

## PRESENT

Tom Hadkiss (Chair).

102 members and guests were present.

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Tom Hadkiss welcomed members to the 5<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Hull Business Forum. He indicated that there were two main items for discussions – doing business with the public sector and the closure of North Bridge.

## BUSINESS FORUM AND CITYVISION REPORT AND ELECTIONS

A report was tabled which updated Forum members on the progress of the Cityvision partnership and eight themed sub-boards since the last elections. Business Forum Manager, Nick Pontone invited members to contact him or the business representatives on the partnerships if they required any further information.

Nick Pontone reported that the Steering Group had agreed to defer full elections until the outcome of the Cityvision structures review was complete. In the meantime, only vacant positions would be up for elections. It was noted that all members had been circulated with details of the current vacancies but that no candidates had yet been nominated for the Citylearning sub-board. Members were therefore invited to express an interest outside of the meeting. There was one vacant position on the Steering Group, and members elected Richard Brough of Brough Marine Limited to the position.

## PUBLIC SECTOR PROCUREMENT

Stephen Greep, Chief Executive of Hull & East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

The Chair invited Stephen Greep, Chief Executive of Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust to make a presentation on 'Your Local NHS – New Opportunities'. Stephen Greep highlighted that the NHS was the world's third largest employer, and the local hospitals trust comprising Hull Royal Infirmary, Castle Hill and Princess Royal Hospitals employed 6,800 people locally and had an annual income of circa £300m. Its importance to the local economy should therefore not be underestimated.

Stephen Greep stated that the Trust was embarking on the biggest investment in hospital services since the formation of the NHS. The investment programme would total circa £250m and create around 1,000 new jobs. The significant capital build programme would present some real opportunities for local businesses. Shepherds had been appointed as the main contractor for new oncology facilities at Castle Hill. Shepherds would be working with local schools and colleges regarding job opportunities and it was anticipated that 85% of the work would be kept within the Yorkshire and Humber region. Local companies interested in joining the Shepherds supply chain could contact them via their website ([www.shepherd-construction.co.uk](http://www.shepherd-construction.co.uk)).

Kier ([www.kier.co.uk](http://www.kier.co.uk)) had been appointed by the Trust to progress the cardiothoracic development to a value of £48m. Stephen Greep indicated that where possible Kier would be using contacts on the Trusts Approved List for a proportion of this work.

A number of site enabling schemes would also be required to support the above developments. The Trust approved lists would be used for this work. Local businesses could find out more about the Trust from their website ([www.hey.nhs.uk](http://www.hey.nhs.uk)).

Stephen Greep concluded by commenting that the Trust played an important role in the local economy because of their purchasing power, staff growth, capital developments and willingness to work with local partners.

#### Stephen Barrett, Corporate Director of Economy and Resources at Hull City Council

The Chair invited Stephen Barrett, Hull City Council's Corporate Director for Economy and Resources to make a presentation on the Council's new procurement policy. Stephen Barrett indicated that the Council were committed to retaining the maximum local economic benefit possible from their spending. He outlined some major changes in public sector procurement driven by the Gershon Review which set out plans for efficiency savings across the public services driven by procurement and IT.

Stephen Barrett emphasised that he hoped the meeting could provide a starting point for an ongoing dialogue between the Council and the local business community on issues such as procurement. He also highlighted the new procurement strategy which was as follows:

*"To achieve the maximum possible economic benefit for local business and the community at large as defined by the Council's corporate priorities and in parallel to use procurement as part of the toolkit in delivering the Council's statutory obligation to deliver Best Value."*

Stephen Barrett outlined the scale of the Council's capital spend in the coming years with £305m in the core capital programme in the next three years; £221m for the Decent Homes Standard up to 2011; and £180m for Building Schools for the Future from 2007. In addition there was likely to be significant investment in the Gateway Pathfinder on housing market renewal in addition to the Council's £300m per year revenue budgets. Stephen Barrett emphasised that procurement was a heavily regulated part of local government and whilst the Council couldn't give contracts to local firms because they were local, they were able to help demystify public sector procurement to increase the capacity of local firms to win business.

