Enterprise and Business Committee

Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration

Evidence from the City and County of Swansea

September 2011

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1 The well being of Swansea City Centre and surrounding district shopping centres is a significant and high profile subject and one that raises a number of live issues for this Authority. On the 7^{th} July 2011 a special meeting of Council was convened to respond to the concerns expressed by City Centre traders and to discuss the short, medium and longer term programme for intervention.

1.2 In response to the Notice of Motion calling for the special meeting a detailed report was prepared so as to explore the wider challenges facing the City Centre economy, to outline the current partnership and delivery mechanisms and to summarise the strategic regeneration programme drawn up to respond to known issues. Significantly, the report incorporated an Action Plan for concerted action by the City Centre partners, including a programme of measures for immediate delivery in response to the traders concerns. A copy of the Action Plan is attached to this submission as Appendix 1.

1.3 It is recognised that city and town centres are facing a range of challenges. At the macro level, the UK is experiencing an economic climate that is fragile and uncertain and consequently the consumer spending outlook is considered to be muted. The ongoing public sector spending cuts and uncertainty over the future jobs market is further impacting on consumer confidence. Decreased disposable income is also placing household budgets under strain. However, even before this financial downturn, centres were experiencing the impact of out of town shopping with its associated free parking and late night opening and the effect of competition from the internet.

1.4 In the face of such difficulties the response in Swansea is to consider the positive measures that can be introduced by the Authority and its partners to strengthen the City Centre and to improve its standing in the retail hierarchy. Essential intervention is focused on an integrated regeneration programme encompassing enhanced public realm, quality public access, active management and communication. The most critical element, namely bringing about a major change in the retail offer, is being pursued with the Authority's preferred developer

(Hammerson). Inevitably in the present economic circumstances, this is the most difficult element to deliver and it highlights the critical need for public sector enabling intervention if the delivery process is to move forward.

1.5 Balanced against the action programme is the need to ensure that measures are in place to prevent further growth in out of town competition. The Council has adopted a policy position which provides a planning context for addressing the challenges and to be effective this needs to be supported by the WG policy framework.

2. ROLES OF WELSH GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1 The public sector has to take a facilitating lead if regeneration is to be delivered successfully. This lead covers two areas. In the first place there is the setting of a policy context and secondly having set the context there is a need for financial commitment to convert ambition into reality through practical measures such as land assembly, infrastructure delivery, public realm enhancement and sustainable transportation.

2.2 The connection between policy and delivery is recognised by WG. The introduction to the Wales Spatial Plan, for example, acknowledges that the document provides a canvas against which WG investment, both capital and revenue, can be considered and agreed. This point is further emphasised in the main body of the report in the statement that there is an essential link between strategy and action, and that the identification of priorities will enable European Structural Funds to be spent where they are most needed.

2.3 The policy context both at national and local authority level is clearly and robustly set out in relation to Swansea. At the national level the WG policy framework for city and town centres is contained primarily within Planning Policy Wales, which in essence makes a number of fundamental points:

- Although retailing should continue to underpin centres, well being requires the integration of a range of complementary uses - commercial business / leisure/ housing/ community etc.
- Public realm improvements and other distinctive design solutions can assist regeneration.
- Good access to and convenient movement within centres are essential.
- Access by car and short term parking can help centres compete with out of centre locations
- Promotion can be an important tool in securing vitality.

2.4 TAN 4 takes national policy advice to a more detailed level with the emphasis on management strategies, advocating a range of initiatives:

- Environmental improvements in relation to open spaces and pedestrian environments.
- Efficient street cleaning and refuse collection.
- Provision of accessible, safe and secure car parks.
- Adequate crime prevention and safety measures.
- Provision of high quality public transport.

2.5 The national policy context is taken up robustly and comprehensively at the local level. A raft of integrated documents is in place, including Swansea 2020 (Swansea's overarching economic regeneration strategy), the City Centre Strategic Framework (CCSF) and the Unitary Development Plan. The local policy framework naturally embraces the direction set at a national level (as outlined above) and there is, therefore, a clear and compatible planning context for dealing with the challenge of city centre renewal. In order to regenerate the City Centre, the CCSF promotes a retail led mixed use regeneration programme focused on a vibrant mixed use heart and waterfront connection.

