

PRESENT

Tom Hadkiss (Chair).

63 Members were present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Tom Hadkiss welcomed members to the 3rd Quarterly Meeting of Hull Business Forum focusing on 'Changing the Face of Hull'.

BUSINESS FORUM AND CITYVISION UPDATE

Nick Pontone, Hull Business Forum Manager, gave members an overview of recent work and forthcoming activities of the Forum. It was reported that the Forum's bi-weekly e-newsletter, Inside Track, had been launched for local business and would include no more than five articles per issue each with no more than five sentences.

It was also reported that the Steering Group had been developing a Strategic Priorities Plan for the Forum which would shape representational and practical activities. It was proposed that the two key strategic priorities for the Forum would be economy (to include transport, enterprise, 'buy local' etc) and education (GCSE attainment, vocational skills and graduate retention etc.). Secondary priority themes were proposed as environment, health, crime and housing. Cross-cutting all of these themes would be a 'Pride in Hull' banner which would be about improving Hull's self-confidence and civic pride. With no dissenting voices the Forum agreed this framework in principle with further work on implementation to be led by the Steering Group.

Nick Pontone also updated members on progress made on the two issues raised at the Open Forum at the 2nd Quarterly Forum:

Castle Street – Transport Minister Tony McNulty MP visited Hull in June to look at the options for a long-term solution to the Castle Street problem for which the Highways Agency were currently developing a scheme(s). A 'cut and cover' option was favoured amongst key partners in the city as it would substantially resolve the severance of the city centre from its waterfront. The Department for Transport would receive recommendations from the Highways Agency late this year or early in 2005 with a decision anticipated in Spring 2005. More information was available from Nick Pontone.

Royal Mail – it was reported that the Chamber of Commerce had led business representations regarding the deterioration of postal services in Hull (primarily later delivery times) following the recent introduction of Single Daily Delivery, which was a key part of Royal Mail's restructuring to take it back into profitability. Local managers had met with local businesses at the Hull Area Council of the Chamber recently and explained that later deliveries were largely due to changing terms of employment of Royal Mail staff which meant all business deliveries were unlikely to be completed before 9.30am as had been the norm in the past. The problems would be partially resolved once the new system bedded down and the Royal Mail locally may be able to assist businesses with specific needs, however national representations would be required to influence the fundamental reason why deliveries were now later.

Cityvision Sub-Board Elections – it was noted that there were no volunteers for business representatives onto the Citytravel sub-board at the last meeting. However, since that meeting Tony Cosgrove from Nortech and Simon Taylor from TaylorSyms had put themselves forward for the sub-board. This was agreed.

Nick Pontone reported that issues arising in the next quarter would include a response from the Forum to the Regional Spatial Strategy, the establishment of a working group to look into procurement issues in the city and further work to promote an entrepreneurial culture with a presentation from Young Enterprise at the next Steering Group meeting.

Cityvision Board and Sub-Board representatives were then invited to highlight key issues arising from their various groups and David Hawkins reported on the positive recent work of Cityimage and its key partners in presenting Hull and the East Riding together as a destination for tourism and investment. Members had a discussion on how we attracted investment into the local area.

'CHANGING THE FACE OF HULL'

Panel: Tom Hadkiss (Chair)	Hull Business Forum
Paul Sewell	Sewell Group
Hardial Bhogal	Gateway Pathfinder
John Haymes	Hull Citybuild

Gateway Pathfinder – Hardial Bhogal

Hardial Bhogal, Interim Director of Gateway Pathfinder gave members a presentation on the work of the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) work in the city. Key issues raised included:

- Hull and the East Riding had been designated as one of nine pathfinder areas in the country.
- Tasked with tackling the housing problems in the area as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities agenda.
- Gateway were currently developing their prospectus which was in part a funding bid to Government for what could be very significant resources over to next 15 years.
- Other pathfinders had been awarded sums of between £30m and £125m over the next 2/3 years.
- The symptoms of housing problems were falling or static prices, high turnover and the number of empty properties.
- The causes of low demand included economic issues, demographic change, quality of housing stock, education and community safety.
- The solutions therefore must be about holistic regeneration, not just housing.
- The prospectus would in reality be a masterplan for the area with a strong delivery focus.
- A Developers Forum had been established with Construction Works in an attempt to maximise the opportunities for local firms and people to benefit.
- Pathfinder provided an opportunity to be bold and ambitious and presented a huge opportunity for Hull which it needed to grasp.
- The Prospectus would be submitted in September or October with ODPM deciding the level of investment three months after submission. Delivery would start 1 April 2005.

