infancy but is developing connections with more retailers.

What other activities could have a more positive impact on retailers?

Members asked whether there had been any progress on the opening of Abingdon Street. It was emphasised that any traffic changes would have to be considered as part of the redevelopment of the town centre, beginning with the new bus interchange and associated works to the Grosvenor Centre.

It was acknowledged that there were still questions about how the Grosvenor Centre redevelopment might now look. Panel members were assured that Legal and General was revising its scheme to make sure that it was deliverable and cost effective. There were fortnightly meetings between Legal and General and the Council. However, it was likely that it would be a smaller scheme.

Concern was expressed that the old Greyfriars bus station should be removed as soon as practicable as it would not be good to have the building fall into a state of disrepair. In terms of timing it was hoped that work would begin on site by Christmas and the project completed by Christmas 2013.

There is more than £100 million being invested in Northampton through the delivery of Northampton Alive projects. This was money that had been attracted in by other partners/developers.

Members asked which elements could be directly influenced by the Council. These were items such as car parking, fees and usage were constantly monitored and other aspects of what could be offered were also being looked into. Public realm improvements were also very important.

Special events such as Lady Godiva and the Olympic torch had brought many people into the town and efforts would be made to attract and promote similar one off events.

How can independent retailers compete with both larger multiples and internet shopping?

Independent retailers' strength can be in their ability to deliver tailor made customer service. They should also consider the use of the internet themselves as a way of reaching other customers.

What would you like the town centre to look like in 5 years' time?

Members praised Rugby town centre, particularly because of the town rangers that were present. These were paid for through the Town Centre BID and it was felt they were a very positive feature.

It should not be assumed that all of the property that is currently retail will remain as retail, some could be returned to residential use.

It was felt that more use could be made of the All Saints square.

How good are the communication channels from the Borough Council regarding new town centre developments?

There has been a change in the planning process. It is anticipated that there will be some massive applications in the near future and people will be involved in the consultation process as soon as possible. It was felt that there was a more dynamic relationship with the media, with the Council being proactive in media on Northampton Alive.

Has there be any occasion where you have used the Internet to buy any item and why?

Members had used eBay to buy items, and generally used the Internet as a source of information such as price comparisons if items could not be found locally they would be more inclined to purchase them on the Internet.

Additional questions to Cabinet Member (Environment)

What impact does the level of cleanliness in the town centre have?

There are difficulties in obtaining sufficient information to obtain evidence. The Cabinet Member encouraged members of the public to report any incidents.

Concern was also expressed at the number of closed public toilets. It was pointed out that there was a Community Toilet scheme in operation.

Additional questions to Cabinet Member (Planning, Regeneration and Enterprise) and Head of Regeneration and Development

Please provide details of support available to retail businesses

Members were advised that the Enterprise Loans Panel offered small loans to businesses and Members asked for details about that scheme and how it was publicised. There was also on-going work with the market to assist traders in improving customer service, presentation etc.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS -PRECIS' OF PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

The Panel received a précis of information on:-

- Central Area Action Plan
- Northampton Town Centre Health Check 2009
- Northampton Town Centre Shopping Survey June 2010.

AGREED :- That the information inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny review.

The meeting concluded at 7:30 pm

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

CORE QUESTIONS –

How can Northampton Borough Council (NBC) further develop partnership working with the town centre business community?

How can NBC support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre

How can Northampton's retail experience be supported and the impact of low inflation and the economic downturn be mitigated?

How can the independent retail sector and multiple/larger chains work in partnership to ensure work towards sustaining the viability of the retail sector?

What effective marketing and promotion would benefit the town's retail sector and how do you feel the profile of the town centre could be raised?

How can retailers, landlords, prospective developers and agents develop the town's retail sector?

How can regulations and advice regarding the retail sector be utilised and accessed more by retailers?

What other activities could have a more positive impact on retailers?

How can independent retailers compete with both larger multiples and internet shopping?

What would you like the town centre will look like in 5 years time?

How good are the communication channels from the Borough Council regarding new town centre developments?

What do you feel would enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre

Has there be any occasion where you have used the Internet to buy any item and why?

