



**Preston**  
City Council



***Preston After Hours***  
***- Work Plan Study***

**Report by the  
Communities Scrutiny Panel**

**January 2014 - November 2014**

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## 1. Chair's Commentary

The Panel looked at various options prior to this study based around the theme of improving Preston's night time economy and cultural offering. We named the report 'Preston After Hours'.

It was agreed that the report and issues it scrutinised would be complimentary to the excellent work the Council is already doing in this area and that it be supportive and complimentary to this work.

The Panel met with several organisations and bodies which provided very informative presentations about their various business plans and offerings, open and honest discussions were had, and debate led to suggestions on how we, as a Council could be more supportive in assisting the City's out of hours economy.

Members were very enthusiastic and found the presentations very enlightening. We were very well supported by officers and other councillors. We hope that following on from this study, Preston will work to establish closer and better links with our partner organisations to ensure our local economy grows stronger.

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in this study.



**Councillor Gale**  
**Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel**

## **2. Summary**

This report gives details of the investigations which have been made on the Communities Scrutiny Panel's Work Plan Study into Preston's night time economy and city events.

The Communities Scrutiny Panel ("the Panel") carried out a variety of interviews and research, details of which are attached.

### 3. Introduction

- 3.1 This topic was selected by the Panel as the subject of its next work plan study at the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013.
- 3.2 The Panel's deliberations were conducted over the course of three meetings held January, February and April 2014.

The Panel undertook information gathering and carried out interviews with the following attendees:-

Mr Peter Ward – Retired Justice of the Peace  
Mr Mark Whittle } Preston Business Improvement District  
Mr Kevin Barrett }  
Inspector Astrid Wilson – Lancashire Constabulary  
Mr Richard Simkin – Preston Guild Hall Ltd  
Mr Darren Wildman – Preston Comic Con  
Ms Daniella Gallagher – Professional Artist

The Panel also received a presentation by Mr Neil Fairhurst, Deputy Director (Head of ICT Services).

### 4. Membership

The Panel was chaired by Councillor Gale, the full membership being:-



Councillor Gale  
(Chair)



Councillor Coupland  
(Vice Chair)



Councillor B Cartwright



Councillor Corker



Councillor Eaves



Councillor Faruki



Councillor Kelly



Councillor Leach



Councillor Leeming



Councillor Mullen



Councillor Mrs Thomas

Councillor Thompson-Ortega

- 4.1 The study originally commenced in January 2014 and the Panel was at that time chaired by Councillor Patel.

## **5. Deliberations**

- 5.1 The Panel met on a number of occasions to gather information/evidence, interview witnesses and discuss findings. The following paragraphs give outline summaries of the key points/information gathered and discussed at each meeting together with links to the minutes of those meetings.

### **5.2 27 November 2013**

- 5.2.1 The Panel considered suggested topics and chose Preston's Cultural Offer in the Evenings as its next work plan study. It was expected that the study would take approximately six months to complete.
- 5.2.2 Members selected various persons that they wished to interview as part of the study.

[Minutes 27 November 2013](#)

### **5.3 8 January 2014**

- 5.3.1 Mr Neil Fairhurst, Deputy Director (Head of ICT Services) and Mr Tim Joel, Events Manager, attended the meeting and presented the draft scoping document for the consideration of Members (see Appendix A).

5.3.2 Mr Peter Ward, a retired magistrate was also in attendance at the invite of the Chair to give his views on issues relating to activities in the city centre in the evening.

#### 5.4 **26 February 2014**

5.4.1 Mr Neil Fairhurst, Deputy Director (Head of ICT Services), gave a presentation relevant to the study.

He set out a number of city centre challenges including out of town and internet shopping, office space and working from home initiatives and the lack of quality and affordable residential accommodation in the city centre. The Deputy Director then provided details as to where the Council was focusing its vision which was on a vibrant city centre with a diverse offer thus bringing people into the city centre and ensuring its economic sustainability. He then said that clear objectives were required and a number of collaborative arrangements and agreements were already under way, and these were:

- LCC Collaboration Agreement
- Development Prospectus
- Guild Hall
- Markets Redevelopment
- Collaboration with UCLAN
- Arts and Culture Framework
- Events Team
- City Centre Plan
- Preston Business Improvement District (“Preston BID”)

5.4.2 Members requested that Preston BID be invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel together with representatives from the Police, UCLAN and the Heritage Arts Partnership Group if practicable.

