

Question to Scrutiny Committee on 20th November 2017

Question Asked by Deborah Lewis

1. What is happening as part of the regeneration project of Swindon for Fleet Street/ Bridge Street, around the Wilko area? bottom end of town which appears to be forgotten. **This has been talked about now for many years but nothing has been done.**
2. Antisocial behaviour what measures have been put in place or will be to remove these individuals. **This has been talked about now for many years but nothing has been done.**

Response from Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Regeneration:

Q1. Fleet St/Bridge St Regeneration

- Numerous works have taken place in Bridge St / Fleet St over recent years to help improve the street scene and de-clutter the area of unused street furniture. This has included placing vinyl fronts on the front of several empty properties to help promote and market them. Working with letting agents to advise of opportunities and promote the area.
- De-cluttering work includes:
 - Removal of the raised planter on Bridge Stand tree
 - Removal of benches on Bridge St
 - Removal of Bike shelter on Fleet St
 - Removal of benches on Fleet St.
- The above will be allocated into the schedule of works according to the priority of work in the town based on public safety as the primary concern. It is in the programme for this financial year.
- We have also seen additional CCTV installed in the local area to help provide surveillance of the area.
- They are concentrating on the defects in the town centre which take priority as these are often safety issues.

Planning

- A supplementary planning document is being created for the Fleet Street / Bridge Street area of Swindon Town Centre. A draft document is near completion, which will then be circulated within Swindon Borough Council for comments from officers before Christmas; any amendments as a result of this will then be completed, we anticipate it will be out for public consultation in the New Year before Spring 2018.
- The objectives of the supplementary planning document (SPD) are to:
 - Provide guidance on the Council's existing policy framework
 - Promote Bridge Street/Fleet Street and the surrounding area for future development

- Highlight development opportunities and outline a range of uses suitable for the area
- Provide advice and guidance for quality of design for future development and the area as a whole including the public realm
- Ensure high quality and sustainable development which promotes long term, physical and economic regeneration within the area.

Working with partners

- Work with partner organisations is ongoing on a town centre vacant unit reduction project within the BID district. In October 2017 a two year low in the number of vacant units across the whole of the town centre was recorded. The aim of the project is to enhance the retail provision in the town centre by attracting new businesses. Focused on approaching independent businesses or small chains who may want to trial a shop in the town centre.
 - An aim of the project is to reduce the number of empty retail units in the town centre by 50% in the two year project. Project completion date: 24th December 2018.

Q2 Antisocial Behaviour

SBC and Police Cooperation

- The local authority has no powers to stop any person from entering the town centre, however if an individual (s) are causing nuisance, anti-social behaviour or crime, these will need to be reported at the time of the offence to the Police by phoning 101 or 999 depending on the nature of the offence who can then deploy officers to respond. If offences are not reported it can make it very difficult to address any concerns individuals may have.
- The Council works closely with the Police and InSwindon Bid Company to look at and review intelligence on a weekly basis. Bridge St and Fleet St area are on the patrol strategy for the Town Centre and is visited regularly, however we do rely on local reporting to help provide intelligence as we do not have resources which will be in the area throughout the day. They will be patrolled as part of a wider plan.

Alcohol misuse

- Numerous interventions have taken place concerning some individuals and some businesses who also contribute to some of the issues in the local area by selling alcohol to those under the influence of alcohol. This has included:
 - obtaining injunctions to exclude individuals where evidence is available to support this
 - issuing warning notices to individuals to advise them of concerns about their behaviour and the actions that can be considered
 - introducing a public spaces protection order based on intelligence to introduce restrictions on people's behaviours which if not adhered to can lead to fixed penalty notice and or further legal actions.
- Additional CCTV cameras have also been installed into the area which transmit images back to the Council's CCTV control room.

- The InSwindon Bid Company provide a forum through which we have also held local business meetings with the local police officer to remind businesses of how to report and why this is very important in helping to address any concerns.
- Action has also been taken against two off licenses in the local area and numerous others in the close proximity when sales of alcohol are taking place for those under the influence of alcohol and this has resulted in one town centre business having their ability to sell alcohol suspended and in Manchester Road area two off licenses have closed as a result of recent licensing reviews.

Support for homeless

- For those who are homeless and need support outreach workers provide advice and assistance to help people find accommodation.
 - Planning permission has been sort to increase the homeless shelter provision in Swindon over the winter months for 2017 / 2018.

Anti social behaviour

- The Police will also use the powers that they have available for addressing nuisance / ASB issues and they have also taken recent actions including issuing warnings, issuing dispersal orders which puts a restriction of not returning to the area for up to 48 hours otherwise any persons returning to the area could be arrested.
- There is an ongoing commitment by all parties to continue to improve the local area and make it as vibrant and attractive as it can be. All of the above should demonstrate that works and actions are in place to address nuisance and ASB in the Bridge St / Fleet St. area.