

Meeting	Economy & Place Policy & Scrutiny Committee
Date	13 November 2019
Present	Councillors S Barnes (Chair), Baker, Douglas, Hook, Pearson and K Taylor
Apologies	Councillor Daubeney

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## **28. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or discloseable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. Cllr Pearson declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 [Round table discussions around in-work poverty, gender pay gap and low-pay industries] as he was a friend of the TUC representative. There were no further declarations of interest.

## **29. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 10 September 2019 and 16 October 2019 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair.

## **30. Public Participation**

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

## **31. Round table discussions around in-work poverty, gender pay gap and low-pay industries**

Members considered a report that informed them of the current situation in the city in relation to in-work poverty, the gender pay gap and low-paid industries. The following professionals had been invited to the meeting to participate in discussions and to inform Members on those issues they wished to take forward in their work plan for the year:

- The Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York (UoY)

- The Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)
- The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC
- A representative from the retail sector in York

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made. He explained that the committee was working closely with other scrutiny committees on different aspects of poverty in the city.

Discussion took place regarding in work poverty in York. The Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York noted the risks of in work poverty and attributed the causes of it to a number of issues. These included changes in the labour market, low wages, short hours, in work benefit cuts, the impact of government austerity and the non-take up of benefits. The representative from the retail sector in York supported this, adding that in work poverty affected parents as they had additional costs such as childcare.

The Chair noted that housing costs were higher in York and he asked whether this was unique to York. The Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York noted that it was not unique to York and was an important factor as most private rents were not covered by housing benefit. The representative from the retail sector in York noted that at her place of work a job applicant had requested 50-60 hours per week to be able to cover their housing costs. The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC noted that the concept of affordable housing was ambiguous, noting that in York there was not enough social housing and there was also the impact of local authorities not enforcing affordable housing which resulted in a lack of supply of affordable housing.

The Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York was asked and explained that his evaluation was based on the voluntary wage. The Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) noted that there were city and local area differences in the living wage which were impacted by housing costs, income (wage plus benefits), low pay and people getting stuck on low pay, the number of hours and constraints on working hours (childcare and transport) and the local economy. She explained that the Living Wage Foundation had developed a new scheme on working hours which called for decent notice periods for shifts and a minimum of 16 hours a week. The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC concurred with this and noted the precarity in the workplace for the numbers of 16-30 year olds working in the hospitality, retail and caring sector which were growing sectors in which employees may not have their rights enforced or know that their rights exist.

A Member asked whether working hours and shifts were being looked at governmental level. The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC noted that at some companies shift managers were given little training. The representative from the retail sector in York noted that zero hours contracts were not used at her place of work and they also issued fixed contracts, for example a two week working hours rota. She noted that the stability of working hours was important and there had been a number of retail jobs lost, and seemed to be transferring over to warehousing jobs. She added that there was a pressure to make a profit and in her organisation there had been a 12% decrease in the number of staffing hours.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) noted the importance of considering one sided flexibility in the workplace and she asked how employers could be supported to create more good quality jobs. She explained that the Local Industrial Strategy needed to support growth and highlighted the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter as an example of this. She noted that there was a role for councils to convene good job standards. The representative from the retail sector in York noted that there were opportunities for employers to be good role models.

The City of York Council (CYC) Assistant Director for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Asset Management explained that the living wage was important for the council and there was salary compression at lower grades. She noted that the council had tried to look at the living wage in its supply chain. She advised that there was consultation on the economic strategy that would feed into the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and there was an emphasis on including growth which would involve the setting up of a 'people's panel' that would look at items such as the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. The CYC Head of Economic Growth outlined the York Economic Strategy and noted that there was growth in the low paid work areas such as hospitality. He noted that a report on this had been presented to the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning at his Decision Session. He noted the challenges around in work poverty and added that the people's panel workshops would be held at Easter for which it would be ensured that people could feed into that process.

The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC urged the consideration of dialogue with employers and Trade Unions noting that the TUC was working with Liverpool City Region on a Fair Employment Charter. He noted that local authorities could look at

procurement and employers around the living wage and could not use suppliers that use zero hours contracts.

Discussion took place on Brexit. The representative from the retail sector in York noted that employees talked about Brexit every day and The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC noted that a no deal Brexit would adversely affect workers' rights, including seasonal workers and migrant workers. When asked about good examples of industrial growth strategies, the Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) noted that there could be further discussion about it. The CYC Assistant Director for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Asset Management noted the need to be mindful of how procurement could affect Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In response to a further question on procurement she explained that the Council used a combined procurement portal with other local authorities. The Head of Economic Growth explained that the Economic Growth Team had been working with SMEs. He advised that the rules on procurement were complicated and that there were limitations as a result of this.