2.6 As indicated previously, however, the key challenge for both bodies is the translation of policy into action. There is a fundamental need therefore to ensure that the policy canvas is directly linked to resource allocation and this requires WG to have a positive role in channelling finance into sustained delivery. Working in partnership, WG and CCS have progressed delivery of an Action Plan arising from the CCSF, which has also provided a significant policy context in support of successful and comprehensive Convergence funding bid which is currently delivering change on the ground.

2.7 The CCS planning policy position also recognises that Swansea has an above average supply of out of town retail floorspace. Whilst out of town retailing, generically, does not necessarily compromise town or city centre provision, the proviso is that the town or city centre has a strong mix of anchors and an overall mix of retail outlets, all set within quality buildings, and, therefore, able to maintain its role in the face of this competition. Unfortunately, Swansea City Centre's present retail provision does not meet these criteria. It is essential, therefore, that the role of the city centre (and indeed district centres) is not undermined further. There is an obligation for both WG and CCS to protect against the detrimental impact of further out of town proposals. It is acknowledged that PPW sets down a number of factors for consideration :

- Sequential Test
- Impact on existing centres.
- Take up rate of allocated sites
- Accessibility.
- Flexibility and innovation (format / scale/ design of development proposals)

Whilst Swansea has adopted a policy position of protecting the City Centre from inappropriate development, the Authority's level of influence on proposals outside its administrative area is limited. There is a role, therefore, for WG and all local authorities to consider any detrimental impact on regional centres when determining out of town retail applications and robustly resist retail proposals which do not positively contribute to the well being of established centres.

3. EXTENT OF BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

3.1 The Council and its WG partner recognise the importance of engagement, and accordingly there is a network of partnership arrangements in place which demonstrate this commitment, as outlined below.

3.2 The City Centre Partnership (private/ public/ voluntary sectors) was established in 2001 with an over arching vision for the agencies to work together to "Develop Swansea City Centre as a premier destination and a vibrant and dynamic place to live, work and visit". The partnership has 6 priorities as indicated below, each of which is reflected in the actions set out in successive annual Action Plans:

- Strategic and coordinated approach.
- Prosperous and competitive City Centre.
- Improved transport and public access.
- Safe and secure environment.
- Clean and attractive centre.
- Marketing and promotion.

The remit of the Partnership Board is to focus on a high level strategic role, overseeing and integrating the work of those bodies responsible for delivery. Specifically therefore it has a remit to:

- Monitor and critically analyse activity/ progress
- Provide a means of communication and collaboration between key stakeholders.
- Act as a consultative body and when required as a lobbying body.
- Raise the centre's profile, acting in an ambassadorial role to champion the City Centre

The Partnership is not a decision making body but rather a Board of influential decision makers representing key sectors each with a key stake in the city centre.

3.3 The work of the City Centre Partnership is facilitated by the Council's City Centre Management (CCM) function, served by a team which sits within the Economic Regeneration and Planning Division. The team also monitors the performance of the City Centre, is responsible for coordinating the development and delivery of the City Centre action plans and manages several operational services.

3.4 Swansea remains the only area in Wales to operate a Business Improvement District (BID). This is an independent, not for profit mechanism by which traders within a defined geographical area identify issues that impact on their trading performance, and initiate and fund projects to tackle them. The funding comes from a levy calculated according to Rateable Value of each premises within the BID area. An annual sum of approximately £465,000 is accordingly generated. The Swansea BID was initially established in 2006 and has recently been extended for a second term until August 2016. The BID has over 800 members and it provides a legitimate forum through which the business community can voice their views.

3.5 Since its inception, the BID has worked closely with the Council, coordinating projects according to its business plan. Notably, to date, this has led to the delivery of the following sample of projects -

- Subsidised parking.
- Additional cleansing.
- Evening Taxi Marshalls
- Additional City Centre Rangers.
- BBC Big Screen
- Television and radio advertising.