A note of caution for small businesses was noted in that both the Gershon Review and attempts to move to a more strategic approach to procurement perhaps with neighbouring authorities, could potentially mean larger companies would be better placed to win contracts. The onset of E-procurement was also a major factor for which local businesses would need to be ready for if they wanted to do business with the public sector

#### Phillip Cleary, E-business Officer, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Phillip Cleary, E-business Officer reported that he was working for East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council to work with local businesses on procurement opportunities. He indicated that local authority tenders from across the region could be found on the internet ([www.counciltenders.net](http://www.counciltenders.net)). Support was available to local businesses on e-procurement and a guide 'Selling to the Council' was being developed. Contact details and more information on was available from their website ([www.eastriding.gov.uk/ebusiness](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/ebusiness)). Stephen Greep indicated that he would put his presentation and details about the NHS Trusts approved list on their website.

#### Questions and Discussion

Sue Taylor from the Federation of Small Businesses asked what chance very small businesses had to take advantage of the opportunities discussed. Stephen Greep recognised that it would be difficult for the smallest businesses and they would stand a better chance by collaborating with other SMEs. However, the public sector didn't always procure 'big' and cost wasn't the first and only criteria taken into consideration when tendering. Stephen Barrett highlighted the challenges for small businesses investing in the appropriate IT facilities to be ready for e-procurement.

Liz Young asked how the approved supplier lists worked and Stephen Greep indicated that different scales of tender had different requirements but that in general a track record of successful work between the Trust and contractor was important. David Hawkins asked how SMEs could access sub-contracts under PFI schemes and it was noted that the main contractor would deal with these issues. Some contracts could stipulate the need for the main contractor to supply locally wherever possible. Graham Barnett asked about opportunities for business outside of the construction and development sectors. Stephen Greep indicated that approved lists were used to procure a number of goods and services and other means such as open advertisement were also used depending on the nature and size of the tender. It was emphasised that local businesses should not be afraid to approach and build relationships with large public sector organisations on the issue of procurement. David Burnby highlighted that the co-operative model was an excellent example of business collaboration and he suggested that work be undertaken to encourage and facilitate small businesses to work together on securing contracts too large for them on their own. Stephen Greep indicated that he would be happy to talk to such a group on an informal basis.

The Chair thanked Stephen Greep, Stephen Barrett and Phillip Cleary for their presentations and contributions to the meeting.

## **CLOSURE OF NORTH BRIDGE**

### Presentations

Graham Hall, Passenger Transport Manager at Hull City Council gave members a presentation on the transport implications arising from the closure of North Bridge for eight months from 7 March 2005. He indicated that 21,000 vehicles per weekday would be directly affected by the closure, and that delays were inevitable unless measures were taken to reduce disruption.

Graham Hall reviewed the wide range of traffic management measures that would be put in place to try to keep traffic flows moving. These included altering traffic signals, extension of bus lane hours of operation, the promotion of walking, cycling and car sharing ([www.hullcarshare.com](http://www.hullcarshare.com)) and some changes to city centre routes, such as prohibiting north bound traffic on Wilberforce Drive. A letter to local businesses was launched which set out details of what was happening, why and what could be done. Detailed information packs would also be available shortly from [passengertransport@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:passengertransport@hullcc.gov.uk) or on 01482 300300. Business could help by disseminating information to their staff and developing transport plans. It was noted that priority was being given to public transport in an attempt to take cars off the road thus freeing up road space for essential journeys.

Barrie Young from Hull City Council gave a presentation on the engineering issues associated with the bridge closure. He reported that the bridge was built in 1932 with a life span of 120 years and with an anticipated refurbishment required every 30-40 years. The structure was now Grade II listed and was one of only eight such bridges in the UK (3 of which were in Hull). The cracks in the opening mechanism were discovered in 2000 and had been closely monitored since. The contract was awarded last May and preparatory work had been ongoing since this time. The

closure had already been delayed once to avoid it co-inciding with the temporary relocation of the bus station.

