

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 16 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Denise Fox (Chair), Joe Otten (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Ian Auckland, Steve Ayriss, Dawn Dale, Mark Jones, Bryan Lodge, Martin Phipps, Mick Rooney, Dianne Hurst (Substitute Member) and Richard Shaw (Substitute Member)

.....

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Levery, with Councillor Richard Shaw attending as his substitute, and Councillor Zahira Naz, with Councillor Dianne Hurst attending as her substitute.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th July 2021, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) read out the following questions from members of the public who were not in attendance at the meeting, and which related to the changes on Pinstone Street:-

(a) Liz Allen

“I am very concerned about any plan to restore motor traffic to this route. Whilst the temporary measures, particularly at the Leopold Street end, are visually unappealing and have created access issues, the solution to this is to replace these measures as quickly as possible with the City Centre Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) scheme which will deliver benefits for people walking and cycling, along with public transport users, and delivering much needed public realm improvements. The consultation for this was completed in January and the majority of responses were positive.

I do not believe this scheme can be delivered if motor traffic is restored along this route, and that therefore this significant funding will be lost. If

this is the case, I would be worried about the impact on the viability of other TCF schemes (as well as some of the Active Travel Fund schemes) which all link into the city scheme. It is important to note that the TCF schemes are not just aimed at 'cyclists' but deliver vital improvements for walking and public transport, which are badly needed in Sheffield to give people viable alternatives to making their journeys by car. I would also be concerned about the impact of this decision on future Department for Transport funding for all transport schemes in Sheffield (not just 'active travel' schemes)"

Please could you respond to these comments from Cycle Sheffield?

The Chair requested that a written response be sent to Ms Allen.

(b) Emily Griffiths

In examining best use of the public realm in a city that has declared a climate emergency, and where efficiency can be measured in terms of space taken up, energy expended, or how many people are using it, how efficient is the transport mix of Pinstone Street now, and how efficient was it with two-way motor traffic?

The Chair requested that a written response be sent to Ms Griffiths.

(c) Chris Sterry

With regards to the works being done in Sheffield, especially around the Town Hall, I understand that a number of parking bays are to be lost, including Blue Badge bays, which is a concern as not all persons are able to use public transport, and for some, taxis are not ideal. This is expressly so for wheelchairs, due to the insufficiency of wheelchair bays on some buses, and with regards to taxis for wheelchairs to be securely clamped within the vehicles. For a secure clamping, the wheelchairs need to be either facing forward or rear facing, otherwise they are unstable. So actions need to be taken to provide more secure facilities for wheelchair travel.

This brings me to blue Badge bays, which again, many in Sheffield are not suitable for wheelchair embarking, and as in many bays, there is insufficient space for vehicles to be able to park in a blue badge bay to enable wheelchairs to be loaded or unloaded. Also, in many if not all bays, there are not any safe areas around the bays to enable safe access to load or unload as there are in Blue Badge bays in car parks. So more spaces need to be available around all Blue Badge bays, and certainly more bays for wheelchair accessible access vehicles.

The Chair requested that a written response be sent to Mr Sterry.

(d) Robin Garner

How does the Council reconcile the possible return of motor vehicles to the City Centre in light of their recently declared climate emergency?

The Chair requested that a written response be sent to Mr Garner.

5.2 The Committee received questions relating to the changes on Pinstone Street where members of the public attended in the meeting, as follows:-

(a) Peter Sephton (Chair, Sheffield City Centre Action Group)

Can we be told whether the Council has asked for the views of Dame Sarah Storey over this proposal and if 'Yes', what are these views? In her position as the Active Travel Commissioner for the Sheffield City Region and a person with disability who has won a record 17 Paralympic gold medals, we might presume that she feels the same way as the City Centre residents, who realise that the future of our centre lies in a traffic free environment where people of all abilities and disabilities can move about without fear of dying prematurely from traffic fumes or being flattened by a ten ton bus.

