

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - IMPACT OF THE MOVE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON**

Thursday, 31 January 2019

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Graham Walker (Chair), Councillors Dennis Meredith and Danielle Stone

Witnesses Rob Purdy, Executive Director,
Town Centre BID
Becky Bradshaw, University of
Northampton

Councillor Roberts
Councillor Davenport

Officers Derrick Simpson, Town Centre Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Michelle Pyer
Kim Woodbridge-Dodd
Alan Earl
Daniel Soan
Morcea Walker

Press James Averill, Democracy Reporter

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kilby-Shaw, Birch, G Eales, Aziz and Jane Bunce, Co-Optee

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESS

Councillor Roberts addressed the Scrutiny Panel on agenda items 5a), 5b) and 6. She advised that she had received reports of drug use around the University area and there had been reports of increased smell of cannabis around University too. Councillor Roberts said she and local people feel that students are being unfairly demonised for drug use when in fact it is the drug “pushers” who are using the area around the University to hand off their drugs.

In respect of agenda item 5(b) Councillor Roberts asked whether other groups had responded or are expected to respond.

Councillor Roberts asked if the University were undertaking any actions in respect of pollution.

Councillor Roberts concluded her address by welcoming the report of NCC Highways (agenda item 6).

Councillor Roberts was thanked for her address.

Councillor Davenport addressed the Scrutiny Panel commenting it is really important lessons are learnt with respect to major redevelopments (such as the University) can have on local residents and businesses especially around parking, noise and anti-social behaviour being experienced by residents in Malt House Close.

Councillor Davenport made reference to local residents concerns around New South Bridge Road and in Far Cotton.

Councillor Davenport expressed her opinion that these problems should have been dealt with at the Planning Stage as the potential impacts were already known about as they already occurred in Kingsthorpe.

Councillor Davenport went on to mention:

- The siting of the Halls of Residence so close to a residential area
- The number of abandoned trolleys; she was told 35 trolleys were picked up from around the University and the local supermarket had run out.
- Students making a noise coming back through residential roads at night

Councillor Davenport acknowledged all the work the University has undertaken and are continuing to do to address any problems.

Councillor Davenport was thanked for her address.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2018 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TOWN CENTRE BID

The Executive Director, Town Centre BID presented his written response to the core questions to the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Freshers event this year is a good example of joint working. Agencies and organisations need to continue working together.
- Although it is early days, so far there is much better pedestrian movement through the town.
- We must ensure students and staff are attracted to visit the town centre and visit shops, restaurants, café house and more. The University offers an excellent opportunity for all town centre businesses.
- In response to a query, Rob Purdy advised that integrating students into community activities in the town is important. Students should be able to access the Market Square and use pop up shops. He believes there are great opportunities for students coming into the town.
- Graphic design students from the University are liaising with the BID regarding show casing their work in vacant shops.
- A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested the BID, University and NBC look into ways of generating initiatives to bring into force community use of buildings in town
- The University has already made an economic impact in the town centre, for example the Platform bar, night time venues, coffee shops and more and have been supporting shops in Far Cotton.

Rob Purdy was thanked for his informative address.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The Scrutiny Panel commented on the need for a Womens' centre in the town and the need to find a way to communicate with all community groups.

The Scrutiny Panel referred to Berlin, Germany where there is a huge youth centre for age 8-25, it offers a range of services, youth parliament etc. It was felt something similar would be ideal in the old M&S building.

A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested the University looks at the possibility of using one of the empty retail units in the town centre

(B) DIRECTOR, PUBWATCH

No one from Pubwatch was available so Becky Bradshaw was asked to provide a general update.

Becky Bradshaw, University of Northampton, addressed the Scrutiny Panel and provided information how the University is dealing with issues as they arise.

Becky Bradshaw advised:

- Residents' Forum was set up in the Summer 2018 and a schedule of further meeting dates has been sent to residents.
- A lot of attention has focussed on parking issues and these should be addressed by early Spring.
- Environmental issues – surveys on wildlife being undertaken and early indications show no adverse impact in the University area. The full survey findings will be shared when completed.
- Street Littering – the University are helping with this issue and are looking to do more.
- A number of safety issues have been addresses including lighting and CCTV in Becketts Park; Safer Routes Home map for students; Safety & Wellbeing Centre to support the night time economy; park & ride at Edgar Mobbs car parks and continue to improve engagement wherever possible.
- Safer routes home plan direct students over new bridge in Becketts Park and away from the residential areas.

Over the Christmas period the Universities security staff rescued two members of the public from the river.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The vast majority of students are well behaved it is only a handful of students whose behaviour needs addressing. The University deals with students in line with the management policies.
- The University is continuing to work with partners in dealing with drug issues in and around the University. The University has invested in providing 5 full-time Police Officers on the campus and leads the way in this Model of Operations. The University recently hosted an open day which saw 36 Universities attend and review Northampton's operational model.
- The Panel acknowledged the good work the University is doing and in particular the new Platform student bar which has received excellent feedback from the police and other community safety partners.

(C) VARIOUS COMMUNITY GROUPS

At this point, Councillor Larratt, in his capacity of Deputy Leader of the Council, presented his written report which highlighted the partnership work had undertaken to date and which is continuing to be carried out with the University. A copy of the written response is attached to the agenda. Councillor Larratt highlighted the salient points:

- CCTV, lighting, community safety, park& ride, partnership working and more.
- Ongoing work in respect of identifying a Park & Ride site on the east side of town.
- Parking on residential streets is an issue and the Council is actively working with residents, University, Police and NCC on this issue.
- The Council supported by the University and UNO buses offered Park & Ride at Christmas. Further work will be undertaken for 2019.

The Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The written report of the Deputy Leader was supported it showed good collaborative working. There are negative impacts as well.
- It is good the public can use the café, restaurant etc on the University campus.
- In response to a query regarding HIMOs, it was acknowledged HIMOs are an issue but the findings of the research paper by University of Loughborough will be taken forward.
- The quality of student accommodation is subject to licensing.
- Regarding the Freshers event that had taken place on the Market Square it was acknowledged some lessons had been learnt. The event was very well attended and attracted high levels of rubbish which will be better managed in 2019.
- The Impact on the town centre economy had been significant which was excellent.
- The bar “Platform” is an excellent venue. This is great support for students, excellent security.
- It was acknowledged that the Friends of and Delapre Abbey have begun working with the University.
- A neighbourhood watch scheme around the University is being explored.

Councillor Larratt was thanked for his address.

The Scrutiny Panel considered the written responses from the various Community Groups and commented:

- Buddies of Becketts (BOB) has been working with the University from the outset. A good relationship has developed. There is a need for a similar type relationship with other partners.
- Positive feel with regard the impact of the move of the University.
- Support was given to the clear bag initiative for recycling in Far Cotton.
- Dual use highways are explored around Becketts Park as they have worked well in other towns. It was suggested this might be a potential recommendation of final report to enhance the area.
- It was noted the junction at the top of Bedford Road / Victoria Promenade / Derngate / Cheyne Walk requires a yellow box to improve traffic flow. The traffic lights are already managed by Urban Traffic Control but no enforcement at the junction is currently undertaken. Some drivers are blocking exit ways and causing tailback.
- It was noted the pedestrian crossing between St Johns car park and Becketts Park on Victoria Promenade is where the majority of foot traffic takes place and more work could be undertaken to enhance this area and promote use of the footbridge.

AGREED: That the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The background information was noted and would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The meeting concluded at 7:25 pm