



Meeting report - High Street Forum

Committee Room, Victoria Hall

10.00am to 11.30am, Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Standing call to action: Forum members are asked to amplify the message, raise the profile of the forum within your own networks and be an ambassador for the group to help attract, recruit and retain participants.

This month we were delighted to welcome 42 attendees to our March High Street Forum from businesses including: 35 George Street, Changing Sheff, China Red, Cubana, The Great Escape, Hamilton Communications, Leah's Yard, Nat West, Nationwide Building Society, New River REIT, The Nottingham, The Old Shoe Bar, Orchard Square, Printed By Us, Roxy Ballroom, Savills Barbershop, Sheffield Cathedral, Showroom Cinema, Subway, Taylor Taylor Hairdressing, Virgin Money, South Yorkshire Police and Sheffield City Council officers.

Managed by Sheffield BID and chaired by BID Director Lee Appleton (New River's Centre Manager for The Moor), these meet ups take place frequently on a 6-weekly cycle.

Discussion points covered in the meeting 06.03.24

Neighbourhood policing / Inspector Jessica Doncaster, South Yorkshire Police

Opening remarks:

- Outlined the city centre neighbourhood policing team's (NPT) geographic area together with areas of policing responsibility.
- The team currently comprises 13/14 officers supported by a smaller team of PCSOs.
- The police want to see a city centre that is safe and inviting for those who live, work and visit here.
- Acknowledged that it is a diverse and challenging job that the team face.
- Jess urged businesses to report incidents, this is key. Use 999 (in an emergency), 101 (for non-emergency) as well as online reporting channels.
- Four key areas covered by the City Centre NPT: Night-Time Economy (NTE), Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Neighbourhood Crime and Retail Crime.
- NTE
 - A dedicated team on Friday and Saturday nights with visible patrols in hot spot locations.
 - Continuing with Operation Sentinel activities targeting predatory behaviour.
 - The Safe Square space in Leopold Square is an important addition to providing a safe space for NTE users requiring assistance (details here: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554312994509>)
 - Use of GRIP funding, working with city centre licensed premises, to roll out ID scanners and body worn cameras.
 - Targeted work around drug use and drug supply which is more prevalent in the NTE.
- ASB
 - Acceptance that there is a large street community, often with a range of complex needs.

- Partnership working is key to manage this: “we can’t simply arrest our way out of the problem”.
- Visible patrols are undertaken in key areas, supported by plain clothes activity.
- A dedicated officer (Steve Hart) is out from 6am to identify and address early morning ASB issues.
- Jess also highlighted the work of the Help Us Help partnership (details here: <https://www.helpushelpsheffield.uk/> and on their social channels: <https://www.facebook.com/HelpUsHelpSheffield/> and <https://www.instagram.com/helpushelpsheffield/>)
- Section 35 dispersal orders are used regularly, which can cover a specific area for up to 48 hours.
- There have been competing challenges on resources over recent weeks which have been geared around city centre protest activity.
- PCSOs will remain a constant feature in the city around crime prevention. Harm reduction pathways will continue to be supported but Criminal Behaviour Orders will be pursued where appropriate through the courts to stop specific individuals going into certain shops etc.
- Committed to a continued police presence, engaging with the public and businesses (details of these activities on the meetings and events tab: <https://www.southyorks.police.uk/find-out/your-neighbourhood-policing-team/sheffield-city-centre/>)
- Neighbourhood Crime
 - Key areas such as burglary and theft addressed by Problem Oriented Policing Plans (POPs)
- Retail Crime
 - Very aware that this is a priority area to address for city centre businesses.
 - There is a dedicated retail crime officer who ensures all evidence is taken.
 - The message to the business community is to report it, and action is and will be taken where offenders are identified.
- Jess encouraged everyone to follow the team’s social channels: <https://www.facebook.com/sheffieldcitycentreNPT> and https://twitter.com/SheffCity_NPT
- Further details on the work of the City Centre NPT on their website: <https://www.southyorks.police.uk/find-out/your-neighbourhood-policing-team/sheffield-city-centre/>

Questions arising:

Q. With prolific offenders and orders preventing re-entering business premises, can this be extended to multiple venues or a particular area?

A. Yes, but it does require evidence and a process of information gathering.

Q. Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and the consultation around implementation of one in Sheffield city centre. How will this change things?