What are the BID's ambitions for the town centre?

How is the BID looking to improve the overall shopping experience in the town centre?

Does the BID have any influence beyond the town centre?

How does the BID support the retail sector in comparison with other sectors within the town centre?

In respect of the Portas Review and lobbying government: what aspects would the BID like lobby for?

Does the BID take into account best practice carried out by other BIDs in town centres around the UK?

How could schools and community groups be engaged in the retail experience?

Any other comments

Retail Scrutiny Panel

Stephen Chown MRICS
Chairman

Northampton Town Centre BID

Introduction

The Elephants in the room:

- Car Parking
- Penal Rates assessments
- Street Cleanliness

5 Main Topics

- Partnership Working
- Retail issues, marketing and promotion
- The Internet
- Building Projects
- 5 Year Plan / Vision

Partnership Working

- Having Councillors as BID Directors is working well
- Concern over rigid adherence to planning policy. Flexibility required.
- Enterprise consistency

Retail issues, Marketing & Promotion

- Focus on Abington St & Market Sq
- Consider Shop-front Improvement Grants
- Install main route signage advertising in town events. Use traffic message signs. Improve signage vs. street clutter. Distance to x, y, z
- Create “quarters” with arches over the road to announce / delineate them

Retail (continued)

- Encourage 5-7pm shopping – “Free after 3” parking?
- Create “street stages” for entertainment
- Change 1 hour on-street parking to 2 hour
- Parking permits for town centre businesses at attractive/competitive rates

Retail (continued)

- Flexibility towards shop front vinyl advertising
- Support for pop-up shops
- Street lighting improvements
- Endorse Police / PCSO's

The Internet

- It's not a threat: it's an opportunity
- BUT you'll die if you don't embrace it
- Encourage high-speed internet
- Embrace push-messaging
- Support LoveNorthampton website: it's the future
- Free wi-fi in the Market Sq is a good start!

Building Projects

- BID embraces these unreservedly
- BUT could be last nail in the coffin of marginal businesses
- Liaison with businesses is key
- Early notice for planning is key
- Leaflet car park users as they are the ones affected
- Positive signage “Back open by ...”

5 Year Plan / Vision

- Installation/feature in Abington Street outside Co-Op arcade
- Cruciform layout in Market Square with flexible stands & central stage
- Greater powers and support for Town Centre Managers office
- Extend the retail day to 7pm
- Varied events program to increase footfall

Additional thoughts

- Northampton is already a 24 hour economy but retail is only 9 – 5
- Project Angel, St.Johns/Uni, Bus Interchange etc will all increase footfall. This will increase shop take-up but the quality retailers will only come to new units in the managed (Grosvenor) scheme.
- Last 4 months: 4.1m visitors – so we're doing something right!

And finally

- All BID details/documents are available at: www.NorthamptonBID.co.uk
- Why not sign up for our Newsletter?
- Follow @NorthamptonBID and @ntonBIDchair on Twitter now.
- See www.LoveNorthampton.co.uk for all your Christmas Events...
- (Other BIDs are available/always read the label/may contain nuts etc)

Thank you



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

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NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – RETAIL EXPERIENCE

29th October 2012

Response to the core questions: Mr Everall

Personal Data / history

Raymond Everall

Independent Business owner , Northampton town centre since 1974

Business , Hairdressing ,incorporating Vocational Training.

Name of business, Raymond Martin Hair. /multi salon owner / Northampton school of hairdressing.

Business first opened 1974 , St Giles terrace , Northampton Town Centre , moved to The Drapery first floor in 1982 , incorporating training as City & Guilds training Centre from 1985 to 2004 .

Exhibition Hairdresser , UK , America , Germany , Tokyo , 1985/1992

Training broker . for LSC , 1996 to 2004 , delivering NVQ work based training , re Apprentership level 2 / 3 Hairdressing , to include key skills .

Consultant to City & Guilds, and further education department re development of Modern Apprenticeships.

National Hairdressers Federation, Northamptonshire branch Chair 1995/98

Customs and excise, advisory group member, 1997/98

Bid director 2011/12 , consultant re implementation of Bid company , and delivery of remit .

