

## Retail Policy Group Minutes

Meeting held at John Lewis, 15 October at 3:30pm

- In Attendance: Isabella Miller (Chair)  
Hazel Tierney (John Lewis)  
Denzil Skinner (Hamilton & Inches)  
Fawns Reid (GATA)  
Graham Russell (West End Association and Leith Walk Traders)  
Robert Winter (Princes Mall)  
Hannah Park (Princes Mall)  
Lorna Burt (Burt Greener Communications)  
Gordon Drummond (Harvey Nichols)  
Ian Elder (Jenners and House of Fraser)  
Michael Dixon
- Guest Speaker: Lisa Dransfield, Head of Communications, Essential Edinburgh
- Apologies: Graeme Birse (Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce)  
Tom Campbell (Essential Edinburgh)  
Martin Clarke  
Josh Miller  
George Bell (Jenners and House of Fraser)

Isabella Miller (IM) welcomed all and the guest speaker Lisa Dransfield to the meeting.

Lisa Dransfield (LD) delivered an overview of winter marketing for the city. She set out the objectives of the campaign and outlined the bodies responsible for delivery. LD also covered the launch weekend and introduced the 'Come Into Town' tagline for transport-related activity.

Graham Russell (GR) enquired about the specifics of the promotion of the parking offer, adding that he would advocate advertising the free parking offer on parking meters and at pay stations.

Gordon Drummond (GD) stated the importance of planning Christmas trading hours as early as possible, drawing attention to the leadtime of three months necessary to secure changes to bus scheduling, for example the upweighting of express services later into the evening.

GD felt that marketing activity should promote all that sets the city centre apart from out of town shopping, highlighting the reasons to come into town, and establishing the city centre's USP. GD thought it imperative to address these issues in January.

IM replied that it would be worthwhile contacting Mandy Haeburn-Little of TIE to ask that she call a meeting early 2010 to analyse which aspects of the winter campaign worked and those that didn't.

Hazel Tierney (HT) noted that these opinions will need to be supported by hard data, particularly if there is a case to be put to LRT regarding frequency of services.

LD said she will put the suggestion to Mandy.

Fawns Reid (FR) set out the schedule for activity planned for the Grassmarket. Activities were not finalised but looked set to include a children's lantern event and a fire festival. FR said that there was support for a Christmas market amongst the traders but residents had shown resistance.

Denzil Skinner (DS) informed the group that he had discussed the installation of large Christmas trees, funded by TIE, for Haymarket and Picardy Place.

Graham Russell (GR) confirmed that these trees were going ahead.

Robert Winter (RW) mentioned how pleased he was to finally see some dove-tailing of the winter activity and saw this as a reason for optimism.

IM raise the issue of the preponderance of PR and communication agencies involved in the campaign.

RW agreed that this should be addressed going forward.

IM felt that Mandy's involvement has been positive and things have improved but still maintains her concerns over the weakness of signage. She expressed concern that signage remained very basic and could be seen to be not working.

DS added that the language used was not sufficiently specific. He would like to see signage relate specifically to cars, buses or taxis in a way that was easily understood.

GR noted that the MD of NCP was not happy with the quality of current signage either.

IM admitted that while there was a need for consistency of messaging from different bodies, the signage could still deliver a strong message.

GR gave an example of the complexities of changing signage owing to the need for approval from the Traffic Management Group.

GD added that the signposting of car parks should be prioritised.

Michael Dixon (MD) drew attention to the lack of communication between NCP and the council. He stated that off street and on street parking facilities must be communicated using a joined-up strategy.

Ian Elder (IE) would like to see pedestrians viewed as equally important targets of signage as motorists.

IM informed the group that the Transport Policy Group had been reorganised and a meeting was planned for early December to which the RPG would be invited.

DS turned the discussion to the consultation process for the vision for the future of the city centre. He felt that the RPG needs to influence these visions, a scenario which would be critical to the future of the RPG.

RW enquired whether the group could submit proposals rather than merely view proposals.

IE highlighted the importance of the consumer on these discussions. He feels that the way in which transport issues lead thinking is wrong. The consumer should have the outlet to express opinions and transport should support the wants and needs of the consumer.

IM asked if she should speak to Graham Birse about the direction of these discussions.

GR stated that it was already too late to influence the plans.

IE reiterated that transport should accommodate what the traders and consumers want.

RW added that he would like the lack of consultation with retailers to be noted.

GD raised the point that while it was important that retailers were consulted, they are not transport planners.

MD agreed that transport tends to lead all visions created. He'd prefer to see the development of a plan which transport can feed into.

GR discussed forming a group with Dave Anderson on the subject of public realm. This group would address costing and the allocation of funds. He was keen to note that the big decisions were always taken behind closed doors and smaller groups were an unfortunate necessity to make broader opinions known. GR felt that Essential Edinburgh should lead on presenting our vision.

IE agreed to pick this up.

GD asked whether public realm should be completed at the same time as, or immediately following, tram works, adding that it would be better not to allow a break.

IE raised concerns that the necessary funding of £8-10m was not at the council.

IM turned to dates for RPG meetings for next year, adding that while the RPG had not produced policy, it had succeeded in attracting valuable speakers. IM also asked whether four meetings per year was working for members.

RW said that he felt the frequency of meetings was correct as members frequently met at other times. He would however like to see a clearer agenda and communication of outcomes. He also suggested ten minute slots be allocated to different speakers.

GD would like to see the presentations in advance of the meetings. He went on to note that the group should view the city centre as a store in the hope that this would lead how we think about customers. GD feels that the groups should work at getting agreement among the big retailers and the rest will follow.

MD said the RPG was also relevant to smaller businesses; they just required the timetable.

RW would like an item added to the agenda for the next meeting to address what the group will look like post tram works.

IM suggested a lunch in January to discuss Christmas and invite key people to hear feedback.

## **AOB**

MD asked whether there was consensus on Christmas opening

RW replied that the issue sits with Lisa Dransfield.

IM said that there was very little variety amongst the major department stores, possibly only an hour here or there.