#### [Minutes 26 February 2014](#)

#### 5.5 **9 April 2014**

5.5.1 Mr Mark Whittle and Mr Kevin Barrett attended the meeting representing Preston BID. Inspector Astrid Wilson, representing Lancashire Constabulary, was also in attendance.

5.5.2 The Panel received a presentation from Mr Whittle on the establishment of Preston BID and the work it carries out.

Various events and awards supported by Preston BID, the Council and local businesses were discussed including:-

- Preston By Night;
- Prestfest;

- Alive After Five Hospitality Award;
- Purple Flag;
- Christmas Lights Switch On.

5.5.3 Inspector Wilson gave a presentation on the work of her team and on Operation Nightsafe. She explained that she was new in her role and was reviewing what was already in place and continuing the close working partnerships. The various phases of the day and busiest times were also discussed.

## 5.6 **14 May 2014**

5.6.1 The Panel briefly discussed the work so far on the work plan study and also on proposed developments in the city centre which could enhance the night time economy.

## 5.7 **16 July 2014**

5.7.1 At the first meeting of the Municipal Year, there had been a change in membership including a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

5.7.2 It was decided that the title of the study be amended to Preston After Hours. The Panel also discussed a proposal to hold a conference in conjunction with partners.

5.7.3 Mr Richard Simkin, Operations Manager from Preston Guild Hall Ltd attended the meeting for interview. Mr Simkin gave the Panel details of the company's proposals for the Guild Hall complex following its acquisition scheduled for October 2014. He also reported on the type of events that would be aired and community use.

### [Minutes 16 July 2014](#)

## 5.8 **3 September 2014**

5.8.1 Mr Darren Wildman from Preston Comic Con and Mrs Daniella Gallagher, a professional artist attended the meeting for interview. Mr Neil Fairhurst, Deputy Director (Head of ICT Services) and Mr Tim Joel, Events Manager were also in attendance.

5.8.2 Mr Wildman gave the Panel details of Preston Comic Con which was scheduled to be held in the Guild Hall on 25 October 2014. He reported on the successful advance ticket sales and on working in partnership with other organisations.

5.8.3 Ms Gallagher reported on her career to date and also the music scene in Preston. She also gave details of aspirations to develop a collaboration of musicians and businesses to create networking events leading up to a showcase event. She was keen to also engage with schools and local colleges.

- 5.8.4 Mr Fairhurst gave the Panel details of the Preston Cultural Partnership which had recently been established and in which Councillor Mrs Afrin the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure was involved. Mr Joel gave details of initial ideas of events for Preston and the aspiration of a signature event.
- 5.8.5 The Panel discussed proposals / draft recommendations for the study including the appointment of a Member Champion, the establishment of regular early evening activity, the holding of a symposium and working with the Preston Cultural Partnership.

## **6. Financial and Legal Implications**

At this initial stage there are no legal implications contained within the body of this Work Plan Study.

At this point there are also no financial implications. However, there may be implications from the outcome of the recommendations, which would require further investigations.

## **7. Summary of Findings**

1. That there was already some collaboration under way as regards the city's night time cultural offer, with partners such as UCLAN and Preston BID.
2. That the city would benefit from expanding on existing collaboration with partners to promote the night time economy and city events, including the appointment of a Member Champion and establishing a programme of early evening activity, the holding of a symposium and working with the Preston Cultural Partnership.
3. That a review of the opening hours of the Harris Museum would support the widening of the city's cultural offer.

