

**CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN REFERENCE GROUP
MINUTE OF MEETING OF 28 JUNE 2017**

In attendance: Councillor Boulton, Chair; and Russell Borthwick, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Vice Chair; and Councillors Flynn, Laing, Lumsden, Nicoll and Yuill; Allan Henderson, Aberdeen Inspired; Arthur Forbes and Lavina Massie, Civic Forum; Peter Roberts, Community Council Forum; Bill Duguid, One Group. Officers – Marc Cole (City Centre Director), Scott Davidson (Programme Manager), David Ewen (Communication and Engagement Officer) and Garry Watson (Clerk).

No.	Agenda Item	Notes of Discussion	Action / Decisions	By Whom
1.	Appointment of Chair	The Clerk called for nominations for the position of Chairperson. Russell Borthwick nominated Councillor Boulton. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Lumsden. There were no further nominations and Councillor Boulton took the Chair.		
2.	Welcome and apologies	The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.		G Watson
3.	Minute of Previous Meeting of 1st February 2017		The minute was agreed as a correct record.	G Watson
4.	Matters arising	There were no matters arising.		G Watson
5.	City Centre Progress Annual Review	<p>Marc Cole provided members with a comprehensive update on the transformational city centre regeneration programme, saying that, compared with a year ago, we were now 'seeing changes taking place on the ground'. Marc used Powerpoint to highlight his presentation, which covered the background, current position, progress against key objectives and next steps for the Masterplan.</p> <p>Marc explained that his team, appointed in May 2016, had been engaging with a wide range of groups and</p>		

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		<p>during that time they had noticed a subtle shift in attitudes, from questioning the need for regeneration, towards positive support for the project and a growing sense that Aberdeen's economy is on the rise.</p> <p>Marc said he was pleased to see the works ongoing in Broad Street. He acknowledged that city centre transformation is a messy process, however the most dynamic cities are the ones which are constantly regenerating.</p> <p>Marc went on to discuss city centre based events, saying the feedback from last year Winter Festival indicated that people wanted to see stalls featuring more local producers and craftspeople. He advised that work was ongoing to ensure the 2017 event addressed this issue.</p> <p>Everyone agreed that the NUART festival had been a huge success for the city. Marc described it as a 'game changer', which altered the way Aberdeen was perceived by the Specialist Press.</p> <p>Another massive success for Aberdeen was the recent Cycle Tour Series, which had attracted large crowds to the city centre. The feedback received from the Tour organisers themselves was extremely positive, citing Aberdeen as the best event in the history of the Tour.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the Great Aberdeen Run will attract yet more people to the city and raise its profile further still.</p> <p>Marc noted that the Masterplan had played an active role in either funding these events or driving them forward.</p>		

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		<p>He advised members that the cities which are perceived as the most dynamic will tend to have at least one major event on per month, and Aberdeen was well on the way to achieving this.</p> <p>Marc said that gateways into the city were of huge importance to how it is perceived, and advised members that his team were now working on a partnership project with Aberdeen Railway Station to bring about improvements to there.</p> <p>He continued saying that for many years Aberdeen has sought to cement its position as a leading city in the global oil and gas sector, however there is a growing realisation that this has very little appeal outside that particular industry. Aberdeen has much more to offer tourists and has been underselling itself for many years. He said that, moving forward, it was important that we challenged any negative attitudes and what appears to be a local culture of self-deprecation, in order to portray Aberdeen as the vibrant city it is.</p> <p>Marc advised that there was recent evidence of big business making a return to the city centre, with the likes of the refurbished Capitol building offering business award winning city centre office space. He cited KPMG as an example of this.</p> <p>Marc moved on to discuss the Bon Accord Centre, where there are plans to evolve from a purely retail offering to a retail and leisure complex in order to satisfy the needs and tastes of modern society.</p> <p>On a similar note, Marc advised that a planning decision on the expansion of Union Square was expected within weeks.</p>		