Bid activity , environment , highways , implementation

Current status , owner of Naked ,The Hair Salon , The Drapery Northampton .
Established 2004 .

Chair , Northampton Market square review panel , 2011/12 .

Current Chair , market square advisory group , on behalf of Cllr Tim Hadland .

Question 1

Small working groups,

MAG GROUP , good example.

Question 2

Keep traffic moving?

Road closures to a minimum,

Noise, and dust pollution in town centre, positive press.

Question 3

Impact of low" inflation?

Parking rates.

Parking locations

Business rates

Shopper experience

Question 4

Bid initiative

Work with NBC , re managed obligations of the presentation and maintenance of the town centre .

Question 5

Raise the profile of the town , re presentation and shopping experience , promotion comes after this has been achieved , no packaging .

Question 6

Shop front initiative , encouraging upgrade and regular maintenance .

Rents do need to be held at current levels , for the foreseeable future

Kettering & Wellingborough Road ?

Parking location .

Question 7

Business Link .

Seminars .

Mentoring between large and small retailers .

Internet sites .

Question 8

Cleaning .

Maintenance .

Policing

Vagrant management .

Parking location , and pricing .

Presentation .

Events

Question 9

Niche products .

Customer relations .

Business web site .

Question 10

About the same .

The new bus station will improve the Drapery .

Continuity in Street furniture .

Good base line services .

Accessible localised parking .

Anything other than like Milton Keynes .

Question 11

Excellent

Improvement on Town Centre Management communication and activity .

Question 12

Market Town “

Presentation

Eas of access

Cleaning , reliable targeted .

Maintenance , Scheduled , and of good standard

Control of licensed premises .

Events

Somewhere to sit that is not covered in food grease .

Question 13

Yes , convenient , not necessarily cheaper .

The Town centre management , re base line services is poor .

Communication with businesses is week .

Transparency , and access to base line services departments is blocked .

Policing is sporadic .

Most of the services to the Town Centre , to include policing is reactive , not proactive .

Maintance standards are poor .

Town Centre management office , weak .

I Hold Northampton , and the Town Centre in high regard , and do think that the activities of the Borough Council , in the last year , have contributed to improvements , in presentation , and especially re the services of Enterprise .

However , I would say that some departments of the base line services , need to improve .Not much continuity of standards here , especially re repairs , drain cleaning , and targeted cleaning

Policing of the Town Centre has also improved this year ., but no planning re licence premises concentration in the Drapery , re new status , bus station .

I my dealing as a bid director, I haven't found much accountability, from the heads of departments, re above.

Continuity, of deliver

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

CORE QUESTIONS RESPONSE FROM UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

How can Northampton Borough Council (NBC) further develop partnership working with the town centre business community?

N/A

How can NBC support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre

N/A

How can Northampton's retail experience be supported and the impact of low inflation and the economic downturn be mitigated?

Impact of the recession on retailers

- Value retailers outperformed the market, growing by almost 6% in 2009 to achieve sales of £8.1 billion, with companies such as Primark and Matalan benefiting from the trading down trend.
- Over 20 clothing and footwear companies, accounting for over £2.9 billion of sales, have collapsed including Ethel Austin, Adams Childrenswear and Mosaic Fashions, but most occurred at the start of the recession. (Mintel June 2010)

Consumer spending patterns in 2009 and intentions for 2010

- Over half of the population did not reduce their spend on clothes in 2009 despite the recession. While more than four in ten adults spent less in 2009 than they usually would, they did not cease buying clothes altogether, indicating that while many people are being more cautious, they now consider buying clothes as a necessary spend.
- Some pent-up demand will be released this year as nearly one fifth of consumers plan to spend more on clothes in 2010, more than the one in ten who spent more in 2009. The year 2010 is, nevertheless, set to continue to be challenging for retailers, with one in three adults planning to spend less on clothing in the coming year. (Mintel June 2010)

It is worthwhile noting the research findings that in essence consumers are still spending, but perhaps not as much as they would like. With regards to shopping the report (Mintel 2010) continues as follows:

- Marks & Spencer is the most popular place to shop for clothes overall, in-store and online, and is used by over half of clothes buyers.
- Value retailers and supermarkets have become the preferred places to buy clothes in-store and are both used by six in ten consumers.