If the Council votes to put traffic back into Pinstone Street it will be killing not just its residents, but the whole future of its expensive and potentially exciting new building project that aims to revitalise our struggling town centre. In 2019 the Council took the brave step to pedestrianise the centre. Let's know whether our Active Travel Commissioner supports a policy that will return us to the polluted 1980's?

Having managed city public transport all my working life I can see what the problem is here. The new route layout needs a massive public information campaign and some decent infrastructure to shelter people from the rain and inform users where the services start and stop. However, if public transport access is an issue, it's a temporary one because you haven't created the facilities or publicity to help its users. All under the Council's and the Passenger Transport Executive's control. Get these sorted and the problem is solved. But please don't ruin the City Centre because you can't fix the present or visualise the future.

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson (Executive Member for Climate Change Environment and Transport) stated that that Dame Sarah Storey had been involved in advising the Sheffield City Region (SCR) on active travel issues, specifically those issues faced by people with disabilities. The main problem facing the city in terms of active travel was the current lack of infrastructure. In terms of the promotion of public transport, the proposals in the report represented a step-change and 'wrap around' approach to public transport, with the proposed new schemes including new bus stops, real-time information, audio-visual aids, seats and lighting in bus stops and coherence in terms of the sighting of bus stops. In addition to this, the Council was working with the bus operators in

connection with efforts to attract more people to travel on buses.

Matthew Reynolds (Transport Planning and Infrastructure Manager) added that the proposals outlined by Councillor Johnson were all included in the business case, which had been submitted to the SCR, and that the proposals fed into the wider Bus Services Improvement Plan, and how the Council could provide the step-change with regard to public transport priority within the City Centre.

(b) James Martin (Acting Chair, Transport 4 All)

Over the Christmas and New Year period of 2020, several groups of disabled people got together (virtually!) to produce a joint response to the proposed changes in the City Centre for Connecting Sheffield. I believe this response is pertinent to your discussion today, giving some depth to the issues both of permanently losing buses on Pinstone Street and the gains of levelling cambered pavements which excessively tip towards the road, and rectifying the loss of blue badge parking, etc. Gains which are only possible when replacing all pavements on the affected corridor, and hopefully on some side streets as well.

As I understand it, removing the active travel aspect of the City Centre scheme would mean handing millions of pounds back to Central Government because it would not be possible to develop another scheme in time with active travel at its core. I want to make it clear that there are wins and losses for disabled people whether abandoning or keeping the City Centre Connecting Sheffield plans.

The response highlights the essential nature of getting a City Centre circular bus route if closing Pinstone Street. It needs to serve the Barkers Pool/City Hall area and connecting with key transport stops in the Castle Gate, trams and the Moor, and of course the railway station if we are to be attractive to visitors. The City Hall and Town Hall are the most cut off areas of the city due to the Pinstone Street closure and it is a pre-requisite for the success of any City Centre change for disabled people and those with mobility issues that some bus access is provided even if this means changing to another bus.

Can the Committee assure the Access Liaison Group and Transport 4 All groups that elected members will take care with this response to understand it and show their engagement with the wins and losses of the different options ahead of us? Aspiration is important for our city, and we need to ensure that the aspirations of disabled people are delivered on irrespective of today's decision to ensure that losses in blue badge parking are reversed and fixing issues with pavement surfaces are resolved whatever the outcome of the Committee's decision today. I hope the Committee is equally supportive of this?

The following is a quote from Disability Sheffield's response to the City Centre proposals:

“There are positives to the scheme, but some significant difficulties remain that could leave people with certain disabilities unable to access parts of the City Centre and these need resolving for the scheme to be positive for all disabled people. It is important to note that positive impacts for one group of disabled people are not a mitigation for people with a different disability and setting the needs of different people against one another is unhelpful. Therefore, this response should not be treated as an endorsement of the scheme by the groups concerned. There are some key problems which need resolving to ensure that equal access for all is maintained.”