A. The PSPO will provide important additional powers to be able to take action. This could be useful in scenarios where criminal offences could follow if action is not taken. A good example relates to street drinking where intoxication can lead to ASB. Currently, there is no power to remove alcohol. A PSPO will provide this. It also provides an opportunity to engage and signpost to support services. A PSPO will not be a magical cure, but it will provide important additional powers.

Q. Carver Street and the situation with barriers that have previously been in place but subsequently removed. They seemed to be doing a good job. Are there plans to reintroduce?

A. There are conversations to put these back, between South Yorkshire Police and Sheffield City Council, but there is a process to go through. They are a positive addition in my view.

Q. Resources. Do you feel you have enough officers for the city centre or do you feel under-resourced?

A. As well as the team outlined earlier, there are additional resources that can be called on. Of course, I would always want more, but realistically we must use what we have. Having excellent partnership networks in place is crucial to support our work.

Jess described the use of other police response teams who deal with 999 calls so the support is there.

Q. Project Servator. We've seen these happen in areas like The Moor. Are they effective?

A. Yes, we know that these are effective measures, disrupting activity through the deployment of a high visibility presence which is deliberately unpredictable (locations, days and times), using hostile reconnaissance techniques to target criminal activity. They continue to play an important part in police operations.

Q. The works on Fargate and the potential ASB that some of the 'pinch points' could be creating e.g. around ATMs. Do you have any say around this?

A. Whilst we don't have direct contact with the contractor for these works, we have regular meetings with Council partners around a wide number of city centre developments. Where there are issues identified, it is important that these are reported so that these can be addressed.

City centre regeneration / Alan Seasman, Head of Regeneration, Sheffield City Council

Opening remarks:

- Alan outlined that today's presentation was intended to focus on those things that feed into our (the audience) agenda.
- Focus is to make the city a new place to live, work, shop – all those things that matter in the city centre. Need to deliver 35,000 new homes, with 20,000 in city centre. The last four years has seen collaboration with House England around this.
- The City Centre Vision sets out three clear areas (catalyst sites) for the next phase of city centre development: Sheffield Station area; Furnace Hill and Neepsend; and Moorfoot.
- Station campus – a new bridge is planned, tying into the wider community and access to public spaces. This area will include new homes and grade A office space. Partners include Homes England, the Council, Network Rail, London & Continental Railways (LCR Property).
- Moorfoot – there will be a repurposing of the Moorfoot building, creating a dense city centre living environment. Linked to open spaces, better connections and researching how to use the space. Could result in 2,000 new homes, 7-20 storeys.
- Furnace Hill/Neepsend – the old furnace is a listed building. There is a desire to create open space around that area and looking at some 1,200 new homes. £67m investment from Homes England will support this and other developments.

- Future High Street Fund – Fargate. Has seen £15.8m from government plus money from the South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority. Work includes development of the new public realm, linking to Orchard Square and other key buildings and includes Victoria Hall, Montgomery Theatre, Chapel Walk. Fargate will see new underground bin stores. Keen to adopt a look and feel of Heart of the City. Alan discussed Event Central (the building has been purchased by the Council), with a contractor and operator identified. Focus is a new event workspace to animate and activate Fargate including the development of a larger event space at the top of Fargate. Front door scheme – the old Topshop has now been split into two premises with offices upstairs. Overall intention to generate more footfall to Fargate.
- Heart of the City – anchor tenants are HSBC and the law firm CMS. New residential accommodation, Burgess House, Kangaroo Works all adding to the area. New outdoor spaces such as Pounds Park are popular and busy. The new park at Castlegate will see a new series of interconnecting spaces. New cultural and leisure facilities will see the old Gaumont Cinema and Bethel Chapel used as events venues. Recent business arrivals have been announced including: Fjällräven, The Cream Store and The Yards Store.
- Cole Store – Urban Splash very close to agreeing lease. Overall proposal is one of a retail and event space in basement and workspace above. Vision is that it will adapt and change to what is happening in city centre.
- Alan encouraged everyone to visit a new section on the Welcome to Sheffield website for further information on all developments: <https://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/living/transforming-sheffield-city-centre/>

Questions arising:

Q. City centre living and plans for the housing mix – owner occupied v rental?

A. We are trying to look at a mix of properties that include a good percentage for owner occupied properties and for family living. In the past, much of the stock has focused on student living. We're probably at the peak for that. Furnace Hill and Neepsend will be planned for family housing. Moorfoot is intended as urban professional living. There is a need to look at all tenures and not focus on one thing.