3.6 The Safer Swansea Partnership is a group of organisations and individuals constituted under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all committed to working together to build a safer city. Key statutory partners are the Council, police, fire and rescue, health and probation services. The partnership addresses many issues, including graffiti removal, CCTV, anti-social behaviour, designing out crime, working with young people and much more. Safer Swansea has finalised its new strategy for 2011-2014 and an action plan is being developed to achieve goals in a number of priority areas.

3.7 The Swansea Economic Regeneration Partnership (SERP) is responsible for overseeing the ‘Prosperity’ theme of the Swansea Community Strategy. As part of its role the SERP is engaged in the implementation of Swansea 2020, the Economic Regeneration Strategy for the authority area. The regeneration of the City Centre is of relevance to a number of the 2020 strategic aims and cross cutting themes. The intention is to promote and support regeneration of the City Centre under “Competitive Places”, as a location for delivery of aspirations relating to the “Knowledge Economy”, “Focus Clusters”, “Entrepreneurship”, skills development and economic inactivity. It is recognised, therefore, that all partners can assist in delivering aspects of the SERP’s transformational projects. To that end, the SERP has identified Swansea City Centre’s Convergence Programme as a transformational project, conveying a positive profile and progressive improvement through application of the Building Enhancement Programme, the Property Development Fund and public realm enhancements.

3.8 Specific consultation and dialogue with traders takes place on a regular basis as City Centre projects are brought forward for implementation. This usually arises from a stakeholder engagement exercise and the preparation of project specific communication plans. There are also several established forums, for example, the various BID Working Groups, Pub and Club Watch and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, which are mainly task orientated programme based delivery mechanisms which involve representatives of and engage the local business community.

3.9 On a more generic basis, in April of this year, there was a bespoke meeting of Council officers with traders to consider present trading conditions and a range of other issues. This has been followed by subsequent meetings with BID representatives to consider the issues and to develop proposals to address the traders concerns. In addition, in recent months there has been a series of public meetings convened by City Centre traders to highlight their concerns about the conditions within the City Centre. As a result, and in order to improve future communications, a series of communication measures are being finalised utilising both existing and new mechanisms. These include the appointment of a long serving councillor as a ‘City Centre Champion’ and a regular series of surgeries will be held in the City Centre. In addition, a Service Level Agreement between the BID and the Authority is being developed to reflect future communication practices with the City Centre traders.

3.10 From the above it can be seen that there is a comprehensive and structured engagement network which facilitates direct communication with individuals and organisations. This includes direct engagement though City Centre Management, BID and the City Centre Champion, as well as individual project engagement. All of this facilitates the imparting of information on project progress and provides a conduit for highlighting and discussing issues and concerns. Engagement is obviously critically important but it has to be recognised also that different bodies have different priorities and opinions, which need to be reconciled and/or accounted for. Apart from BID (which has its own budget), many organisations are not in a position to devise, manage or programme project delivery. It is the public sector which has to take the lead in facilitating action and managing delivery. For an action programme to be effective it is important to ensure the support of interested parties and this is the primary value of structured engagement.

3.11 Whilst the Council has met with some success in its engagement with business, its engagement with the wider community which the City Centre serves does leave room for improvement. Although included in all of its consultation and communication measures, there would be merit in seeking to better integrate community regeneration aspirations with those of physical and economic regeneration. Considerable progress has taken place through programmes like Beyond Bricks and Mortar and Workways, demonstrating the approach mooted in Swansea 2020. However, in terms of community engagement, the residential population within the City Centre is increasing as new developments come forward, and it is important to develop new mechanisms to ensure that the community has a meaningful voice.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE MIX OF RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL PREMISES.

4.1 Key interrelated factors influencing the development mix in the City Centre are those of demand and competition. In Swansea, for example, there has been a substantial programme of waterfront apartment development which, in providing competition to the City Centre, has lessened the demand for City Centre housing sites. There are a number of schemes with a housing content being implemented in the City Centre, but these are largely as a result of Housing Association commitment. As a further example, the demand for student accommodation in the centre may well be influenced by the competition arising from Swansea University's proposal for a new Bay Campus.