## **8. Recommendations to Cabinet**

- (i) That Cabinet be recommended to explore the option of the establishment of a Member Champion post to promote the night time economy and city events;
- (ii) That the Council's Events Team explore the possibility of including pilot early evening events as part of the Council's Summer and Winter Programmes;
- (iii) That an Early Evening Sub Group as part of the Cultural Framework Board is endorsed to discuss how to develop

Preston after hours and other events, together with other interested parties;

- (iv) That the Council continues to work with the Preston Cultural Partnership through the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and requests that it considers to include the night time economy and economically beneficial events within its remit;
- (v) That the Council looks to host a symposium in partnership with Preston BID to discuss the early evening offer with city businesses;
- (vi) That the operating times of the Harris Museum and Art Gallery be reviewed to explore the feasibility of supporting the early evening offer and also opening on Sundays;
- (vii) That the promotion of events be examined and developed by the Council's Events Team.

## **9. Corporate Management Team Commentary**

CMT have acknowledged that for Preston to fulfil its role as a sub-regional centre a thriving early evening economy is an essential ingredient.

To have a thriving early evening economy the City Centre needs to:

- Attract people who come into the centre to work to stay once their work is finished
- Attract people to make a specific visit to the centre in the early evening and
- Attract more people as residents in the City Centre who may work elsewhere but return to use the facilities in the early evening

Therefore there is no one easy fix to address this issue.

Important ingredients are:

- A safe and clean environment
- Easy transport links
- A blend of leisure, entertainment, arts, culture and heritage attractions
- Quality food and drink facilities.
- Supporting retail
- Opportunities for City Centre Living
- Events

CMT firmly believe that the current regeneration work being undertaken by the Council and its partners (including Lancashire County Council, UCLan, BID and Marketing Lancashire) will

ultimately bring the step change to the city centre facilitating sustaining the economy from the daytime through the early evening and beyond.

Indeed the green shoots of that work are beginning to show with the shared space work on Fishergate, the recent opening of new food and drink establishments and the investment planned for the Guild Hall. The redevelopment of the markets area and the bus station will also have an impact. The Council is working closely with the investors in this part of the centre to co-ordinate efforts.

The significant investment planned by UCLan will also have a major impact on the centre and the relationship with the student population.

CMT therefore welcomes this report and makes the following specific comments on the recommendations:-

1. The appointment of a Member Champion would need to be on a very clear brief as there are likely to be considerable overlaps in respect of the Leaders and other Executive Members portfolios e.g. City Centre Regeneration, Leisure, Art and Culture, and Events;
2. The Council's Events team are planning to test some early evening events as part of the Flag Market approach and as part of the Lancashire Encounter event. However with this exception, currently the budget available is fully committed to the current Summer and Winter Programmes;
3. The Cultural Framework Board (CFB) takes a strategic overview of all arts and culture activities in Preston and part of that remit includes the early evening economy. The Collaboration Board takes an overview and co-ordinates the work of public sector agencies in city centre regeneration initiatives. Discussions have already taken place to establish a group linked to the Collaboration Board of the major private sector partners to ensure a comprehensive approach to the regeneration of the city centre which will include the early evening economy issues raised in this report. This new partnership is likely to be best placed to focus on the development of the early evening economy and complement the work already taking place in partnership through the BID;
4. The Preston Cultural Partnership already covers day and night time activities. Additional funding would certainly be required for the Preston Cultural Partnership to undertake any specific extra work in respect of the night time economy;

5. The Cultural Framework Board has already agreed to a symposium during this year with the business community in respect of the arts and culture agenda. This, with the Boards agreement, can be extended to cover the night time economy;
6. The Harris undertakes limited evening opening for special events and openings. Any extension of those evening openings and Sunday opening would need additional finance or compensating reductions in mid-week opening times. Any changes to opening times would need to be agreed with the Library Service; and,
7. The Events team currently work closely with the Communications team and partners to ensure events are promoted in the most cost effective manner subject to the budget available. As part of the Guild City Brand and approach to the Flag Market we intend to explore lamppost banners to advertise events. However this would have to be a partnership approach to make it affordable