- Just under half of consumers currently shop at midmarket fashion stores. These retailers need to do more to target the fashion conscious 25-34s, which are set to increase by 11.4% by 2015.
- Over four in ten consumers shop at Next in-store and more than one in ten shop online.

Department stores' sales have performed well during the recession, particularly John Lewis, as they benefit from a customer base that tends to be more affluent and were the big-spenders of 2009 and again in 2010.

So if Northampton wants to support the retail experience in the current climate then a focus on the retailers that consumers are using would perhaps be beneficial.

How can the independent retail sector and multiple/larger chains work in partnership to ensure work towards sustaining the viability of the retail sector?

Northampton needs to try and attract consumers into High Street. If the multiple chains could focus on enhancing their current merchandise mix to try and target new markets then perhaps this could attract consumers who would normally go to Milton Keynes or London into the area. Independent retailers need to try and specialise, so by finding niche markets they could attract visitors. Perhaps programmes trying to attract specialists into the town centre would be advantageous, similar to the efforts in Leamington Spa.

What effective marketing and promotion would benefit the town's retail sector and how do you feel the profile of the town centre could be raised?

Last Christmas Corby enhanced the appeal of the town centre through free parking and an ice rink to attract visitors to shop in Corby. Perhaps Northampton could use a similar approach this year by attracting consumers by providing Christmas entertainment. This could also be an opportunity to show new visitors the benefits of coming to Northampton.

There have been a few events taking place in Northampton town centre that I have become aware of by accident. I reside in one of the outlying villages, and there seems to be a lack of communication on events that are being hosted by the town. So perhaps some more communication is needed to attract consumers from villages on the outskirts of town could improve the appeal of the town.

Certainly the need for easy parking and consideration to free parking at key times would influence consumers from further afield to come into town.

The recent student lock in the Grovesnor Centre was an excellent idea, and the students at the university were very excited about the event, however, I

am not aware of the overall success of the event and whether it was worthwhile for the retailers.

How can retailers, landlords, prospective developers and agents develop the town's retail sector?

How can regulations and advice regarding the retail sector be utilised and accessed more by retailers?

I do not know what committees or working groups are currently in place, however, a retail forum is perhaps advisable where new legislation and new practise techniques could be discussed.

What other activities could have a more positive impact on retailers?

The town centre needs to attract independents into the high street. If Northampton could differentiate itself from every other high street then a real advantage could be gained. Good eating and cafe facilities are needed to satisfy the experience for visitors. A cafe culture is certainly growing in the UK and the high street needs to embrace this consumer need.

Easy access into the town is needed for retailers, and convenient parking facilities in order to compete with the out of town retail parks.

How can independent retailers compete with both larger multiples and internet shopping?

Independent retailers need to compete with the larger multiples on the basis of addressing a niche market and providing better more personalised service to the consumer. Everyone needs to embrace the internet and independents need to use this technology to enhance their own offering. While there has been a significant growth in shopping on line, consumers still want the retail experience, where shopping is seen as a leisure activity, therefore the additional facilities of cafes, restaurants and entertainment is essential to attract shoppers into Northampton.

What would you like the town centre will look like in 5 years time?

How good are the communication channels from the Borough Council regarding new town centre developments?

N/A

What do you feel would enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre

Ease of parking and access to shops

A varied retailer selection from mainstream high street stores to more specialised retailers offering exclusivity, additional service and variety.

Good cafes and eating places.

Entertainment or Pop up markets to give variety to the town.

Limited number of mobile stores and charity shops

At the weekend shopping needs to be family orientated, with children's entertainment included.

A good modern department store with prestige brands on offer, as middle aged shoppers want to shop in department stores, but they also want a good variety of merchandise, from own brand through to designer options.

Northampton is directly competing with Milton Keynes and London. If you look at Milton Keynes, it has lots of parking, lots of entertainment nearby, so that shoppers can turn their trip into an all day event. There are excellent facilities from baby facilities through to eating places. The centre of the Mall has a regular new themed event going on most months from Christmas experiences to arts exhibitions to summer time beach events. Northampton has to compete against this to attract the shoppers into Northampton rather than consumers travelling to Milton Keynes.

