

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY 4 MARCH 2004

MARSH BARTON FORUM: MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the progress made by the Marsh Barton Forum since September 2003 on implementing the Management Plan agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on the 13 June 2002.
- 1.2 To ask Members' opinion on whether the City Council's contribution to the costs of the Marsh Barton Administrator should continue for a further year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City Council contributed £4,500, as agreed, to the Marsh Barton Forum as a matched payment to that received from the County Council and from employers on the estate, in order to progress the Marsh Barton Management Plan. This has been developed so as to provide a framework for coordinated effort to enhance the estate as a successful business location. The funding granted was for the period July 2002 to June 2003.
- 2.2 It should be noted that the former Marsh Barton Administrator retired unexpectedly in early January 2003 and it was late March 2003 before his successor was appointed. Not surprisingly, there has been some slippage in the agreed timetable for the implementation of the Management Plan.

3. KEY OUTPUTS

- 3.1 Officers have been meeting on a monthly basis with the new Administrator to progress and continue to implement the Management Plan.
- 3.2 Progress to date on the agreed priorities in the Plan is as follows:-
- 3.3 **Trading**
“to encourage and promote the maximum variety and range of trading and associated service business” (extract from the Plan).

- *Obtain information on the size, scope and development needs of businesses* – The Administrator conducted a face to face survey from late September up until Christmas 2003 of all businesses on Marsh Barton. Questions were based around four main strategic groups: development, training, recycling and transportation needs. The Administrator reported a 75% return and the key findings of the survey were:
 - Almost 28% of businesses are experiencing problems recruiting suitable staff;
 - The vast majority of staff (79%) drive to work,

- 46% of businesses are experiencing transport difficulties, of these 51% blamed traffic congestion,
 - Almost 91% of businesses do not have a Green Travel Plan, but only 9% want help developing a Green Travel Plan,
 - More than 60% of companies on Marsh Barton recycle,
 - Less than a third of business use broadband,
 - Less than 9% of businesses thought the Shared Delivery Partnership was applicable to their business.
- *Produce a definitive estate guide* – The last Directory was published in January 2003. The next estate directory is due for publication in early 2005. Discussions are currently taking place about whether this should become an annual publication as it is currently a bi-annual publication.
 - *Co-ordinate the upkeep and appearance of empty properties with owners and estate agents* – Some improvements to sites have been made and the general upkeep and pride in the appearance of the estate is being promoted in the newsletter and on the website.

3.4 Access

“to improve access to and from the Estate”

- *Develop an access strategy with DCC/ECC/Stagecoach/Sustrans and others* – The Administrator is currently working with the County Council and City Council to develop a number of short-term measures for the Estate. New signage from the M5 is in place. Phase 2 of introducing the parking and waiting restrictions is waiting for implementation by the County Council. The Shared Delivery Partnership has been launched and promoted in the Express & Echo, Marsh Barton Newsletter and to businesses on the Estate.
- *Identify and design information sites at Estate access points* – Three sites have been identified at the main entry points to the Estate: Bad Homburg Way, outside the Stone Lane Retail Park and at the start of Alphin Brook Road. A new map of the Estate has been produced (later than planned due to commercial reasons), and is now ready for distribution. The three information boards at the entry points to the estate will use the same map.
- *Develop a plan for increased use of public transport, cycling and pedestrian access* – A number of proposals are under discussion with the County Council, which include improved pedestrian walkways, crossings and security measures.

3.5 Marketing

“to promote the Estate locally, regionally and nationally through positive communication”

- *Provide a focus for individual business marketing and publicity events and develop a regular media / PR service* – The Marsh Barton website is currently under review. Businesses on the estate are

encouraged to contribute their opinions and articles to the newsletter at every opportunity.

- *Develop a co-ordinated approach to marketing the Estate with local authorities* – Direct links have been created between the Marsh Barton website and those of surrounding local authorities. The Forum also supports the marketing efforts of the City Council by including details of initiatives within its newsletters.
- *Develop and promote regular media contacts to sustain interest in the trading activities of businesses on the Estate* – Links with the Express & Echo are being maintained to ensure that Marsh Barton and its projects are regularly highlighted.
- *Develop and maintain an Estate Website Access* – The whole ethos of the Marsh Barton website, www.marsh-barton.co.uk, its content and how it can be accessed and used is undergoing a radical change. The Police are working closely with the Forum to tap into the potential for using the site as a point for information distribution in crime prevention. It is hoped the motor dealerships on the estate will be instrumental in supporting this change. Quotes have been received to improve the website and ways of funding this are under discussion.

3.6 **Physical Environment**

“to provide a clean and attractive Estate, encouraging and facilitating improvements to the physical environment”

- *Review and improve the standard of road surfaces* – As part of the Walkabout in October 2003 the Chair of the Joint Highways Committee, Councillor Chris Gale and Exeter Local Services Group officers met with members of the Forum, and identified a number of items to address which are under consideration.
- *Review and improve the standard of refuse handling, street cleaning and collection* – Current practices and the desire for improved recycling facilities are being reviewed in conjunction with the City Council’s Cleansing Services as a result of the information obtained in the Business Survey.

3.7 **Security**

“to provide a safe and convenient Estate for the traders, suppliers and their customers”

- *Set up a Crime Prevention Panel, with a reporting system* – A close working partnership with the Police now exists, with whom the Administrator is enhancing the sharing of information about crime.

3.8 **Employment and Training**

“to identify with businesses and providers the employment and training needs for the Estate”

- *Review and communicate details of training available on the Estate &*

determining the need for (and where necessary developing) new training courses for Marsh Barton businesses – Information gathered through the Survey is being shared with Exeter College who are contacting the companies that expressed an interest in training. Information about job and training opportunities is regularly advertised through the Forum newsletter. The Administrator is working closely with JobCentre Plus and Exeter College's Learning Centre to help them raise their profile with Marsh Barton businesses.

4. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 2004**

4.1 Key aspects of rolling forward the Management Plan for 2004 will be as follows:

- Arising from the results of the business survey the nominated theme for Marsh Barton Forum will be “Reducing Waste and Recycling”. Looking at current practices and using information from the business survey there appears to be major potential to increase the number of companies recycling, and also to broaden the range of materials recycled. Information will be shared with businesses about how to reduce waste produced and practical solutions will be researched and presented to traders on the Estate including schemes that provide an income for traders from recycling of materials.
- Continue to develop the access strategy.
- Further CCTV cameras on the estate.
- Continue to improve the road surfaces.
- Vigorous promotion of the Shared Delivery Partnership. This is still in its infancy and it is intended to make it a thriving scheme that effectively reduces the number of van deliveries on Marsh Barton and throughout the region saving time and money for traders. Marsh Barton is part of the Freight Quality Partnership and the pilot project launched in February 2004 will be reviewed by the Freight Quality Partnership. The Forum will use all means of promotion of the pilot project at its disposal.
- Review the effectiveness of the Crime Prevention Panel and its reporting system. Initially this will focus on the Dealerships to achieve a cohesive approach to information sharing, particularly crime, and to widen the net to eventually include all business communities on the estate. A meeting scheduled for 10th Feb will urge dealers to enter into a working partnership with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and Marsh Barton Forum to report suspicious activity to other dealerships and the police, it is anticipated much of this will be disseminated via the Marsh Barton website.
- Redevelopment of the Marsh Barton website to bring it up to date as a means of distribution of information for all sectors of the business community.

- Continue to review and communicate details of training available and meeting local needs in conjunction with Exeter College and JobCentre Plus.

5. RECOMMENDED – that

- 5.1 Members note the progress made with the Marsh Barton Management Plan in 2002 and 2003 and support match-funding of £4,500 for the implementation of the 2004 Marsh Barton Management Plan, as detailed above.

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HEAD OF ECONOMY AND TOURISM**

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling the report:-

Marsh Barton Forum: Report Back on Issues Raised. Scrutiny Committee – Economy, 13 June 2002

Marsh Barton Forum: Six-Month Progress Report – Scrutiny Committee - Economy, 16 January 2003

Marsh Barton Forum: Management Plan Progress Report – Scrutiny Committee - Economy, 6 November 2003.

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