**SCOPING DOCUMENT**

**“Preston After Hours”**

1.	<u>Scrutiny Chair:</u>  Councillor D Gale	<u>Contact Details</u>  <a href="mailto:cllr.d.gale@preston.gov.uk">cllr.d.gale@preston.gov.uk</a>
2.	<u>Scrutiny Support Officer:</u>	Jacqui Pollock x6305  <a href="mailto:j.pollock@preston.gov.uk">j.pollock@preston.gov.uk</a>
3.	<u>Departmental Link Officer:</u>	Tim Joel x3660  <a href="mailto:t.joel@preston.gov.uk">t.joel@preston.gov.uk</a>

1. **Which of our Corporate Priorities does this topic address?**

The topic supports the Council’s City Vision and Safer Stronger Neighbourhoods Corporate Priorities.

2.

**What are the overall aims and objectives in doing this work?**

- To improve the Council’s understanding of the current night time cultural offer
- To improve the Council’s understanding of the city’s potential venues and avenues for a broader night time offer
- To look to develop recommendations for the Council to strengthen and expand the night time cultural offer beyond the current drinking culture
- To analyse existing night time clientele and identify proposed target groups to broaden the demographic

- To evaluate the economic impact of the night time economy
- To examine how the Council's assets can be better utilised to serve the night time economy
- To consider possible barriers to improving the night time offer

3. **Possible outputs/outcomes to this review are:-**

- Formation of a steering group made up of key partners and cross departmental officers to develop night time offer
- Council to have a clear position in relation to its own assets and contribution to improving the night time offer
- Development of an evening cultural plan with supporting budget
- Development of an improvement plan to the built environment to assist the cultural offer
- Marketing plan to improve the perception and awareness of evening offer and to target specific audiences

4. **What specific value can Scrutiny add to this work area?**

- Make recommendation to Cabinet to progress the outcomes
- Working closely with elected members to ensure an understanding of the needs and requirements of this project
- Making sure the outcomes are realistic and achievable within the current Council restraints
- Assist Council services to understand their role within the project
- Champion external partners to support and contribute to the study

5. **Duration of the Review?**

12 months

6. **What category does the review fall into?**

Policy Development  
External Partnership

7. **What information do we need to undertake the Scrutiny Review**

- Evaluation of existing night time offer
- Evaluation of current clientele
- Benchmark against towns and cities of a similar demographic and size
- Evaluation of public perception and requirements and businesses' perception and requirements
- Review of the Council's and wider city night time assets and potential assets
- Evaluation of economic impact of night time offer

8. **Who can provide us with relevant evidence?**      **What areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence**

Preston BID	Current offer, recommendations for the future, footfall, business needs, economic impact, issues facing the city centre
Business Owners	Footfall, economic impact, future plans, target customers, suggestions for improvements
Customers	Public perceptions, economic impact, improvements
UCLAN/Students' Union	Alternative offer to student drinking culture, economic impact

Preston City Council's Licensing Section	Number and type of licenced premises, opening hour trends, issues, changes in licencing regulation, support for improvements. Taxi data including footfall and journey trends
Police	Trouble hot spots, issues, suggestions to improve night time safety
Preston City Council's Planning Department	Changes to City Centre built environment, embedding cultural offer into planning considerations, City Deal Footfall, audience data, ways to link into night time offer,
Guild Hall/Harris/Markets/car parks	suggestions to maximise assets, car park data
Other LA Event/Cultural officers	Benchmark other towns and cities night time offers and seek models of best practise.

9. **What processes can we use to feed into the review (site visits/observations, face to face questioning, telephone surveys, written questionnaires etc?)**

Interviews with representatives of the Panel  
 Face to face meetings  
 Questionnaires  
 Online surveys

10. **Diversity – How will we address the diversity standards in order to uphold the Council's Single Equality Scheme?**

All areas of work and any recommendations would be Equality Impact Assessed.

Recommendations can be discussed with the Inclusion Reference Group to identify any potential barriers.