4.2 The economic downturn has of course significantly impacted on development as a whole, which in turn has impacted on proposals which would have possibly brought a more balanced approach to the mixed used content of the City Centre (the financial position is discussed more fully under point 6 below). Finance is a fundamental factor and it is not considered that business rates incentives alone will be sufficient to have a meaningful impact, although some measure of rate relief may well help. The economic downturn is of course all embracing in that it extends beyond the City Centre environment. What will be of benefit to improving the City Centre mix, are policies designed to improve the wealth of Swansea as a whole, leading to quality employment opportunities being channelled into the centre which in turn could stimulate demand for hotels and a balanced leisure offer.

4.3 Local traders have raised the issue of City Centre rents, which in their view, are too high. This is largely outside the control of Welsh Government and the local authority, and essentially in the hands of the private sector and the property market. However, there may be merit in exploring whether there are influencing factors which either WG or the City and County Council could address.

4.4 Traders have also drawn attention to the lack of financial support and general assistance available to existing businesses in the retail sector, something which the Authority would endorse given its remit with WG to provide Business Support where individual sectors are able to benefit. Such measures are often accompanied by bureaucratic procedures which businesses find onerous and time consuming, procedures which might benefit considerably from streamlining. Indeed, the Authority has recently done this explicitly in delivering its Convergence funded Building Enhancement Programme, following representations from traders and property owners.

4.5 Whilst the night time economy is an important part of the City Centre function, it has to be recognised that a poor night time reputation can deter efficient day time functioning. A narrowly focussed night time offer, concentrated on a drinking culture, can lead to the centre proving unattractive and a hindrance to the creation of a balanced 'café quarter' environment, and the introduction of a balanced mix of leisure facilities. The historic closure of most retail outlets at 5 or 5.30pm is also unhelpful in that it brings into focus a sharp boundary between the day and evening functions. Retailing is now seen as a leisure activity and blurring the boundaries would help a more seamless transition and a less stark contrast, thereby contributing to the aspirations for a truly mixed use City Centre. The reluctance among the retail community to reflect changes in consumer spending patterns and aspirations for late night shopping does hinder the deliverability of this ambition, and particularly so now that new and out of town developments cater for this from the outset.

5. IMPACT OF OUT OF TOWN RETAIL SITES

5.1 The Council's planning policy position recognises that Swansea has an above average supply of out of town retail floor-space. Whilst out of town retailing does not necessarily compromise town or city centre provision (as it can be complementary in certain circumstances), the essential proviso is that the retail provision in the city centre is strong in its mix of anchors, overall mix, and the quality and quantity of stock. Unfortunately, Swansea City Centre's present retail provision does not currently meet the criteria. In 2005, therefore, the Council adopted an interim retail policy strategy to prevent further out of town development that would compete with the City Centre, until the centre was in a robust enough position to withstand competition. The strategy also pointed to the need to improve the quality and range of stock in the centre (in particular its fashion base) and to extend the prime retail pitch as opposed to any further expansion of the already extensive secondary retail area. Whilst this position has been successfully maintained, there is now a need to conduct an up to date retail capacity study to inform future policy.

5.2 The Authority's level of influence on the development of out of town sites outside the Swansea area is limited and additional competitive centres have recently emerged, both within Swansea and in adjacent local authority areas. It is considered, therefore, that there needs to be a regional overview and policy framework to ensure that there is a consistency of approach.

5.3 Planning Policy Wales makes an important policy statement in that rather than proposing a large scale out of town single site, developers should be expected to demonstrate why elements of a large scheme could not be brought forward on a site or number of sites within a central location. In other words, developers should be expected to demonstrate flexibility and innovation in respect of format, design and scale and also the level of car parking. This is an admirable position statement, and its application needs to be followed through consistently and reflected in the regional approach referred to in 5.2 above.

