



Meeting report - High Street Forum

Adelphi Suite, Crucible Theatre

10.00am to 11.30am, Tuesday 13 June 2023

Recognising that the high street is changing and adapting, the purpose of the High Street Forum is to provide a voice and bring influence to bear on issues and decisions affecting the city centre trading environment.

This new forum builds on the work of the original City Centre Retailers Group but is expanding the reach to hospitality and leisure operators.

Its purpose is to create a peer-to-peer support network, share ideas and help find solutions to specific problems impacting the city centre.

The aim is to create an influential group of businesses who are regularly consulted by the local authority and other partners on relevant matters.

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.

Managed by Sheffield BID and chaired by BID Director Lee Appleton (New River’s Centre Manager for The Moor), meetings will be monthly with other specific activities scheduled in between.

Emerging action plan to support city centre improvement

No.	Summary actions
1	Invite CEO and/or Exec Directors to a specific meeting or future Forum to discuss the Public Space Protection Order (the Council’s commitment and progress). Enable Forum members to share experiences, incidents, impact on colleagues and financial losses to support consultation.
2	Build voice and influence of the High Street Forum with the political arm of the Council. Invite the new Leader of Sheffield City Council – Cllr Tom Hunt - to a Q&A session with Forum members.
3	Engage with Gayle Kirby, the Council’s Safer Neighbourhood Coordinator to explore options for temporary local authority injunctions to help police events. Whilst driving footfall, dwell time and spend, events also fuel street drinking, theft and general ASB.
4	Clarify the exact nature of the City Centre Ambassadors’ remit. There is confusion amongst businesses and mixed messages from the Council when called on to assist with issues.
5	Review the benefits of the city centre radio network (and raise awareness). Is it fit for purpose?

No.	Summary actions
6	Signpost businesses to Retail Trust who offer support to employees affected by abuse in the workplace, Let's Respect Retail. https://www.retailtrust.org.uk/helping-your-business/customer-resources/respect-retail
7	DAMS – Digital Asset Management System - this is the introduction of a single source of digital evidence that both police and the public (businesses) can upload to. Businesses are encouraged to sign up via Insp. Jess Doncaster.

Discussion points covered in the meeting 13.06.23

An update from Sheffield BID

Further details about the upcoming city centre events can be found here:

[Summer events programme](#)

Businesses are advised that road closures will be in place for a major cycling event - Sheffield Grand Prix - on the 19 July. Details of these impacts will be shared when available.

The BID's visitor website www.sheffieldcitycentre.com currently pulls together the city centre "offer" through aggregating social media from local businesses, featured content around the retail and seasonal calendar and experience-themed blogs. Work is underway to ensure it represents and promotes all B2C businesses in the city centre BID area, providing a vibrant "shop window" marketplace that reflects the diversity of businesses trading here.

Businesses are invited to a drop-in session hosted by the Safer Sheffield Partnership on **Thursday, 6 July 3pm – 7pm in the Winter Garden**. This is for the launch of the new Business and Retail Guide to support businesses in managing the impacts of begging and begging-related anti-social behaviour.

Safety in the Workplace – Roundtable discussion

It is widely reported (nationally) that there are a broad range of crimes against High Street businesses and employees. Retail violence and abuse happens daily. Employees are physically assaulted and threatened (sometimes with weapons) and shoplifting is costing industry millions. Hence the reason for introducing what was an informative group discussion with local businesses and members of South Yorkshire Police.

Common experiences include:

- Often a daily occurrence for many businesses (both shoplifting and other types of ASB, less so for service businesses e.g. banking).
- Mostly opportunistic incidents (shoplifting) with strong views that this is often fuelled by addiction in vulnerable people.
- All businesses present have common experiences but not every business is reporting incidents – there is a sense among some that "nothing gets done anyway" whilst others firmly believe that reporting all incidents is crucial. Incidents must be logged so that appropriate levels of police resource will be made available.

- Some businesses believe a “no tolerance” stance is the only option, whilst one national retailer has discretion locally to take a compassionate view towards individuals who resort to this type of activity.
- Is a difference in approach across businesses inadvertently creating a perception that Sheffield is a “soft touch”. Could we achieve a level of consistency across business sectors?
- One retailer is investing in security but has had difficulty and delay in recruiting the right people/skills to the role(s).
- General sense that there has been an increase in incidents recently and that the city centre is attracting more street drinkers.
- Recent incidents cited – outside stores – were drug dealing in and around the Cathedral and at the bottom of Fargate/High Street alongside illegal selling of perfumes from groups at the top of Fargate.
- There was a call for the Police to be more visible with their CCTV van / unit particularly around the bottom of Fargate/High Street area.
- Discussion covered the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced several new tools and powers for use by councils and their partners to address ASB in their local areas. These tools replaced and streamlined a number of previous measures. Sheffield BID has long lobbied for a city centre PSPO and has held discussions with the CEO of SCC and the Police & Crime Commissioner. A PSPO is Council-led and some work to create an Order has now started but there is little transparency around progress. Businesses have yet to be consulted on this. Support for a PSPO within the Council is mixed. Whose remit does this sit within and what is their stance on this.
- Closer links with the political arm of the Council would be useful. There is a view that Councillors focus on communities/residents but not businesses.
- From the discussion, it’s clear that the role of the city centre ambassador team isn’t fully understood with some mixed messaging received by different businesses.
- Knowledge raising and better understanding is needed around the city centre radio– some businesses know about it, some don’t, and some have mixed views about its effectiveness (i.e. the advice and actions taken by the Council’s Control Room).
- Additional comments focused on spikes in ASB on match days and when larger events and festivals are present in the city centre. The same events that drive footfall, dwell time and spend conversely bring additional challenges to the city centre. Businesses feel that when the city holds any event it brings more undesirables into the centre which fuels street drinking, theft and general ASB. Could temporary Local Authority injunctions be introduced on a trial/case-by-case basis.

Business health check

- Despite challenges, businesses are generally positive about the current trading environment. The Moor’s footfall is up by an average of 30% this year with strong spend, whilst footfall on Fargate was down 20% last week compared to the same period last year. This is now impacting on trade and is expected to continue until construction work in the area finishes. Whilst footfall is also down in Orchard Square, spend performance is strong.
- Access to the city centre is becoming more challenging for some city centre visitors – the Arundel Gate Bus Gate is having an impact.

DAMS

- Inspector Gareth Thomas from South Yorkshire Police gave an update on DAMS – the Digital Asset Management System (previously known to some businesses as NICE Digital Evidence Management).
- DAMS is helping transform policing by enabling better, more timely and proactive decision-making, while improving the efficiency of both front-line and support resources. It is the introduction of a single source of digital evidence that both police and the public (businesses) can upload to.
- Businesses are encouraged to get involved and sign up. The contact for DAMS is Inspector Jess Doncaster who is responsible for neighbourhood policing in the city centre. To find out more, contact Jessica.Doncaster@southyorkshire.police.uk.

AOB

- A discussion on joined-up student-focused activity for the new student year (September) and Christmas was requested for a future (or separate meeting).