

Transport Infrastructure and Environment Committee meets today

The Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committtee meets at 10am this morning in the City Chambers. A packed agenda as always for one of the most important areas of council business, and today is no different. Here is the agenda:-

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Some of the important items which we will be keeping a watch over include the following:-

9 hour parking in extended controlled parking zones. These parking spaces are aimed at providing a solution for businesses and trades people in the city centre, but the report claims that there is actually little call for them. The point about them is that there is a maximum stay period of 9 hours in one day, and the cost is now around £5.50 for a full day. There is also a minimum stay period of 3 hours imposed. However the monitoring of these spaces has shown that none of them are used for more than 34% of the time, and in one area the occupancy is as low as 9%. Instead, Retailers' permits can now be purchased in the zone which are not subject to a maximum stay period at all. To qualify, the retailers' vehicles initially had to have business livery on them (so vans with the company names on them!) and one of the recommendations is that this requirement is removed. As well as this, the report suggests that what are called Class 2 businesses are allowed to use the scheme too. It is recognised that part of the problem with controlled parking zones is that commuters try to park just outside that boundary and then presumably jump on a bus into town. It is possible that the controlled parking zones will be extended further, making it

almost impossible for drivers to do this. The Ashley/Harrison area has already been considered and approved for controlled parking, but other areas are also under consideration.

Princes Street Realm is on the agenda with a report being produced to this meeting on what this important street should look like in the future. Gehl Architects have drawn up proposals for the Princes Street, George Street and Rose Street areas and this is to be presented to the meeting and a motion that a public consultation is now embarked upon to report back within this calendar year.

Some of the notable recommendations from the architects include reducing the domination of buses on Princes Street, reduction of jay walking, the investigation of residential opportunities in these areas, removal of clutter on the pavements, a review of guard rails at junctions, an improvement of the paving quality, and the provision of areas for “spontaneous sitting” as well as an increase of areas of green or vegetation.

There has already been a meeting with businesses in the affected areas when an overwhelming 94% agreed with the approach being described, and many who agreed on the key issues which face these central streets. The vision for the streets is to ‘create a place which is increasingly attractive to visitors and meets the needs and aspirations of city residents.”

The City Development Framework includes something called the String of Pearls, which recognises key buildings and areas in the city. There is to be an illustration of how the city will look in the future if any of these recommendations are adopted. We shall report on this to you more fully after the meeting.

Various motions are on the agenda for future reports to be produced. Some examples:-

Bonus Bag Scheme. This is a motion by Green Councillor Alison Johnstone requesting that the council examines the possibility of a scheme encouraging people to use local shops is examined. Greener Leith have already introduced such a scheme which, for example, offers locals discounts if they use the bag in the Leith area, and encourages local custom.

Road safety around South Morningside school. Councillor Godzik has tabled this motion for consideration by the council, to try and reduce the double yellow lines near the school, while also maintaining safety for the schoolchildren being dropped off there. There is also a separate motion for consideration of the area outside George Watson's College tabled by Councillor McInnes.

Councillor Ewan Aitken bemoans the loss of the number 12 bus resulting in much local anger, and requests an investigation into a replacement service.

Councillor Mackenzie wants increased provision of covered cycle storage to encourage more bicycle use.

One other important matter on the agenda for future reporting is Talking Buses, a motion requested by Councillor Whyte.