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		<p>Marc also noted the refurbishment of Aberdeen Art Gallery and the Music Hall as key projects which would also have a bearing on Aberdeen's ability to market itself more widely.</p> <p>With regard to potential new residential offerings in, or close to, the city centre Marc highlighted Broadford Works and Queens Square. He advised members that there are also plans to refurbish/convert the upper floors of some of the buildings along Union Street to residential use.</p> <p>Marc acknowledged that there are certain challenges around residential property prices in Aberdeen city centre, due to fluctuations in the market and advised members that a 'City Living Study' is currently in progress.</p> <p>Turning to the issue of waterfront development, Marc accepted that this was an aspect of the Masterplan which had yet to receive significant attention, however he said he believed it was the one which offered the greatest opportunity. The new harbour development at Bay of Nigg was going to cause the Harbour Board to think about how it uses its existing real estate. People are attracted to water and waterfront developments are extremely successful.</p> <p>Marc advised members that a car parking study is currently being undertaken. He said there was an acknowledgement that, if attention was only given to city centre parking, problems could just be shifted outwards rather than solved, and so the study had been set up to look at parking across the city.</p> <p>In conclusion, Marc reviewed the key points and</p>		

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		<p>suggested that a review of the current implementation plan should now be undertaken.</p> <p>There followed a general discussion.</p> <p>It was suggested to Marc Cole that the Third Sector had a role to play via social enterprise, fund raising and investment and that avenues of engagement should be explored. Marc Cole responded saying that he completely agreed, noting that Third Sector engagement was playing an increasingly important role in delivering projects throughout the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Lavina said that it was important to think carefully about street use, given the fact that Aberdeen's streets were designed over a hundred years ago.</p> <p>Marc Cole acknowledged this, saying that it was important to adapt Aberdeen's 18th and 19th century streets to 21st century use, without losing the character of the buildings for which Aberdeen is so famous.</p> <p>Arthur expressed concern about congestion that might be caused by traffic heading to the new AECC, once completed and Councillor Lumsden emphasised that it was important to get transport infrastructure right throughout the city. Marc Cole agreed with Councillor Lumsden's remarks and said that the Berryden Corridor was high on the list of areas to be addressed in terms of transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Marc Cole said that the whole Masterplan project was very exciting for Aberdeen and was evolving rapidly, however he acknowledged that liaison between the key stakeholders, namely Aberdeen City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Inspired and Visit</p>	<p>Explore Third Sector opportunities.</p>	<p>M Cole / R Borthwick</p>

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		Scotland, needed to be better organised.		
6.	Current Work Programme	<p>Marc Cole advised members that the work to clean up Union Street was ongoing, with a cherry-picker being used to check roofs and clear chimney pots etc. Lavina asked if the Council should be subsidising repairs of privately owned buildings. Marc Cole responded saying that the work was being jointly funded by Historic Scotland as part of a C.A.R.S. (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) due to the conservation status of the architecture involved. An additional benefit of this is that the Council can ensure all repairs are carried out to the highest possible standard.</p>		
7.	Communication and Engagement update	<p>David Ewen advised members that a new Masterplan website was almost ready to be launched. Users would be able to see the current Phase 1 of operations, and then overlay Phase 2, to see how the projects were going to develop over time.</p> <p>David advised that an engagement session had been carried out with school pupils, whereby the senior pupils gathered the views of their younger peers, based on what they would like to see in Aberdeen. It was gratifying to note that many of the things the children were requesting were already part of the Masterplan. David noted that it was also a good opportunity to explain to the children what could not be achieved, and why. To take this very positive engagement further, there are plans to create teaching material which can be introduced into classrooms throughout the city. It is envisaged that children will be able to obtain an understanding of civil engineering and infrastructure projects in a context they can relate to, and that this will foster in them positive attitudes towards their city.</p>		

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		<p>David explained that Masterplan literature had been translated into the six most commonly spoken languages in the city, so that as many people as possible can benefit from positive engagement.</p> <p>Marc Cole said the ultimate goal was to create a city that was accessible to everyone. Partnerships had already been established with schools and disabled groups, and work was now ongoing to understand how elements of the local infrastructure, such as signs, might be designed to assist those with dementia. The more child/disabled/dementia friendly the city is, the more tourist friendly it is.</p> <p>He added that Officers and Councillors had recently participated in a wheelchair challenge, to help them understand the difficulties faced by users, and he added that special goggles were being developed which would enable Designers and Planners to experience visual impairment, as a means to enhance the accessibility of infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Peter asked if any thought had been given to 3D modelling, to help people understand the project better. David responded saying that work was ongoing to model the city in 3D.</p>		
8.	AOCB	None.		
9.	Date of Future Meetings	The rest of the dates for 2017 remained unchanged. They are Tuesday 26 September and Tuesday 12 December 2017.		