Has there be any occasion where you have used the Internet to buy any item and why?

I use the internet all the time. I hardly ever shop in the town or at a shopping centre. Why? Because, I find it convenient. I am time poor, and like many other consumers I work fulltime, I have a young family and spend most of time taking children from one hobby to the next. Shopping on line means that I can get the merchandise that I need delivered directly to my door, and since my husband works from home, I have no problems accepting deliveries. On Saturday night I ordered 5 items from M&S, they were delivered at 8am this morning. This type of service is hard to beat.

However, I still enjoy shopping in the high street and when I can get the time; I like a full day of retail therapy! However, I also like to combine it with other treats e.g. a good lunch and perhaps some kind of beauty treatment, e.g. nail counters or indeed the fish tank scenario of fish eating your feet! Adding these types of services into the high street to enhance the retail experience are essential in order to compete with e-retailers. Retailers can also combine the internet type of technology with in-store experience and there are examples of high tech shopping experiences coming forward, where consumers still go to the high street but have the option of using technology to browse and select merchandise and even virtually try on garments, prior to perhaps asking for the garments to be taken to traditional changing rooms.

I also travelled out to Thrapston at the weekend to shop in a baby shoe shop (Funky Lil Feet) that offers a wide variety of merchandise, but is different to that of Clarkes or any other high street retailer. So like me, many consumers still have disposable income to spend however, consumers are more demanding and are looking for specialised retailers, and if Northampton can attract these specialists into the town, then new consumers will be attracted into the town time and time again.

Any other comments

I have tried to make comments in a more generalised way, as I am fairly new to Northampton, and am not overly familiar with all the shopping formats available. Therefore I do not feel that I am overly expert in giving much advice or too many specifics, as I am not very knowledgeable on the town centre. From the experiences I have had in Northampton, I feel there are many retailers missing from the Northampton town centre that would continually attract me into town, and I am representative of a fairly typical shopper. I am aware that Northampton does not attract its fair share of shoppers in from the local geography and that many shoppers will choose to travel to other locations rather than come into town. This can only be addressed by changing the mix of retailers in the town and trying to attract specialists and niche retailers into Northampton. Supported by good facilities and attracting events and entertainment to enhance the shopping experience would give the retailers a better chance of being successful in the long term.



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – RETAIL EXPERIENCE

29TH OCTOBER 2012

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISIT TO NORWICH

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Panel on 27th June 2012, it was agreed that site visits take place so that a comparison could be made with other town centres against that of Northampton.
- 1.2 Councillor Matt Lynch, Chair of Scrutiny Panel 2, visited Norwich city centre on 10th August 2012.

2 Information

- 2.1 Councillor Lynch found Norwich a pleasant city to visit. The entrances to the city centre are tree lined roads with very attractive hanging baskets.
- 2.2 Councillor Lynch found parking not so easy and there appears to be a lack of parking near the city centre. There is no park and ride system.
- 2.3 The streets around the city centre were very clean, as were the shop fronts. Councillor Lynch did not see any beggars or “chuggers”. There were some street entertainers which gave the centre a nice atmosphere for shopping.
- 2.4 Councillor Lynch revisited the city centre in the evening and spoke with some local residents. They advised that the roads around the centre are cleaned every morning. Litter picking takes place every day around the city centre. Norwich City Council also has a Litter Warden who hands out tickets to anyone who he sees dropping litter.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 Norwich city centre is very clean but does not have the provision of a park and ride system.
- 3.2 Street entertainers gave a nice atmosphere to the shopping experience and the Chair suggested that this could be investigated for Northampton.

3.3 The provision of a Litter Warden was supported.

3.4 Detailed at Appendix A are photographs of Norwich city centre.

4 Recommendations

4.1 That the information gathered from the site visit to Norwich be used to inform the Panel's evidence base.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Matt Lynch, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2.

Date: 24th October 2012

Norwich City Centre – Photographs taken on the visit – 10th August 2012