Hull Citybuild – John Haymes

John Haymes gave members a presentation on the activities and plans of Hull Citybuild, the Urban Regeneration Company who were leading key regeneration schemes in Hull as well as the City Centre Masterplan:

- Citybuild was effectively a joint venture between Hull City Council and Yorkshire Forward.
- Masterplans had been developed for the central area and West Hull.
- Hull city centre was critical to the wider city-region as it has the capacity to drive the economy.
- However, it was currently under-performing and had significant weaknesses such as the quality of office space and employment.
- It was emphasised that the Masterplan was owned by the city not just Citybuild – it needed to be recognised as Hull's agenda as a focus for investment and development.
- The Masterplan identified key opportunities for Hull including an under-utilised waterfront (both the estuary and river Hull) and a large potential catchment area.
- The key development sites in the city centre such as Humber Quays and Albion Square were reviewed. Taken together, the sites would have a complimentary mix of retails, leisure, office and residential development.
- Progress of the Island Wharf and St Stephens (Ferensway) developments was reported in detail.
- It was emphasised that the size and location of St Stephens meant that it was a unique opportunity for Hull.
- The scheme would include a transport interchange, hotel, major retail development, residential investment and a new home for Hull Truck Theatre.
- The site would handed to the developer, ING, in the autumn with completion scheduled for Easter 2007.
- In terms of using local companies and jobs during development, it was highlighted that approximately 40% of Island Wharf contracts would be with local firms with a similar figure for St Stephens. This was substantially higher than other major schemes in recent years.

Questions and discussion

Tom Hadkiss welcomed the emphasis in both presentations on holistic regeneration which dealt with people as well as buildings. He highlighted the need for the business community to have a belief in Hull and help provide solutions for the city's problems.

Paul Sewell was then invited to comment from a private sector perspective. He commented that Hull's access the significant public funds in recent years reflected the problems it had but also provided real opportunities if the city could 'make it happen'. Robust projects needed to be delivered and the private sector would need to 'take the risk of winning' which may include working together in consortiums or other arrangements to deliver. It was the responsibility of business to raise the bar in terms of quality, and it was the role of the public sector to both 'join up' various initiatives and 'let go' more than in the past. Key issues which needed to be addressed included planning and procurement. He emphasised that Hull needed to make the most of its window of opportunity over the coming years.

How can local businesses get involved?

Businesses may need to work together to bid for bigger contracts and engage with the key networks in the city to get the latest information on the available opportunities. There was likely to be an overheating in key development sectors due to the under-investment in skills as the pace of change accelerated. Organisations such as Construction Works could also provide practical assistance to local businesses small and large. Above all, businesses needed to be aware of the likely opportunities over the coming years and position themselves now to be ready to take advantage.

It was noted that legal requirements to use local companies could not be written into major contracts although it could be a criteria in development competitions.

What details are available on timescales and occupancy for Island Wharf and St Stephens?

Island Wharf was a speculative development, for which Northern Foods then expressed an interest but as the local press had reported were now unlikely to re-locate there. PPH were now actively seeking appropriate tenants with a single employers HQ site highly desirable. Island Wharf was very seen as a flagship site and the right tenant would be important. St Stephens demolition would be completed in October with work on the main scheme beginning in the New Year. It was a complex development but trading on the retail side was anticipated in 2007. Retailers such as Next would be part of the scheme and a number of other major high quality retailers had shown interest in the development.

Were Pathfinder talking to the University of Hull about student accommodation?

Hardial Bhogal indicated that student accommodation was part of the Pathfinders brief as part of the wider housing stock in the city. Pathfinder were building strong links with the University and were discussing a range of issues including estate development.

Tom Hadkiss concluded the discussion and highlighted that a key theme in the presentations and debate was quality – the city needed to raise its aspirations. He thanked Hardial Bhogal, John Haymes and Paul Sewell for their contributions to the meeting and indicated that the Forum was committed to working with Gateway Pathfinder and Citybuild positively in the future.

FUTURE FORUM

The 4th Quarterly Forum meeting on 25 October 2004 would focus on the key theme of Education and Learning. To help shape the agenda for that meeting, questionnaires were tabled for members to complete on business attitudes to education.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were invited to the AGM of Young Enterprise company KH Smilers which would be held at the Goodfellowship Inn later in the evening. KH Smilers were a group of Year 10 pupils from Kelvin Hall School who had won local and regional awards for their company.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The 4th Quarterly Hull Business Forum would be held on Monday 25 October 2004 at 4.30pm and would focus on Education and Learning.