5.4 One of the major concerns of City Centre retailers is that, in respect of parking provision, they are not able to compete on a level plane with out of town development, where extensive and immediately available parking is provided free of charge. Serious consideration does need to be given, therefore, to ways in which this inequality can be resolved.

5.5 Out of town retailers have extensive opening hours and City Centre traders have to consider the possibility of greater flexibility to meet the expectations of customers.

6. FUNDING SOURCES AND INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS.

6.1 The effect of the banking crisis and subsequent recession has been felt in the development market since 2008. The decline in the availability of debt at commercially attractive terms (or in some cases the unavailability of finance on any terms), uncertain occupier demand and the decline in capital values (of up to 40%) hitting scheme viability, have meant that developers cannot or are unwilling to proceed with projects. Very few developers remain active and even those that were, are now exercising caution by choosing to re-structure and re-design proposals.

6.2 There may be cause for an element of cautious optimism in the longer term for town centre regeneration where development sites demonstrate the following criteria :

- Low site value.
- Partnership approach from the Local Authority.
- Shorter lead in periods and less up front costs.
- Pre lets / anchor tenants.
- Phased delivery.

6.3 It is clear from other centres in the UK that the public sector is seeking where possible to de-risk development as much as it can. It would be extremely helpful, therefore, if teams charged with regenerating city centres could draw from a menu of potential public sector interventions

- Public sector pump priming to improve accessibility, public realm and infrastructure.
- Public sector site acquisition to enable development.
- Gap funding grants to make marginal sites financially viable.
- Support for business start ups.
- Rate holiday and capital allowances for retail and commercial uses set within a clear policy context that would minimise relocations and target new businesses.
- Convergence funded interventions relating to infrastructure, property development, regeneration and skill development.

6.4 There may well be merit in considering whether certain of the financial benefits associated with Enterprise Zone status could be applied to the City Centre under an appropriate administrative arrangement. In particular the following headings could be considered :

- Business Rate Discount - In England this is proposed to be capped at £275,000 over a 5 year period. Whilst this is a benefit it will mostly benefit small businesses and would not be a significant to large businesses which need to be attracted as city centre anchor stores.
- Business Rate Retention - Local Authority retention of additional rates generated by new businesses for at least 25 years could well be useful provided that there is a clear strategy for reinvesting. The greatest effect of course would be in areas where there are strong market opportunities.
- Capital Allowances and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - Capital allowances could have a major impact if it was applied to employment, retail and commercial uses. If occupier demand could be encouraged through an umbrella scheme as indicated above this would de-risk Local Authority borrowing under TIF models. The levels of anticipated rates would have to be calculated. The potential for combining an area designation (such as the EZ) with TIF initiatives and Regeneration Areas linked with Convergence Funding could be a powerful tool-kit approach.

6.5 In essence, therefore, the interventions which could assist in the delivery of a new major retail led scheme in Swansea City Centre can be summarised as follows :

- Establishment of a Wales specific policy umbrella and delivery mechanism designed to deliver new development in selected areas. This would need capital budgets for acquisition and infrastructure interventions together with Capital Allowances for developers for retail and commercial schemes together with rate incentives for new tenants.
- Provision of capital budgets to attract anchor stores

- Ensuring any successor to Convergence Funding programmes (2014 -2020) has the ability to fund infrastructure, property development and regeneration and renewal projects. The issue of match funding would need to be addressed.
- Provision of short term rate reduction for local traders.
- Creation of a fund to help new businesses with fit out and initial rent/rates payments.
- Provision of gap funding to make schemes financially viable.

A 'mix and match' approach may be useful in building a comprehensive funding package.

6.6 The Regeneration Investment Fund for Wales (RIFW) may well have a role in city centre regeneration provided that the interest rates are competitive and the ceiling is high enough (£10million may be insufficient to make an impact on major city centre retail schemes).

6.7 It needs to be clearly understood that assistance is required in different ways to support the prospective Developer/ Funder on the one hand and the Occupier on the other, if major city centre regeneration schemes are to move forward.

7. SUSTAINABLE AND INTEGRATED TRANSPORT.

7.1 The Council's overall Transport Policy, adopted in July 2009, is reflected in the Regional Transport Plan and includes the following objectives :

- To improve access for all to a wide range of services including business, employment and leisure facilities.
- To improve the sustainability of transport by improving the range and quality (and awareness) of transport options.
- To improve integration between policies, service provision and modes of transport.
- To implement measures which help to reduce the negative impact of transport across the region.
- To improve road safety.

7.2 The Council has acted in support of these objectives, seeking to ensure that the City Centre is easy for everyone to access. Three successful park and ride sites have been introduced and these allow shoppers access to the centre without having to drive into the area themselves. This reduces traffic movements and congestion. The infrastructure serving the ftrMetro is available to park and ride and other buses, as well as to taxis, thereby improving reliability for bus passengers and supporting the City Centre economy. The recent opening of the new bus station and the ongoing work on the railway station together with the ftrMetro service provide evidence of the Authority's commitment to delivering a sustainable alternative to the car.

7.3 Notwithstanding the measures referred to above, the importance of the car remains and in addition to park and ride, the Council operate a number of car parks serving the City Centre. A strategic study was undertaken in 2009 and this set out to assess the current and future demand for parking and match that to parking provision. Although the review concluded that overall provision was sufficient to meet need, it also recognised that restructuring will be required to ensure a more consolidated and strategic distribution, to raise the standard of the remaining stock and to respond to changes associated with major town centre redevelopment. The efficiency of car parks can be significantly improved through a programme of directional and variable signing and it is important that this forms part of the comprehensive package of City Centre car park restructuring. Once again, this contrasts sharply with out of town developments, where the car is the principal mode of transport and car parks are located near to and immediately accessible to the retail outlets.

7.4 Civil Parking enforcement was successfully introduced in Swansea in 2008, with a view to addressing high levels of illegal and obstructive parking which was causing congestion in the City Centre.

7.5 The negative impact of congestion is taken seriously and in addition to 7.4, a new traffic signal control system is being introduced as part of the current Boulevard project. This will increase flexibility and support the wider aim of enhancing pedestrian movement and cycling. Improved traffic signals also facilitate bus priority.

7.6 Independent traders have commented that parking needs to be cheaper, particularly as in out of town centres the provision is free. Measures are being taken to mitigate this disparity through free Sunday parking and reduced fees in one of the main City Centre multi storey car parks. There is also a free parking offer at NCP car parks funded by BID, and the park and ride service is set at a very economical rate of £2.50 per car. Nevertheless this remains a serious issue for traders.

8. IMPACT OF MARKETING

8.1 The importance of efficient marketing and promotion is fully recognised and the public sector has a major role in programme delivery. In Swansea, the City Centre Manager has a lead role and consideration is currently being given to the possibility of running additional events for 2011-2012. These could include the promotion of a ‘Business As Usual’ message to the public, whilst key infrastructure projects, such as the Boulevard scheme, are being delivered. Further opportunities include discussing with BID and market traders the possibility of a ‘Shop Local’ campaign, and maintaining standard activities which include the management of periodic continental markets as well as Christmas events.

8.2 Events do bring life and interest into the centre, but it is acknowledged that marketing and promotions cannot disguise weaknesses in the fundamental offer. For this reason, a programme of marketing and promotion is essential and forms a key part of the City Centre Action Plan, generating increased footfall and interest in the City Centre while improvements to the basic offer and product are being undertaken.

8.3 Image and perception is a key consideration and a high quality public realm is an essential ingredient of a successful city centre. Accordingly, the Authority has with the assistance of convergence funding implemented a significant enhancement programme aimed at improving the image and appearance of the centre. This programme remains ongoing and includes the offer of building frontage enhancement grants. Such a programme can be expensive, and many desirable schemes are difficult to deliver at times of financial constraints. Revenue and maintenance implications can pose significant problems to implementation, along with the need for cooperation from property owners. Many of Swansea's redundant properties suffer from a lack of impetus or resources to improve on the part of their owners and the Council. Significant changes could occur if WG policy and funding could be directed to addressing these neglected properties and locations which do so much to harm the perception of town and city centres.

8.4 The actual level of crime taking place within the City Centre is relatively low in comparison to other centres and the situation continues to improve. However, traders have highlighted issues regarding anti social behaviour, particularly linked to on street drinking. Comments have been received that such behaviour is intimidating and discouraging people from visiting the centre. Concerted action is, however, being taken to deal with anti-social behaviour through the newly formed multi-agency ISTAM *(Information Sharing Tactical Action Meeting)* group and other established mechanisms. Over the last 15 months as part of Operation Lynx, City Centre Management, Housing Options, Community Safety, Cleansing, Enforcement and Housing have been meeting on a bi-weekly basis with the Police and the Probation Service to discuss such problems. The group identified a list of the top 20 perpetrators of anti social behaviour and these individuals are monitored daily and dealt with by way of Section 27 Notices to leave the centre, the 4 step referral system and by arrest if necessary.

8.5 In recent years the Council has made two Designated Public Place Orders which gives the Police powers to prevent people that are causing or are likely to cause problems, from drinking alcohol in public. Current discussions are taking place with a view to giving Community Safety Accreditation powers to the City Centre Rangers, allowing them to confiscate alcohol and deal with other issues. In addition, Gating Schemes are being developed to prevent access to known problem areas.

8.6 A “Healthy Nightlife” Task Group has been established to deal with the night time economy. This initiative is supported by a Night Time Economy Officer whose remit is to improve the management and operation of Swansea’s popular night-scene. A draft Action Plan is being developed to focus on issues such as enforcement of public order, licensing conditions and traffic management. Consideration is also being given to seeking Purple Flag accreditation and extending the day-time Ranger Service into the night.

9. LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

9.1 The Authority has introduced an initiative to secure social benefits from procurement and regeneration activity under the heading of ‘Beyond Bricks and Mortar’ (BBM). By introducing clauses such as Targeted Recruitment and Training into legal contracts, the aim is to ensure that members of the community, especially young people and those who have been out of the job market for some time are given the opportunities of meaningful training and employment. It represents an holistic approach to regeneration and it has arisen from the Swansea 2020 Economic Regeneration Strategy which has been specifically tasked with addressing the issues of deprivation in Swansea. BBM therefore, brings added value to the delivery of physical regeneration projects, and is now mandatory in all relevant contractual and development arrangements in Swansea, and its application has been rolled out on a number of projects already.

9.2 Social benefit clauses offer a new approach to public procurement and can be defined as a requirement made of a developer or contractor that would not normally have them, as a defined or measured outcome. Clauses can be included to influence the following areas :

- Targeted training and recruitment.
- Supply chain initiatives, committing to local sourcing.
- Contributions to education
- Promotion of social enterprise.

9.3 The preferred named developer to take forward the major redevelopment of the City Centre in conjunction with CCS and WG is Hammerson Plc. The company recognises that retail led regeneration projects facilitate the promotion of new employment opportunities for local people and in previous schemes, partnerships have been established with local skills councils and educational bodies to ensure that such opportunities are promoted to those who need them most. Such project outreach programmes are designed to specifically find employment for the disadvantaged and long term unemployed. The proven models would be introduced in Swansea should the ‘retail heart’ project proceed, delivering significant benefits for local people and companies from a multi million pound investment.

9.4 The introduction of mixed uses into the City Centre presents an opportunity for the creation of a sustainable live - work environment. In particular this would be of advantage to those on low incomes and also to those working anti-social hours by facilitating a walk to work opportunity. The creation of employment opportunities within the City Centre also has the benefit of augmenting the immediate catchment population for retail and service outlets.

9.5 The City Centre has a key role in the development of our knowledge economy, particularly in some of our priority sectors (referred to in Swansea 2020 as “focus clusters”). Developments are already well advanced for the creation of a creative industries cluster linked to business support and academic excellence at Swansea Metropolitan University, located along the City’s High Street. Other proposed City Centre office development would provide first-rate facilities and increased capacity to support growth in professional business services and ICT sectors. Further developments that will provide a “seamless link” between the City Centre and our Waterfront will provide additional opportunities for our Marine, Leisure and Tourism sectors to flourish and grow. The diversity of the City Centre’s business, retail and leisure offer would create a vibrant destination and attract more added-value economic activity, employment and disposable income.