Q. Increased potential for more betting shops may have an impact on the desirability for city centre living?

A. The only powers open to the Council for rejecting an application is through licensing.

Q. Do we need to be steering away from single occupancy tenancy and provide more premium properties to keep people in the city centre? There need to be "cool" places to live.

A. In the proposed 20k new homes, there should be enough for everyone and where we own the properties, we can incorporate better space standards including the development of one and two bedrooms which are more attractive to young people.

Q. Do you agree that it's important that we build a balanced community in the city centre?

A. There's a benchmark for a level of quality we want to build towards. Co-living spaces are becoming increasingly desirable.

Q. What interest is there in the units in and around Fargate?

A. Most of these properties are privately owned so the interest does not come into us (the Council), so we don't really know what the level of interest is. The Council's role is to create the conditions for private investment through the current public realm improvements.

Q. Arundel Gate and High Street are a major gateway to the city centre. What are the plans for these areas?

A. As with Fargate, The Council doesn't have the same control over these areas like it does with the Heart of the City transformation. We are talking to building owners in these locations and do want to work on a plan and funding options, but the initial focus right now is to complete Fargate.

Q. When will the works on Fargate be complete?

A. Pushing for a pre-Christmas 2024 completion date for the street works. Work on Event Central will commence in January 2025.

Q. Are there any plans for Surrey Street?

A. No current plans.

Q: With regards the Cole Store (formerly John Lewis and now a listed building) what is the status of the carpark?

A. The carpark is also listed but there is evidence that it may not be the original car park. This is being queried with Historic England. Listed does not mean you cannot do things with the building. The vision is that the car park will be the main route for servicing into both the building and the potential rooftop gardens.

Leah's Yard / Tom Wolfenden, CEO of Sheffield Technology Parks

Opening remarks:

- The running of Leah's Yard is a collaboration between Tom and James O'Hara.
- Looking for Leah's Yard to be both a commercial and sustainable business.
- Will be a mix of retail and studio space in a Grade 2 listed building (c.20 workspaces).
- A fascinating part of the development have been the (physical) discoveries that have been made on-site.
- Want the development to be a place for first (and second) tenancies, whether that's as a first commercial business or adding to an initial site somewhere else in the city.
- Like the Sheffield Technology Parks, Leah's Yard will be an incubator for small businesses and act as a catalyst to progress into larger city centre units in the future.
- Initial market interest in Leah's Yard was high, with 149 enquiries.
- Pete McKee confirmed as the first tenant and more tenants will be announced soon. Discussions with Gravel Pit, Provisions Store, Red Brick Market and Bullion Chocolate.
- It is hoped that Leah's Yard will be a genuine retail / leisure destination and can be leveraged as part of the "weekends away" offer, as well as the aspiration for living in the city centre. It will attract a different demographic.
- Already having wider discussions about how to manage shared events and being part of the cohesive joined up strategy for retail in city centre.

- Leah's Yard is a heritage asset and will be a family focused venue, not night-time economy.

Questions arising:

Q. When will Leah's Yard be opening?

A. The aim is for the summer holidays (Jul/Aug) this year, operating on 10-6pm / 10-7pm hours.

Q. What is the lease position on the units?

A. Working on six month leases up to a maximum of three years, with six-month break clauses. We must make it commercial and sustainable, and we believe we have a model that will work. We are talking to people like Urban Splash around how Leah's tenants could move to Cole Store for instance following their initial tenancy. Keen to have anchor premises but also a ratio of churn to give visitors reasons to come back.

Open forum

- General agreement that forum attendees are fed up with the city centre being constantly berated. Assets like Leah's Yard will lift the city centre emotionally and culturally.
- The old Salvation Army Citadel building – what's happening with that? This is being discussed with the building owner.
- The 145-bedroom Raddison Blue Hotel is due to open this year.
- The residents' association Changing Sheff is endorsing the city centre as a great place to live, viable and exciting. They are lobbying for the city centre to be branded "Heart of the City" – not just the new developments (with lamppost banners, welcome signage everywhere).

Future meetings / dates for the diary

- A date for the next High Street Forum will be communicated soon.