Please could you respond to this?

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson stated that Council officers had been liaising with various groups and organisations on the proposals, including the Access Liaison Group, which had enabled them to get into the detail of the schemes, and find out from people with disabilities exactly how inaccessible the city centre was for them. Councillor Johnson stressed the importance of listening to the views of different people, having a wide range of disabilities. It was accepted that there were a number of barriers in the city centre which created problems of access for people with disabilities, and the current proposals, together with the changing nature of the city centre, would provide the Council with an excellent opportunity to transform the area to make it more accessible for disabled people, and more attractive for everyone. There was a bid for funding for bid for low emission buses, and a free electric bus could form part of that bid.

Tom Finnegan-Smith (Head of Strategic Transport and Infrastructure) reported on the current position regarding Shopmobility, indicating that the Council was currently in discussion with Sheffield Business Improvement District (BID) in terms of the possibility of a new offer, based broadly on the previous scheme. Such discussions had been very positive, and it was hoped that there would be more clarity in terms of a future scheme in the next few weeks.

(c) Martha Foulds (Access Liaison Group and Transport 4 All)

As a blind, white cane user, the changes to Pinstone Street have impacted my ability to travel safely. Tactile paving has not always been updated to reflect the new layout and natural routes for white cane users along the edge of the development lead us into the middle of the cycle path.

Whatever the Committee’s decision, can you assure blind Sheffielders that you will that prioritise our inclusion, access and equality?

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson referred to his previous comments, indicating that, as part of the proposals, the Council would have to work with all disability groups in order to identify all the different needs. He highlighted the opportunities for the Council if the proposed schemes

were approved, to transform the city centre, and make it more accessible for people with disabilities.

(d) Jenny Carpenter (Sheffield Climate Alliance)

"Given the urgent need to reduce the city's carbon emissions and air pollution, is it not possible to maintain the Pinstone Street priority measures for walking and cycling while at the same time providing a small electric bus service to enable and encourage elderly and less mobile people to access the City Centre more readily by public transport?"

The Chair stated that a response to this issue had been provided already.

(e) Andrew Rodgers (Cycle Sheffield/Streets for People)

"Considering the decision of Central Government to withdraw funding and access to apply for future funding from Councils that have removed active travel infrastructure funded through national schemes, i.e. West Sussex, Liverpool and Brighton & Hove - what risk assessment have Council officers undertaken in relation to how reversion on Pinstone Street will impact the likelihood of funding for schemes that have been consulted on, including those at Tinsley, Crookes, Nether Edge and the Sheaf Valley, and how much liaison has been had with their counterparts in the Department for Transport about this issue?"

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson reported that the Council had not carried out any risk assessments in connection with the proposed scheme on the basis that there had not been any decisions taken to remove any of the walking and cycling measures undertaken. There had been a number of decisions made over the last two years to proceed with a number of schemes, which all interlocked and overlapped, and would ultimately create a full network across the city. There was therefore no risk of the Council losing its funding.

(f) Stuart Bywater (City Centre Resident and Business Owner)

Have any of the Councillors in favour of reopening Pinstone Street to traffic any evidence that this move would have any advantages either economically, environmentally and indeed socially to the residents of the City of Sheffield?

The Chair requested that a written response be sent to Mr Bywater.

(g) Lee Thompson (Partnership Manager, Sustrans)

What are the benefits of re-introducing buses and cars to a pedestrianised area? Has any modelling been done?

Has any meaningful face to face engagement been conducted with residents, visitors, and local business in the area? pre and post?

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson referred to the decisions taken over the last two years to use the Transforming Cities Funding and the Future High Streets Fund towards creating a network of accessible walking and cycling routes across the city. This represented the Council's current status and position. The Council declared a climate emergency in 2013, and was now trying to put this into practice.

(h) Thomas Atkin (Sheffield Carer Action Group/Resident)

The closure of Pinstone Street has, in my experience as a disabled person and a carer, become more accessible and is now a better place for people with sensory processing issues, such as ASD? Has the Council factored this into its discussions?

In response, Councillor Douglas Johnson stated that he accepted that the city centre has had poor accessibility for many years, particularly for people with disabilities. The Transforming Cities Fund had granted the Council an opportunity to make the area more accessible. In terms of noise-nuisance, the closure of Pinstone Street to traffic had created a quiet haven in the Peace Gardens, which had been a major benefit for people visiting the city centre. Councillor Johnson made reference to the future proposals for Pounds Park, which was to be developed as part of the Heart of the City scheme, using Transforming Cities Funding on the basis of the city centre scheme.

(i) June Luxon

I oppose the closing of Pinstone Street and Leopold Street because for anyone in a wheelchair, it is all uphill from Arundel Gate or Furnival Gate. I challenge all those who want the streets closed to push my husband in his wheelchair from either of these streets.

Councillor Douglas Johnson stated that there was an opportunity for a major transformation of the city centre, which would improve accessibility for all, and particularly for people with disabilities. He referred to data in the report that showed that one benefit of the scheme was that distances from more bus stops to the theatres were less than they were before.

6. PINSTONE STREET

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Interim Executive Director, Place, on the changes made to Pinstone Street in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the future plans for this area of the city centre.
- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Douglas Johnson (Executive Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport), Councillor Ruth Mersereau (Executive Adviser, Climate Change, Environment and Transport), Mick Crofts (Interim Executive Director, Place), Tom Finnegan-Smith (Head of Strategic Transport and Infrastructure) and Matt Reynolds (Transport Planning and Infrastructure Manager).

6.3 The report made reference to the changes made to the highway in the core city centre area, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, in order to create more circulation space, which included the closure of Leopold Street and Pinstone Street to motor traffic, except for emergency vehicles and permitted access. The report contained statistical information in terms of bus stop accessibility and city centre footfall, in comparison with other Core Cities and city centre bus journey times. The report also contained details of proposed Grey to Green landscaping works to be introduced in the city centre, a map showing proposed Connecting Sheffield steps on Pinstone Street and Arundel Gate, bus access and details of how the proposals aligned with the other city centre programmes. Appended to the report was an Equality Impact Assessment.

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- The main aim of the various schemes was to improve access to, and through, the city centre and to improve the quality of the environment. It was accepted that access to the city centre and its environment had been poor for a number of years, and it was hoped that the proposed schemes would help to significantly improve both these things. One particular aim was to make it attractive for people who are not cycling now.
- In terms of access to specific locations in the city centre, such as the Radisson Blu hotel, drop-off and loading bays were being considered as part of the scheme. Vehicle access for the Radisson Blu Hotel would be on Burgess Street. There were also proposals to address the issue of access and loading for businesses on Pinstone Street, which was likely to be similar to the current arrangements in operation on Fargate. Officers were working closely with colleagues working on the Heart of the City scheme and the Future High Streets Fund scheme to ensure that all the proposed improvements were integrated.
- The main issue with regard to the free electric shuttle bus operating in and around the city centre was one of routing. Officers were working with the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE), in connection with a bid to the Department for Transport for funding for low emission buses, and an electric bus could form part of this bid.
- Considerable work was being undertaken in connection with the future of the John Lewis store and car park but, at the present time, there were no immediate plans for the re-opening of the car park. Any proposals regarding the car park would not fall within the scope of the Connecting Sheffield scheme
- The core change to Pinstone Street would be the same as it is now, as it would be in the Connecting Sheffield project. Wider changes were planned on Arundel Gate and Furnival Gate, and continuing changes on Rockingham Street. On Pinstone Street, the core traffic management arrangements would remain the same. There would be a north-bound bus gate on Arundel

Gate, which would allow access up to the Novotel, and a further bus gate proposed on Furnival Gate, just in advance of Matilda Way.

- There were always going to be some people who benefited from the proposed changes, in terms of access to and through the city centre, and those who would find access more difficult.
- Sheffield had performed better than most Core Cities in terms of the recovery in footfall in the city centre following the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Consultation on the proposed schemes had been undertaken in December 2020 and, as part of the development of the Connecting Sheffield programme, officers were very conscious of the effect of the pandemic on people's lives. A number of shops and businesses in the city centre were re-opening at the time of the consultation, and a large part of the consultation was held online. Information leaflets had been distributed to residents and businesses in the city centre area. A series of online engagement events had also been held with interested groups and organisations. The response to the consultation had been fairly significant, with comments having been received from a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. There may be further consultation on the details of the proposed schemes.
- Whilst the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) attached to the report now submitted related mainly to the plans on Pinstone Street and the wider social distancing measures, there was a specific EIA for the project, which had been updated and developed as the project had progressed.
- Sheffield had led the way in a number of exemplar projects, such as Grey to Green, and the plan was to use the ethos of such projects, and link it to the city centre proposals. Active Travel was clearly a key element of the process, and providing high quality, clear, coherent and consistent routes was vital to the project's success. The aim was to provide a clear, coherent route through the city centre, together with high levels of public transport priority, and closing Pinstone Street had helped to improve some bus journey times.
- The proposed schemes included green planting and sustainable urban drainage for flood management measures based on Grey to Green designs.
- With regard to Hostile Vehicle Mitigation, the need to protect space that high levels of people would be in was very important. The emergency measures were implemented to ensure there was sufficient external space for people, such as to allow for queuing outside banks. Other such measures included Tudor Square, where it was considered vital to have sufficient, outdoor space for people visiting the theatres, and which included permanent counter-terrorism measures.
- Details of the different levels and gradients in the city centre could be provided. As part of the accessibility work undertaken, officers had followed the inclusive mobility standards.

- Details of the number of Sheffield residents having a disability would be forwarded to Members.
- As part of the consultation process, whilst no-one had specifically been on those buses included as part of the 36 bus routes that had been changed, to seek the views of customers, people were asked whether they were public transport users or not. The consultation was shared with Transport User Groups, via the SYPTE and bus operators.
- Service requirements had been identified in the design of the projects. Service requirements regarding the Radisson Blu Hotel had been included in both the emergency works, and there was a servicing route for all businesses on Pinstone Street, shown on the plans included in the report now submitted.
- The Council had undertaken considerable work, which had included working with the bus operators, to improve bus emissions. The Council had also secured funding from the Government's Clean Bus Technology Fund to upgrade more of the city's bus fleet to Euro 6 standard, which represented a significant improvement.
- It was accepted that improvement in footfall in the city centre following the relaxation of Government restrictions was not solely due to the closure of Pinstone Street, but simply due to a trend which had been mirrored in other cities. However, the increase in footfall was not as high in those cities having higher levels of office accommodation due to staff not returning to their offices on a regular basis. This had also affected patronage levels on buses in such cities. Reference was made to a letter from Councillor Paul Turpin (Executive Member for Inclusive Economy, Jobs and Skills) to the Committee, highlighting the benefits of keeping Pinstone Street and Leopold Street closed to traffic.
- The South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service were statutory consultees regarding any proposed Traffic Regulation Order, and the Service had been consulted on the proposed plans. The Service would also be consulted on the more permanent plans.
- The creation of a coherent City Centre Plan was work in progress, and would involve a number of different elements, including the Heart of the City scheme, Transforming Cities Fund, Connecting Sheffield and Future High Streets Fund, as well as the Bus Service Improvement Plan. There were also a number of other related issues to consider, such as anti-social behaviour, green spaces and Grey to Green works.
- It was accepted that given all the different elements, and complexities involved in the various schemes, it was difficult to keep the public up to date, and involve them in the overall process. There was a draft plan which explained all the various different elements of change in the city centre, which would lead into a broader consultation with all interested parties,

including the public, on the longer-term plans and wider central area.

- All local authorities had received a letter from the Minister of State for Transport, in July 2021, regarding the active travel measures funded through the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund, and also referring to broader transport funding issues. It made specific reference to the premature withdrawal of those schemes funded through the Active Travel Fund, warning that any premature withdrawal of schemes could affect future funding. There was an element of risk in terms of the current proposed schemes, in that there were time limits set for the completion of such works. The withdrawal of the scheme at Shalesmoor would not result in any financial risk to the Council as this decision had been made prior to the current Government guidance being announced in February 2022, which would not be retrospective.
- There were no demographic details relating to the footfall figures, although there was a link in the report now submitted to the Centre for Studies data, who were responsible for modelling across urban cities, and which may hold some data regarding demographics.
- Any potential impact of the current proposals across the city would be discussed with the Sheffield City Region, and possibly with the Department for Transport. This would include the Connecting Sheffield Programme, The Sheaf Valley Cycle Route and the Active Travel Fund 2 submission (Attercliffe to Darnall, East Bank Road and Abbey Lane/Crookesmoor crossings).
- There had been considerable improvements in terms of bus times and reliability due to the bus re-routing measures in the city centre. There was still a requirement for further discussion, at a regional level, regarding further improvements to the bus network.
- In terms of the service routes, it did not refer to all the areas highlighted on the orange routes on the plan in the report now submitted, but would also include Cross Burgess Street and Surrey Street, and this is where the servicing would be provided from. The loading bays would be used much in the same way as Fargate, with loading allowed between certain times. Should emergency access be required, this would be managed by the City Centre Management Team, by use of rising bollards and/or barriers. The zero emission bus funding that could support a free electric bus had gone through an expression of interest stage, and a full business case would be submitted to the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.
- At the present time, there was no certainty as to the bus route to Pounds Park.
- As Pinstone Street was the most popular walking route through the city centre, this was the reason why it had been targeted for the social distancing measures.

- There could be more public promotion of the benefits of the schemes, including through visuals and artwork on hoardings and barriers.
- Pedestrianisation allowing cyclists was not deemed to be pure pedestrianisation, and allowing vehicles into a pedestrian space would have to be designed appropriately. The Government have been clear that local authorities should not be promoting schemes which allowed vehicles onto pedestrianised areas.
- It had been clear from discussions with the SYPTTE and bus operators that the operators had wanted to continue using Pinstone Street, but they also valued the potential economic benefits which could be derived from having a strong, thriving city centre. They supported the proposed bus gates, which they considered would help to provide improved journey times and reliability.
- The scheme developed does not accommodate buses travelling past the Town Hall, on Pinstone Street. However, if the scheme does not progress, and buses are reintroduced onto Pinstone Street, there would be a need to redesign the scheme, and consider all the implications of bus use, including the risks around funding.
- The Committee would be informed as to whether or not Public Health had been consulted on the proposals.
- Cycles had been formally recognised as mobility aids by the Council in 2019.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, the information now reported and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Councillor Douglas Johnson, Mick Crofts, Tom Finnegan-Smith and Matt Reynolds for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that (i) the report be referred back to the Co-operative Executive, together with the issues now raised and highlighted by this Committee, specifically with regard to accessibility, inclusivity and travel routes through the city centre, and (ii) Councillor Douglas Johnson (Executive Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport) and Councillor Cate McDonald (Executive Member for Finance and Resources) give consideration, as part of the budget process, to funding a free, electric bus, to run on a route to be agreed, through the city centre.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

- 7.1 RESOLVED: That approval be given to the draft Work Programme for 2021/22, as contained in the Policy and Improvement Officer now submitted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 4th November 2021, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

This page is intentionally left blank