

Meeting	Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date	29 April 2014
Present	Councillors Semlyen (Chair), Barnes, Burton, Cuthbertson, D'Agorne and Watt (Vice-Chair)
Apologies	Councillor Riches

62. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests, other than those listed in their standing declarations, that they might have had in the business on the agenda.

Councillor D'Agorne declared a personal interest in the general remit of the Committee as an employee of York College. He added that as part of his job he gave guidance to young people on training issues.

No other interests were declared.

63. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 March 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

64. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

65. Attendance of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting and gave a verbal report on the priorities within his portfolio area.

His verbal report gave comments on the following;

- Unemployment figures.
- Apprenticeships figures.
- Transport funding-infrastructure, travel costs, the role of the Combined Authority.
- Digital Infrastructure.
- Medium sized businesses in the city.

Unemployment Figures

It was reported that the current unemployment figure in the city for those claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) was 1.7% . This was compared to a figure of 1.5% in August 2008. Although York had the second lowest figures of those on JSA nationally, and the second lowest youth unemployment figures, the Leader felt this could be improved.

Apprenticeship Figures

Although creation of apprenticeships had been good in the city, there was still a concern that 50% of these were going to apprentices who did not live in York. It was hoped that a business rates relief package could be created to encourage companies to take on more apprentices.

Transport Funding

The Leader felt that York had an opportunity to gain large scale transport funding through its membership of the Combined Authority. For example the funding might allow for subsidised travel on public transport, and in conjunction with the Credit Union, employees might be able to get a year long repayable travel pass. If the issue of public transport was not addressed then young people could leave and the city could be in decline.

Digital Infrastructure

It was reported that York would be the first place in the country to have a gigabit connection and that the Leader had asked for a digital conference to be held in York to encourage external businesses to relocate to the city. Wi-fi in the city centre would be available by July and the Government's Super Connected Cities had funded this. The Leader made further comments on

e-commerce within the city and how use of this could combat the city's low export levels.

Medium sized businesses

It was reported that available employment sites were being identified through the Local Plan. However, there were still issues with catering for medium sized businesses through the city's building stock. Suitable sized buildings were often used for housing developments rather than for business use.

Questions and concerns from Members included;

- That many York residents travelled outside the city to find work, and how could the right training be provided so jobs offered in the city could be expanded?
- The remote nature from the electorate of decisions made by the Combined Authority.
- That although the Local Plan focused on inward investment and housing there did not appear to be a strategy in terms of public and sustainable transport to avoid congestion issues.
- Development around the periphery of the city would be more difficult to provide with public transport services.

The Leader responded;

- He wanted more localised skills funding and for collaborative working with businesses to decide where that funding should go.
- He would like to have an element of University funding to go through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), who would commission funding of business.
- He felt that most people would focus on the outcomes from the work of the Combined Authority, not its governance structures. However, there was a scrutiny function and a Monitoring Officer for the Combined Authority.

Resolved: That the verbal report be noted.

Reason: In order to keep Members informed.

66. Verbal Update on Online Business/E-Commerce Scrutiny Review

Members received a verbal update on the work carried out to date by the Online/E-Commerce Scrutiny Review Task Group.

Officers reported that there had not been a large number of responses to the online survey requested by the Committee at their meeting in March. It was suggested that reasons for this could be that some businesses did not see e-commerce as being suitable for them and that there was a lack of understanding in what e-commerce was.

Discussion took place on the membership of the Task Group, Councillor Barnes informed the Committee that he had professional experience with social media and expressed his wish to be on the Task Group. It was agreed that he would take the place of Councillor Watt on the group.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Online Business/E-Commerce Review Scrutiny Review Task Group be comprised of the following Members;

- Councillor Barnes
- Councillor Cuthbertson
- Councillor Semlyen

Reason: To update the membership of the Task Group and to keep the Committee informed of the direction of the review.

67. Scoping Report on Local Productivity Levels and High Value Jobs

Members received a scoping report which explored the possibility of a scrutiny review around Local Productivity Levels and High Value jobs and the considerations of the Task Group to date.

Discussion took place on figures circulated (which were subsequently attached to the agenda and published online) which showed that there had been an increase in low paid part

time employment in the city. This tended to be most apparent amongst graduates staying in the city. Some Members felt that graduates could still maintain a level of income by getting part time jobs whilst looking for full time employment. Others questioned how private sector companies could be encouraged to take on more full time employees.

The Committee decided to change the focus of the review as highlighted in the report away from green jobs towards graduates and young entrepreneurs and jobs in tech sector businesses.

Resolved: (i) That the following aim be amended to:

‘To identify cost effective ways to attract graduates and young entrepreneurs to start up or relocate in York thus enabling the employment of local people at higher than average wages’

(ii) That the following objectives be agreed;

- To identify improvements to the way York attracts graduates and young entrepreneurs to develop enterprise in the city.
- To identify an improved marketing strategy for York in general and as a place to grow Gross Value Added (GVA) jobs in tech sector businesses.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

68. Presentation of sample promotional video- "Exciting Exeter" created by Exeter City Council

The Chair suggested that as some Members of the Committee (those on the Local Productivity Levels and High Value Jobs Task Group) had already seen the sample Economic Promotional video “Exciting Exeter” that it might be beneficial to cancel consideration of this item.

Resolved: That consideration of the promotional video be cancelled.

Reason: As it was deemed to not be beneficial to the Committee.

69. Times of Meetings for 2014-15 Municipal Year

Members were asked to consider and vote on changing the start time for Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings from 5.00pm to 5.30 pm.

It was felt that starting the meeting at 5.30 pm would allow for greater public participation and would be easier for those Members of the Committee who worked to attend.

Resolved: That the start time of the meetings be changed to start at 5.30 pm.

Reason: To allow for easier access to meetings and greater public participation to take place.

70. Work Plan 2013-14

Members considered the Committee's work plan for 2013-14 municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee has a planned programme of work in place.

71. Draft Work Plan 2014-15

Members considered and discussed the Committee's draft work plan for the forthcoming 2014-15 municipal year.

Resolved: That the draft work plan be noted with the following amendments;

- That an item on changes to the figures in the Economic Dashboard be considered on a quarterly basis.

- That the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Planning and Sustainability be invited to the Committee's October meeting.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee has a planned programme of work in place for the forthcoming municipal year.

Councillor A Semlyen, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.05 pm and finished at 6.40 pm].