

**CITY CENTRE QUICK WINS PROPOSED FAWCETT STREET
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
CITY SERVICES**

Strategic Priority: SP5 - Attractive and Inclusive City

**Corporate Priorities: CIO1 – Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4 –
Improving Partnership Working To Deliver ‘One City’**

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Scrutiny Committee on the proposed public realm, traffic and highway improvements to Fawcett Street.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In June 2011 Cabinet approved a package of measures designed to enhance the City Centre by implementing the proposed programme for the current year and to demonstrate the Council's continued support for businesses within the City Centre. This "Quick Wins" budget currently funds public realm enhancements, the city centre events programme, business support and branding/communications.
- 2.2 The part of the public realm element of the budget has been allocated to develop a feasibility scheme to improve Fawcett Street. Any works would be subject to the availability of funding in future years capital programme.

3.0 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 A Project Manager from the Transformation Programmes and Projects Office has been assigned to the Fawcett Street Project and reports Head of Planning and Property as the Project Executive. The Project Manager also sits on City Centre Management Group. This group was established in 2011 to coordinate activity in the city centre and is chaired by the Head of Streetscene.
- 3.2 The City Centre Management Group is supported by a Technical Advisory Group made up of colleagues from the various sections with relevant expertise. The function of this advisory group is to recommend courses of action which include street design, traffic movements, street lighting and any other relevant matters.
- 3.3 The group has been working on both traffic and public realm related improvements for Fawcett Street.

4.0 TRAFFIC IMPACT INVESTIGATIONS

4.1 Congestion and road safety at the south end of Fawcett Street is recognised as a key area for investigation and improvement. Four main issues were highlighted in the investigation:

- I. **Accessibility to City Centre Customer Service Centre** – including the improved provision of disabled parking in closer proximity. There is currently provision to park on Burdon Road within a ‘no waiting’ area, but this is relatively heavily used.
- II. **Pedestrian accessibility** – the section of footway on the west of Fawcett Street between Borough Road and Athenaeum Street (outside Wilkinson’s) has a high pedestrian footfall which at times conflicts with that part of the street functioning a hub for bus transport. There are a number of bus shelters providing pick up and set down points for the many bus services that utilise this route.
- III. **Bus service accessibility** – there are a number of bus services which utilise Fawcett Street. Services travelling north need to traverse the entire length of the street. However the current one way restriction on Borough Road requires other services to right along Athenaeum Street, causing the southern section of Fawcett Street to be excessively congested and creates competition for limited bus stop space.
- IV. **The existing road network** in this area is relatively complex with limited access points and many junctions with limited movements.

4.2 A Traffic Impact Investigation was carried out in October 2011 in the vicinity of the junction of Fawcett Street and Borough Road. This survey information has been used to model the capacity of existing junctions and model traffic impacts of potential improvements. It is considered that the modifications to the highway network to address the issues above could be achieved with limited impacts to traffic flow within the City Centre.

4.3 Recommendations for network improvements

Any proposals in the short to medium term should seek to reduce the congestion in the southern section of Fawcett Street thus enhancing its appeal within the city. To achieve this it is considered necessary to make improvements for both pedestrians and bus accessibility, providing the catalyst to improve provision adjacent to the Customer Service Centre as follows:-

- I. Increase the width of the western footway on Fawcett Street to reduce the congestion caused by queuing bus passengers restricting movement along the footway. Provision of additional footway width on the western side needs to be balanced by the removal of an equal width on the eastern side in order to maintain existing carriageway widths. This could provide an opportunity to introduce an additional loading bay / disabled bays to enhance the accessibility of the Customer Service Centre.
- II. Reducing bus congestion (by around twenty buses per hour) by removing the need for services to circulate around Fawcett Street, Athenaeum Street and

Fredrick Street. To achieve this it would be necessary to provide two way flow on Borough Road for buses only between John Street and Fredrick Street and in the eastern direction between Fawcett Street and John Street. This would result in a need to redesign a number of junctions along Borough Road..

- III. It is also proposed to enhance pedestrian crossing facilities at the Borough Road/Fawcett Street junction to improve pedestrian safety.

5.0 STREET SCENE IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE ROLE

- 5.1 The purpose of any proposed improvements to Fawcett Street should be to create a more attractive and welcoming place for residents and visitors and to increase the confidence of the commercial sector. It is also felt that consideration needs to be given to the longer term future role of Fawcett Street. The success of the Bridges, the current relocation of Primark and the potential of new developments in the city centre is likely to mean that the established shift of the retail core away from Fawcett Street will continue. Fawcett Street will remain a key area of the city centre but will need to reinvent itself as its traditional role is likely to continue to diminish. This realistic assessment should not necessarily be considered negatively – rather, a positive opportunity to maximise the inherent attractiveness of the street and its buildings to create an important link across the River and to Sunnyside and to become a commercially successful area for example based upon an improved restaurant, cultural and leisure offer.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 When clear proposals have been established and subject to the availability of capital funding, the improvements to Fawcett Street will necessitate public consultation which will include residents and the commercial sector. Consultations with both NEXUS and relevant bus companies will also be required.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report.

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