10. MEASURES USED TO EVALUATE SUCCESS OF INITIATIVES.

10.1 City Centre Management regularly reports on the “health” of the City Centre. These Health Checks are designed to review the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the centre as a place in which to shop, do business, work, live and spend leisure time. The reports are compiled in line with Technical Advice Note 4 (Retailing and Town Centres) and the guidance contained in the Association of Town Centre Management publication “Key Performance Indicators”. They are structured therefore around an analysis of key quantitative and qualitative performance indicators. The constituent components of the centre are examined, ranging from land use diversity and rental values through to pedestrian flows and public perceptions. The importance of a broad overview is recognised since no single indicator can be used to provide a definitive measure of a centre’s health.

10.2 Key factors included in the Health Check are as follows ;

- Catchment population analysis
- Pedestrian flows within the centre
- Community safety within the centre (reported crime statistics)
- Development and investment
- Retail rankings – Goad’s Ranking System/ Management Horizons rankings/ CACI’s Retail Footprint Scores
- Retail demand rankings
- Commercial property rents (retail / offices)
- Land use change by a range of defined classes

- Vacancy levels
- Retail sales trends
- Access and parking
- Public perceptions – including users and non users mainly from the City Centre User Survey and Swansea Voices Panel

Where appropriate comparisons are made with similar and neighbouring centres. This is facilitated in part by the City Centre Manager's involvement in the Wales branch of the Association of Town Centre Management and the Association's Regional Cities Working Group.

10.3 Other relevant measures include:

- Visitor numbers.
- City Centre employment levels by sector.
- Number of occupied residential units.
- Impact on deprivation.

11 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Notwithstanding the points made within the general body of the submission, the following points summarise some key conclusions for the Council.

- There is significant merit in adopting a strategic approach to the regeneration of town and city centres, and this should be reflected in both national and local policy, and supported in the consideration of funding bids.

- Despite the structured and inclusive approach adopted by the Authority and its partners to city centre regeneration, and despite also the preparation of a comprehensive action plan and the application of structural funds to facilitate implementation, the primary issue of bringing about a step change to the retail offer through a major retail led mixed use scheme remains.

- The role of the private sector is fundamental to this process and needs to be actively supported and encouraged. Public funding to facilitate key enabling action, such as land assembly, is essential if the private sector is to be persuaded to undertake major investment.

- The scale of potential public sector expenditure should not be underestimated, and funding sources combined with innovative funding solutions should be directed towards support for town and city centres. The question of whether a publicly funded and meaningful delivery vehicle would be an appropriate mechanism for channelling such investment should be open for debate.

Such a governance/ funding body has been considered and discounted for Swansea by WG/CCS in the past, when the City Centre Strategic Framework was completed. If this model were to carry greater favour now, it should be as free from bureaucratic control as possible.

- Policies to prevent further inappropriate out of town retailing need to be as robust as possible, in order to support the primacy of our town and city centres, and measures to address competitive advantage need to be considered.

- Consideration must also to be given to the health of District Centres but the issue of resources comes to the fore, and it may be difficult to address the question of priorities as a result.

- Partnership working and constructive stakeholder engagement must be continued, and needs to be further developed on an holistic basis. However, the principal aim of creative "competitive places" in town and city centres in accordance with a strategic vision to promote prosperity needs to be paramount.

- Whilst the need to facilitate regeneration activity is widely acknowledge, maintaining and supporting the existing business community must be in-built.

11.2 The Authority welcomes the Inquiry and is fully prepared to assist with the work of the Enterprise and Business Committee as required.

11.3 Further information relating to the above, and the City and County of Swansea's experience of city centre regeneration and management is available at –

www.swanseacitycentre.com

Director of Regeneration and Housing
City and County of Swansea
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town centre regeneration response v2_110824

Appendix 1 - City Centre Action Plan