

Oral Questions and Answers Given Post Meeting

23 February 2017

12) Councillor Austin to the Executive Councillor for Environmental Services and City Centre:

What are the ruling group doing to secure the future of independently owned shops across the city?

The City Council recognises and values the important role played by independently owned shops across the city. Independently owned shops are valued for their diversity, the range and quality of their customer offer and the contribution they make to the local economy.

Listed below are some key areas in which the City Council actively supports the future of independently owned shops:

- **Rate relief:** Occupiers of independently owned shops are eligible to claim Small Business Rate Relief. Currently ratepayers who occupy a single property with a rateable value below £6K pay no rates at all, and those with rateable values (RV) between £6K and £12K receive a tapered relief.

From 1st April 2017, those RV thresholds increase to £12K and £15K, therefore many more small businesses will pay no rates at all from 1st April. The cost of this additional relief is met by through Central Government Grants.

To qualify for this relief a ratepayer must only occupy one property therefore it is likely that the majority of ratepayers benefiting from this relief will be independently owned shops within the city.

This relief have been available since 2006 and, over time, the City Council has actively sought to encourage ratepayers to apply.

- **Planning:** The emerging Cambridge Local Plan, which is currently at examination stage, includes a number of policies which will benefit independently owned shops including:
 - Policy 10 on Development in the City Centre Primary Shopping Area, which supports the delivery of both small

and large units as part of new retail and leisure developments of 2,500 square metres or more

- Policy 10 also confirms that both the daily market in the Market Square and the arts and crafts market on All Saints Garden will be protected and enhanced.
 - Policy 72 on Development and Change of Use in District, Local and Neighbourhood Centres, which supports provision of smaller retail units. The policies and supporting text specifically reference units suiting the demands of smaller independent and local traders.
 - Policies in the emerging Plan for the Mitcham's Corner and Mill Road Opportunity Areas also support the interests of the characteristic smaller independent traders.
- **Cambridge BID activity:** As a BID levy payer and member of the BID Board, the City Council supports the delivery of a range of BID projects, which specifically benefit independently owned shops within the BID Zone. These include: Independents' Week, Business Cost Reduction Scheme (in 2015/16 the scheme enabled mainly small businesses to save £135K), and business training (including marketing, sales and use of social media)
 - **Night market trial:** From May 2017 to December 2017, the Council, with support from BID, is organising a trial programme of monthly night market in the Market Square, which will provide a platform for independently owned shops, such as those on Mitcham's Corner and Mill Road, to showcase their offer in a different setting/ environment than they traditionally do
 - **Capital investment in public realm improvements:** The Council is investing in works to improve the quality and accessibility of the public realm associated with local shopping centres across the city including:
 - Local Centres Improvement Programme: £635k budget for Cherry Hinton High Street (completed) and Arbury Court (planning stage) and Mitcham's Corner (yet to start)
 - 'Forecourt' improvement projects: Rectory Terrace, Cherry Hinton (largely Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) funded), Mill Road (s106) and Cherry Hinton Road (s106).

13) Councillor Gehring to the Leader:

The LLF for the Cambourne to Cambridge busway has developed a new option 6 which avoids harmful bus routes across the West Fields. Will he agree to press the City Deal Board to examine this option seriously and discuss it with members of the LLF in person as promised in the summer?

I look forward to attending a meeting of the Cambourne to Cambridge LLF to listen to the LLF's contribution, as other Board members are also doing, including to understand the on-road option they are proposing, and the evidence informing it compared to other options.

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