#### Question and Answer session

Cllr Gary Wareing, Hull City Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport joined Graham Hall and Barrie Young on the platform for questions.

**Q. Would traffic calming on other routes such as Cottingham Road be taken out to improve traffic flows and would the prohibition of traffic on Carr Lane be lifted to provide a further East-West route through the city centre?**

*A. There were no plans to alter traffic calming measures, parking places or bus lanes from Cottingham Road. Carr Lane would continue to be for buses only to ensure that wherever possible public transport was kept moving and reliable to encourage its use particularly during the closure period.*

**Q. Did the contractor have any incentive to finish the job early?**

*A. The contract was awarded with the intention for the work to be completed in the shortest possible time. There were some relatively small dis-incentives should the work overrun. It was also noted that the Council were analysing a detailed programme of the works to try to reduce the period of closure.*

**Q. Are there any additional enforcement measures to avoid bus lanes from being blocked?**

*A. Hull City Council were working closely with partners such as the Police to ensure bus lane regulations were properly enforced to keep public transport moving.*

**Q. Will 24 hour working be used to reduce the closure period?**

*A. At some stages it will be, however other parts of the refurbishment will be noisy and will be restricted due to the residential areas nearby.*

**Q. What measures are being taken to help essential commercial journeys?**

*A. The policy was to try to persuade people travelling to work to make alternative journey arrangements (i.e. public transport, car share, change journey time etc.) which would then maximise the capacity of the network for commercial and other essential traffic.*

**Q. Will there be improved policing and other measures to improve safety for those being encouraged to walk e.g. from Victoria Dock?**

*A. There is a bus service available from Victoria Dock. These issues would also be considered in the regular dialogue with the Police, however it was emphasised that Victoria Dock was a safe place to live.*

**Q. Could local schools make the most of the educational opportunities provided by the closure about the bridge?**

*A. Some work experience placements were offered and there would be co-operation with local schools.*

**Q. Would Scott Street Bridge be brought back into use.**

*A. No, its current condition meant that it would not be feasible to bring it back into use.*

**Q. Why can't the Act of Parliament be sought to remove the priority given to river traffic?**

*A. The Council has a regular dialogue with river Hull users and is seeking to discourage the lifting of bridges where possible.*

**Q. Are there secure cycle facilities to encourage their use?**

*A. Yes. Two of the secure, refurbished city centre multi-story car parks have appropriate cycle parking facilities.*

**Q. A business would have taken the opportunity to replace a piece of equipment more than 70 years old and designed for a different time. Is the Council thinking long term when it decides to repair not replace?**

*A. The Council had looked at the options for replacement, however the bridge has several more decades of life left and the cost of replacement would have been £5m to £10m compared to £1.5m for repair. Construction of a new structure would also cause more disruption to traffic than a period of closure during repair.*

**Q. Concerns were expressed about the impact on retailers in the city centre especially since the recent gridlock whilst part of Ferensway was being resurfaced. Will roadworks on other routes in Hull be halted during the period of closure?**

*A. Other roadworks would not be carried out on 'sensitive' routes. The number of 'sensitive' routes was increasing as the possible area of impact widened.*

**Q. When the bridge is stripped back to carry out the repairs, are more problems likely to be found?**

*A. This has been considered and whilst no other problems are anticipated, it is clearly a risk factor which will only become clear once the bridge is closed.*

**Q. Buses are being given priority, but businesses will be affected if their commercial traffic cannot get through. Who at the Council is directly responsible for ensuring the flow of traffic during closure?**

*A. The Council were trying to protect the reliability of bus services to ensure there are alternatives that encourage people to take cars off the road. If every motorist stays in their car, there is likely to be significant congestion. The Council's Cabinet has agreed that Cllr Gary Wareing and Head of Highways Pele Bhamber are responsible for the traffic management decisions during the period of closure.*

The Chair commented that the discussion had been both frank and constructive and he thanked members for their input and the Council for their openness. He also invited the Council to use the Forum as a means of communicating with the business community during the closure period and as a sounding board for any changes to the traffic management arrangements that may be needed following closure.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Hull Business Forum would be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at 4.30pm.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting.