

**Final Report**

**Scrutiny Review – City Centre Review**

**February 2014**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council's constitution provides that the Scrutiny Committee can agree a programme of not more than three scrutiny reviews a year, such reviews are to be a time limited, in-depth investigation into specific service areas or policy. The review panels report back to the Scrutiny Committee with their findings.
- 1.2 Cabinet has highlighted several areas of work they wish to explore; one of these was issues around the development of the City Centre. In June 2013, Scrutiny Committee agreed that a scrutiny review of issues which 'discourage' as well as those which 'inhibit' development of the City Centre should be undertaken as one of their three reviews.
- 1.3 A Task and Finish panel was therefore established with the intention of providing Cabinet with a better understanding of issues which impede City Centre development.
- 1.4 The panel membership included:
  - Cllr Simon Cronin (Chair of the panel)
  - Cllr Marc Bayliss
  - Cllr Christine Cawthorne
  - Cllr David Tibbutt

## **2. Background and scope of the review**

- 2.1 Worcester is a city with a population of around 99,000 people, which is around 17.5% of Worcestershire residents. Worcester is considerably bigger than any of the other Worcestershire towns and has outlying rural areas.
- 2.2 Worcester City Centre has a great mix of ancient and modern. The centre is crammed with big high street brands and independent shops alongside visitor destinations such as the Guildhall, the Commandery and the Cathedral.
- 2.3 Worcester City Council commissioned a City Centre Master Plan in order to create a Vision and set out ambitions for the City Centre for the next fifteen years. The Master Plan also provides guidance for planners, designers and developers about how proposals should be shaped to help realise the Vision.
- 2.4 The Master plan contains projects on;
  - Cathedral Place
  - Cornmarket
  - City Walls Road
  - Riverside
  - Shrub Hill
  - Angel Place
- 2.5 Worcester City Council's Strategic Framework agreed in February 2013 also outlines that Prosperity and Ambition are key priorities of the council for the future in terms of growing our economy, reducing unemployment and delivering on our aspirations for the whole city.

- 2.6 The council is committed to achieving; more successful new businesses, existing business are supported to grow, regeneration of the City Centre, helping to create the conditions for growth and new jobs, increasing visitor spend and trying to deliver residents' aspiration for Worcester to be a vibrant city.
- 2.7 It was recognised by the Task and Finish group that the Master Plan is on-going and covers a large number of issues around the future development of the City Centre. The Task and Finish group agreed that a review of the Master Plan would be an extremely large project to undertake and were aware that the Business and Regeneration team had recently commissioned consultants to undertake a similar project.
- 2.8 It was acknowledged that that the City Centre is a key part of the council's vision to make 'Worcester a great city with a great future' and that the long term survival of city centres and high streets has dominated the press recently and several high profile national reports have been published in recent months discussing the issues around economic prosperity and sustainability of high streets. Therefore it was recognised that the review subject was timely and relevant.
- 2.9 It was therefore agreed that the Task and Finish group would identify and explore impediments to development only and not look at specific Master Plan projects.
- 2.10 The Review will focus on identifying and providing a better understanding of areas/issues which impede development, in terms of;
- Traffic/parking
  - Seagulls
  - Leases
  - Low footfall (twilight time)
  - Empty retail properties
  - Flooding
  - Surfacing
  - conservation
  - The review will also take in to account;
  - Commissioned work around City Centre progress
  - Political, environmental and social context
- 2.11 Over the course of the review, flooding and surfacing were removed from the scope as the City Council does not have responsibility for these issues. The scope was also broadened to include street cleansing/waste collection in relation to the prevalence of gulls, the evening economy and A boards
- 2.12 For the purpose of the review, it was agreed that the Worcester Business Improvement District (BID) definition of the City Centre was used.

### **3. Current Policy Context**

- 3.1 There has been significant interest in city centres from the government and public alike. The long term survival and sustainability is a hot topic fuelled in part by the economic climate and changes in consumerism.

3.2 The government report 'Understanding High Street Performance' (Dec 2013) reported that *although some high streets continue to thrive, a third are degenerating or failing. It estimates that by 2014 less than 40% of retail spending will be on the high street; and that over the last decade out of town retail floor space has risen by 30% while in town has shrunk by 14%.*

3.2 As part of the growth agenda, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister commissioned retail expert Mary Portas to conduct an independent review of the high street's future. (Mary Portas High Street Review<sup>1</sup>) The famous retail expert visited high streets across the country and produced twenty eight recommendations for government, local authorities and business to:

- Get town centres running like businesses.
- Get the basics right to allow businesses to flourish.
- Level the playing field.
- Define landlords' roles and responsibilities.
- Give communities a greater say.

3.3 The Government's National Improving High streets and town centres policy states that

*'High streets are recognised as important hubs of social interaction and cohesion, as well as providers of local jobs. They're a visible indicator of how well, or how badly, a local economy is doing. But our high streets and town centres are facing serious challenges from out-of-town shopping centres and the growth of online and mobile retailing.*

*The government recognises that our high streets have to offer something new and different that neither shopping centres nor the internet can match. They need to offer an experience that goes beyond retail - the high street should be a destination for socialising, culture, health, wellbeing, creativity and learning, with schools, doctors' surgeries and offices along with shops. Our high streets should be social places that make creative use of public spaces and with a vibrant evening economy.<sup>2</sup>*

3.4 The policy was developed to include such actions such as the *Portas Pilots* which were a result of the Portas review - several areas across the country to come up with innovative ideas about how to transform their local high street into a social place, bustling with people, services and jobs. These pilots have been funded by government.

3.5 *Town Team Partners* -The government has offered all those Town Teams that were not selected to be become a Portas Pilot the opportunity to become a Town Team Partner to help improve their high streets. Those registered to become Town Team Partners will receive a £10,000 share of a six million pound fund to take forward elements of their plans.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mary-portas-high-street-review>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-high-streets-and-town-centres>

3.6 *Supporting local markets* -The government promoted the retail markets industry by organising and supporting a National Markets Day. This was part of a 'Love Your Local Market' fortnight of events aimed at helping new market traders starting up businesses, and to celebrate and promote our local markets as part of the retail mix that a place can offer.

3.7 Government is also supporting a range of measures in response to the Portas High Street review, including:

- a £1 million 'Future High Street X-Fund' for creative and effective schemes that have been completed to rejuvenate town centres (the competition closed on 6 December 2012 and the awards will be announced in May 2013)
- a £500,000 Business Improvement Districts loan fund will be announced in the summer to help finance the development of new business improvement districts
- a share in a new £10 million High Street Innovation Fund was awarded in March 2012 to 100 places whose high streets had been most affected by the 2011 summer riots and those with the highest number of empty shops

3.8 In addition, government introduced a number of measures to support high streets, including:

- doubling small business rate relief for 2 and a half years to help small shops and make it easier for small firms to claim small business rate relief through the Localism Act
- scrapping Whitehall planning guidance which forced up parking charges, allowing councils to attract shoppers by setting competitive parking charges
- changing planning rules to allow councils to provide more parking spaces in town centres so they can compete with out-of-town supermarkets
- updating licensing laws to give councils more powers to tackle late night, anti-social behaviour
- focusing retail development in town centres through a 'town centre first' planning policy, making it easier to convert empty offices into residential use<sup>i</sup>

3.9 Government policy supports action to understand city centre challenges and work in partnership to explore and implement solutions.

#### **4. Methodology and Research**

4.1 Due to the scale of the issues, implications involved and potential resources required, a staged approach was adopted for the review.

4.2 The first stage consisted largely of a desk based approach, involving expert officers from within the council providing information and evidence. Following this, there was a limited call for specialist evidence from key stakeholders such as Contractors, shared services and partners.

- 4.3 The Review group has reported back to the Scrutiny Committee with updates throughout the review.

### **Key Findings and evidence**

#### **5. Management of Gulls**

- 5.1 The group discussed anecdotal evidence about the prevalence of gulls in Worcester City. The various reasons as to why they were such a problem were highlighted. It was acknowledged that the gull problem was in part connected to the amount of food waste in the City. Although, it was noted there had been three formal complaints about seagulls since 20.11, Members had their own experiences and had feedback from the community
- 5.2 It was agreed that more evidence was needed to discuss the issue in more detail. The group requested evidence from the Cleaner and Greener City team and Worcester Regulatory Services (WRS). The group received a briefing note outlining the current policy and activity to manage the gull population.
- 5.3 All gulls are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. It is "illegal to injure or kill any gull" – however egg removal or replacement is allowed. So it is this method of control which is used in Worcester.
- 5.4 Licenses are available from the Home Office, to destroy nests or even adult birds, not however for Herring Gulls – which account for about 10% of the Worcester population. Licenses are not easy to obtain and in particular are not used for "simple nuisance or minor damage to property,"
- 5.5 Worcestershire Regulatory Services manage the Gull egg replacement work carried out by contractors Red Kite Pest Control. This has been carried out for the past eight years and the result of the egg replacement work is a reduction in the adult population of gulls over time which nests in the City Centre.

The results available for previous seasons are shown below

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>Dif</b>
Total City Nesting Pairs	420	381	320	-61
City Centre Nesting Pairs	296 (276)	264 (254)	217 (234)	-47
St. Johns Nesting Pairs	10	13	13	0
Blackpole Nesting Pairs	114	104	90	-14

- 5.6 City Centre nesting pairs, shown in brackets, are projected numbers based on a theoretical algorithm that predicts what the colony population could be in a treatment area based on various known and predicted variables. This figure although theoretical, acts as a "control" and allows WRS to judge the success of the treatment program against a baseline projection.

- 5.7 Figures provided to the Group indicated that there has been a reduction of gull numbers but it was suggested that the population would increase exponentially if action / management is ceased.
- 5.8 There is a local action group of which Worcestershire Regulatory Service, Worcester City Council, the BID and other local businesses are involved. There are also regional Gull groups, which share best practice and information.
- 5.9 The gull population in the City is managed by routine egg removal from nests that are accessible to Red Kite Pest Control. This method of control is recognised as best practice although it is acknowledged that access to roofs in the City was an issue. 30-40% of nests in the City are not accessible.
- 5.10 Other control options discussed included:
- Trials to paint roofs red had shown some success and could be used locally in areas that gulls are known to nest in.
  - Raptors are considered an expensive option as they need to be flying in an area continuously to be effective.
  - Lethal controls can only be used if all non-lethal controls have proved ineffective and a specific license would be required.
  - There are also practical considerations in terms of implementation and potential issues with animal rights groups.
- 5.11 The group requested further information from Planning, as to whether there were any policies that could be used to support the management of the gull population. A briefing note was received from the Planning team.
- 5.12 It was recognised that there was no national or local policy in place to insist on planning action with regards to gulls and there is no reference to gulls as a material consideration in the determination of proposals relating to urban areas.
- There is no reference within the Building Regulations specifically regarding gulls only more general vermin control.
  - It is noted that the characteristic of the architecture in Worcester City is conducive to gulls.
  - Gulls could be given consideration during the first stage of the Development Plan to help shape policy. Evidence would need to be gathered as a basis for any policy formulation or review.
  - Gulls may be looked at from a development management view in terms of the validation process of information that can be considered as part of planning applications, e.g. a statement about how gulls have been considered – these processes are reviewed every two years. It was stressed that this would raise the issue but changes to developments cannot be insisted upon at present.
  - Consideration of bin storage for any future developments (to prevent gulls accessing rubbish) would require demonstrable

evidence of the impact. There may also be problems in the future due to new permitted development to convert business property to domestic outside of the planning process.

- 5.13 The group were in agreement that seagulls were an on going issue and while the council was leading the field in some of its current methods, it was important to ensure that everything that could be done to limit the population and nesting in and around the City Centre should continue to be done.

## **6. Street Cleaning / waste collection**

- 6.1 Street cleaning and waste collection was raised as an issue which may influence perceptions of the City Centre and affect evening economy as well as potentially attracting gulls.
- 6.2 The group requested evidence from Cleaner and Greener City Service on issues such as trade waste and street cleansing. David Sutton Service Manager attended a Task and Finish meeting to provide more information
- 6.3 The City Council is responsible for street cleansing. Cleansing takes place before peak time with schedules largely historically based on customer feedback including that from the BID, Members and visitors.
- 6.4 Approximately 600 businesses in the City use trade waste collection services. Although the City Council currently has over 180 trade waste customers in the City Centre, there are also a number of other commercial collectors operating in the area too. Therefore issues arising from trade waste and any potential solutions may involve a number of providers.
- 6.5 The City Council's trade waste collection service schedules work around traffic levels around the City.
- 6.6 The two key factors identified regarding waste in the City Centre were the length of time waste is left outside which may result in a negative perception of the City, and the receptacles in which it is stored not being robust enough and therefore splitting and attracting gulls, also creating an unsightly mess.
- 6.7 Options were discussed including regulating times of access, enforcement options and suitable waste receptacles including hessian bags. It was reported that Gloucester Council had purchased hessian sacks for trade waste services and that this had proved an effective solution in problem areas.
- 6.8 The group had been informed by David Sutton that the BID had been doing some development work around a shared trade waste supplier. The group therefore invited Adrian Field from BID to attend the same task and review meeting.
- 6.9 Adrian Field informed the group that the BID has considered the use of a shared trade waste collection supplier by members to achieve economies of scales, improve consistency and reduce the number of waste lorries in the City.



- 6.10 However the response from businesses was not as positive as expected. Some businesses are tied into existing contracts and some of the larger businesses / centres have their own corporate suppliers. However, the BID are still considering options for making trade waste collections cheaper for members, more visually appealing and less attractive to gulls. However, it was recognised that it is not possible to provide a total solution.
- 6.11 The group agreed that in relation to trade waste and its links to the seagull issues and resident/visitor perception it was key that the council engage more with trade waste collection companies and businesses about the specific issues and challenges it causes.

## **7. A Boards**

- 7.1 The group raised concerns about the growing number and locations of A Boards in the city centre. There were concerns about accessibility for residents and visitors. A briefing paper was provided by Ruth Mullen, Corporate Director for Service Delivery. The development and enforcement of the policy for placing A-Boards on the highway is the responsibility of the Worcestershire County Council as Highway Authority.
- 7.2 In response to complaints from visitors and concerns raised by businesses, the City Council agreed with partners from Visit Worcester and the County, to promote the current policy. This was launched as a campaign in November 2011, and was accompanied by an advisory leaflet which includes the County Council Policy which was circulated to businesses and retail outlets in the city Centre.
- 7.3 Whilst the campaign led to some improvements it did not address the issue of prompt enforcement to reinforce the policy. This has been considered by officers and discussions are ongoing with the County regarding possible delegation of powers to the City Council, which will enable greater local control and enforcement activity.
- 7.4 The Group considered the policy broadly sufficient, although clarity may be required in some areas. However, it was agreed that the policy needs to be correctly and consistently enforced.
- 7.5 Discussions are underway with the County regarding possible delegation of powers to the City Council, which will enable greater local control and enforcement activity. As part of these discussions to assist with enforcement activity, options for either licensing the A-Boards on the highway (Highways Act) or the use of a Development order (Town and County Planning Act) are also being considered.
- 7.6 It was suggested that there be an annual fee to have A Boards outside businesses which would be enforced by CEOs. Consideration needs to be given to the amount to be charged in order to make it meaningful.

- 7.7 It was agreed that regulations will need to be conveyed carefully with evidence for the reasons and information about requirements e.g. quality of boards.
- 7.8 Enforcement must be consistent and thorough to include sleeves on lamp posts, tents, banners and goods displayed outside properties.
- 7.9 The group agreed that the current course of action that the Council was undertaking with the County with regards to delegation of powers was positive and they support the project.

## **8. Leases / empty retail properties**

- 8.1 According to a recent Worcester City Centre Regeneration Progress review (Zeta report), the number of vacant units more than doubled between 2006 and 2013 and at 18.5% of units it is well above the national average which is 12.6%.
- 8.2 The group were concerned that the availability and lengths of leases for commercial properties in the City may be affecting the appetite of businesses to trade in the City and they had concerns that this may be affecting the number of empty commercial properties.
- 8.3 The BID was also invited to discuss this issue with the group. The BID have plans for activities to encourage the use of empty units in Lychgate / Cathedral area in the next 12 months. The BID is also looking for ideas for new projects where there is scope for partnership working, e.g. business grants for empty shops.
- 8.4 The use of pop-up shops could be used as a means of reducing empty units on a short term basis. These are especially effective when used to take advantage of seasonal trends and events. They are also an opportunity for owners to 'test the water' in the City and are a stepping stone towards longer term tenancies.
- 8.5 The use of business rates as an incentive / punitive tax against empty properties in some circumstances was considered. There is no business rates relief for empty properties.
- 8.6 A meeting / event for landlords was considered as an option to promote opportunities regarding the City Centre. This was thought to be particularly useful for businesses based outside the area as they are currently harder to engage.
- 8.7 The group were informed that the BID and Chamber of Commerce are working on a calendar of events to distribute to businesses and potential owners to promote the City. It was suggested that this could be developed into a pack to also include opportunities and properties to encourage businesses to come to Worcester.
- 8.8 The group considered the evidence and agreed that there were opportunities to work more closely with partners on this issue.

## **9. Extended trading**

- 9.1 The most recent regeneration progress review report indicates that the retail sector is the largest in Worcester by number of business units as they make up 15% of the total number of local businesses. Of the 31 national retailers identified by Experian good as major retailers, Worcester has all but six, the city centre also has a high representation of clothes shops compared with the national average.
- 9.2 Worcester has many attractions both historical and sporting and works with partners to put on several large events throughout the year. These activities bring in more than 2.5 million visitors per year.
- 9.3 However, recent analysis shows that pedestrian footfall in the City Centre has declined from about 27,500 counted movements in Worcester in 2000 to 16,400 in 2012. This downward trend is not confined to Worcester and most town centres around the UK and in Europe have experienced declines.
- 9.4 The group discussed the issues with the BID. Counters for Worcester City are located at various points around the City and it is reported that footfall has fallen by approximately 10% in 2013. Although there is no set pattern to footfall, weather and events held in the City do have an impact, however it is difficult to know specific reasons without face to face consultation.
- 9.5 There maybe several reasons for this decline including the economic crisis, out of centre shopping and the changing ways in which people shop e.g. Internet.
- 9.6 The group felt that there was a distinct break between the day-time and evening economy in the City Centre which results in fewer visitors coming back into the City in the evenings. It was agreed that an incentive was needed to keep shops open for later to give people a reason to come into / stay in the City.
- 9.7 It was proposed that, all businesses within the City Centre could consider changing opening hours so they are open later in the evening. It was anticipated, that this may help bridge the gap between daytime and evening economy. This may also ease some traffic congestion.
- 9.8 There was concern about changing opening hours from a business perspective as it usually takes a long time for the public to adapt to changes or there is confusion about opening times so people may go elsewhere. The group agreed that in order for it to be successful, it would require strong marketing and a long term commitment.
- 9.9 It was noted that extended trading hours should be presented as a complete offer, perhaps concentrating on different areas in the City, e.g. St. Martin's Gate, and may also include parking concessions. It would be useful to 'talk things up' for the future.
- 9.10 Regular markets were considered as an option to link day-time and evening economy.
  - An opportunity to establish a regular market similar to Hereford Farmers Market to supply quality goods and produce.

- Some concerns regarding the quality and appearance of existing market stalls and agreed that stalls should be attractive, flexible and not adversely affect permanent traders.
- High Street, Cathedral Plaza and the Riverside considered as potential venues.
- Suggested that traders could be offered incentives such as free parking.
- A weekday market may be better as there are more people working in the City and there is more competition from other local events at weekends.

9.10 The group considered all the ideas that were discussed and agreed there were opportunities to consider around extended trading.

## **10. Traffic/parking**

10.1 The Task and Finish group highlighted that traffic around the City Centre and the availability and prices of parking may have an impact upon residents and visitors decision to visit the City Centre during the day and evening.

10.2 The group requested evidence from the City Council's parking team. The parking team provided a briefing note and parking annual report.

10.3 Worcester is a city with a medieval layout that was altered in Victorian times. A more modern road layout was introduced after the Second World War, but many of the streets are still narrow, twisting and can be difficult to access in vehicles if inappropriate parking occurs. The Parking and Enforcement Services team's main aim is to keep unnecessary and unlawful parking to a minimum.

10.2 Worcester City Council operates and manages 15 car parks - 14 surface car parks and one 780-space multi-storey, St. Martin's Gate. A team of 16 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) patrol both the Council car parks and the city streets, dealing with parking issues.

10.4 The group were informed by David Sutton, Service Manager, that the council had recently procured a new system for the issuing and collection of Penalty Charge Notice payments. The new system was implemented from May 2013, and provides a greater reporting capability.

10.5 The group received data on the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued by Category by Contravention and number of Penalty Charge Notices issued by Location by Contravention.

10.6 The Group recognised that the City Council's parking team do a very good job but there were concerns about areas that the Council cannot enforce and that there are problems which are caused by people ignoring traffic restrictions or lorries unloading in restricted areas and holding up the traffic. This behaviour if not highlighted becomes accepted even though it is illegal.

10.7 In order to find out more all Members were asked for examples of any issues that they had received anecdotal evidence or complaints about that could be raised with the appropriate body, e.g. Police or Highways. There were no issues brought to the attention of the Group. No further evidence was gathered.

## **11. Conservation**

- 11.1 Worcester is rich in historical and architectural heritage and preserving this heritage while not holding back development was an important issue for the Task and Finish group. Paul O'Connor Service Manager for Development Management provided information to the group on conservation and the current policies and activities.
- 11.2 There are several policies such as National Planning policy framework, South Worcestershire Development plan and the Master plan that are in place to enhance the conservation of the City Centre and are being implemented accordingly.
- 11.3 Work is taking place with County Highways for schemes to enhance the City Centre and will not be wholly dictated by maintenance requirements.
- 11.4 Professionals and elected members have the opportunity to engage in and influence details of development proposals for the better in developers' forums.
- 11.5 Registers are not "naming and shaming" owners of heritage at risk but providing the incentive of encouraging development as part of improvement schemes.
- 11.6 The historic environment is at the heart of strategic thinking on the City Centre; it is at the centre of the delivery of Development Management policy; and is part of the decisions of Planning Committee.
- 11.7 The group raised some concerns regarding the resource and responsibility for conservation following changes within the Development Management Service and how this would affect the preservation and appearance of the City. It was acknowledged that the changes have only recently been made and it was agreed that the impact should be assessed once the new structure was embedded.
- 11.8 The Council has policies in place to enhance the conservation of the City Centre. Responsibility for implementing these policies has been allocated and is being managed within the capacity of the team.
- 11.9 The group were satisfied with the evidence received. No further evidence was gathered.

## **12 Recommendations**

- 12.1 The Task and Finish group have considered all the evidence and would like to recommend that Cabinet consider the 19 recommendations below:**

### **Management of Gulls:**

- 12.2 Recommend to Cabinet that a process for members and residents to identify seagull hotspots is established and a city-wide map of gull nests is produced and kept up to date by WRS and gull control contractors and is made available to City Council officers and Councillors. That the map is maintained as a live document.**
- 12.3 Recommend to the Cabinet that a publicity exercise is undertaken to encourage the public to report gull nests. Possibly look to consult with the public about gull concerns and offer educational information about prevention.**
- 12.4 Recommend to Cabinet that deterrent measures which support the work to control the gull population be a material consideration for planning applications.**
- 12.5 Recommend that Cabinet considers lobbying government to recognise that in protecting specific seabirds there is potential for the seabird populations to increase uncontrolled to the detriment of certain inland areas.**
- 12.6 Recommend to Cabinet that all the current options and methods available to limit the population of gulls should continue to be reviewed and considered.**
- 12.7 Recommend to Cabinet that once the population mapping exercise is complete, consideration is given to the budgetary resources required to effectively manage the Gull population.**

### **Trade Waste collection:**

- 12.8 Recommend that Cabinet write to businesses to request that trade waste is put out on the street at an appropriate time, e.g. not left out overnight, and if it is not collected, that it is removed and taken back in to premises.**
- 12.9 Recommend that Cabinet use the threat of penalties to prevent businesses putting trade waste outside of premises for long periods of time or at inappropriate times. It is also suggested the Council should work with the BID to educate and promote.**
- 12.10 Recommend that Cabinet write to trade waste collectors in Worcester City to request that waste is collected on time, explain the challenges uncollected waste poses to the city and outline potential enforcement processes.**
- 12.11 Recommend that Cabinet encourage the use of wheelie bins and hessian sacks for trade waste, where practical.**

### **A Boards:**

**12.12** Recommend that City Council support discussions with County Council regarding delegation of powers and when considering a licence scheme, supports a modest license fee and sensible enforcement.

**12.13** Recommend that Cabinet consider negotiation with the BID about enforcement options for potential new powers.

**Leases / empty properties:**

**12.14** Recommend that Cabinet consider potential projects, which the City Council can work on in partnership with the BID, to address the issue of empty properties.

**12.15** Recommend that Cabinet encourage the use of pop up shops and short term leases.

**12.16** Recommend that Cabinet consider a pilot / short term project for discounted business rates in long term voids as an incentive for re-occupation.

**12.17** Recommend that Cabinet lobby Government for more local control of business rates; To allow policies such as the imposition of an annually escalating surcharge to act as a discouragement to long-term empty properties.

**Extended trading:**

**12.18** Recommend that Cabinet consider all ways of supporting extended trading hours, potentially with a trial period on a certain day with the offer of discounts and concessions in parking and WIFI to encourage footfall.

**12.19** Recommend that Cabinet consider the development of regular local produce/ farmers market in prime locations around the City Centre.

**Conservation:**

**12.20** Recommend that Cabinet and/ or Planning Committee receive a report regarding the impact of the new Development Management staffing structure on conservation work in the City.

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