The representative from the retail sector in York noted that the Council could offer help to employees on CV writing and the Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York supported the review of discretionary benefits following the suggestion by a Member. The Chair referred to the local assistance scheme and the Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York noted that this was not utilised by local authorities. The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC noted that there could be work done on procurement, especially in social care. He added that in relation to housing, there was a need to recognise that people had complicated needs and he suggested that the rules around substance misuse and housing entitlement needed to be examined.

Discussion took place regarding underemployment. The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC noted that the ONS produced data on underemployment, the Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of York noted that the University of York did a survey on the living wage which produced statistics on employment and the Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) noted that it had led a market survey on underemployment.

Following the Head of Economic Growth giving an outline of the statistics concerning the gender pay gap in York, Members noted that women were predominantly in part time work in York in the retail, hospitality and social care sectors. It was noted that there needed to be a more flexible approach to the hours offered. The representative from the retail sector in York suggested that during recruitment, applicants could be offered jobs with

part time or full time options. The Assistant Director for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Asset Management noted the challenges around high level jobs for women with caring responsibilities. Discussion took place regarding paternity pay.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) suggested that consideration needed to be given to job design. This was supported by The Policy & Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and the Humber TUC, who added that for some people there was no choice about the number of hours they needed to work because of the cost of living. Members noted that good policies could be promoted by a good jobs charter and they discussed the four day working week. A number of suggestions were made regarding possible areas for the Committee to examine:

- The LIS as a tool for growth
- Use of the Liverpool and Manchester Good Employment Charters
- The CYC People's Panel
- Social care procurement
- Job share – advertising jobs as part time or full time
- Training and development/strategy
- Living hours employer
- Transport – consideration of bus franchising (with the possibility of the committee making recommendations on the Strategic Travel Plan following the adoption of the Local Plan)
- Stopping the preclusion of substance misuse in housing

Resolved: That having considered the information provided in the report and at the meeting, the above suggestions would be discussed as areas for development when the work plan was considered.

Reason: In order for the Committee to have a balanced and effective work plan.

### **32. Update of implementation of recommendations from Economic Health of York City Centre Scrutiny Review**

Members considered a report which gave the first update on the implementation of the approved recommendations arising from the scrutiny review into the Economic Health of York City Centre. Annex 1 included the detailed itemised update of the implementation of the review recommendations.

The Assistant Director for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Asset Management advised Members that the engagement activity on MyCityCentre had been delayed until the New Year because of purdah.

Following an update on the implementation of the recommendations, the Assistant Director for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Asset Management and Head of Economic Growth noted that:

- The council would be commissioning an external partner undertake engagement on MyCityCentre and as part of this, the external partners would visit different groups.
- A workshop could be arranged for the committee on the MyCityCentre project
- External engagement could be done the website and through different approaches
- A range of social media strategies would be used to promote the MyCityCentre project.
- The Guildhall project was in progress.
- The reasons for the unsuccessful bid to the Heritage High Streets fund were noted.

Following the update it was:

Resolved: That;

- i. The content of the report be noted.
- ii. There be a further update on the implementation of the recommendations in 6 months' time.

Reason: To raise awareness of those recommendations which are still to be fully implemented.

### **33. Work Plan 2019-20**

Members considered the work plan and work plan requests from the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee. After discussion it was agreed that the work plan be updated to include the following items for consideration at future meetings:

Tuesday 10 December 2019

1. Overview report from Highways Team
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Finance and Performance Monitoring Report.
3. Apprenticeship and Skills Scoping Report
4. Update of implementation of recommendations from York Residents' Priority parking Scheme Scrutiny Review (slipped from November).

## 5. Work Plan 2019-20

### Wednesday 15 January 2019

1. Scoping report on in-work poverty including the Jobs Charters in Manchester and Liverpool and living hours commitment
2. Overview report on Economy and Place Directorate sickness and workloads (to include staff survey data, absenteeism rates and complaints data & representatives from Unison and the GMB Trade Unions to be invited to the meeting)
3. Work Plan 2019-20

### Wednesday 12 February 2020

1. Update report on Planning Enforcement
2. Update report on Guildhall Project
3. Work Plan 2019-20

Resolved: That the above items for the Committee's work plan for the 2019/20 municipal year be considered at the next meeting.

Reason: To keep the Committee's work plan updated.

Cllr S Barnes, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.20 pm].

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