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Meeting	Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee
Date	21 May 2018
Present	Councillors N Barnes (Chair), Richardson (Vice-Chair), D'Agorne, D Myers, Orrell, Steward and Cullwick (Substitute for Councillor Hunter)
Apologies	Councillor Hunter

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#### **44. 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 disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

#### **45. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings of the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee held on 7 March 2018 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **46. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme on general matters within the remit of the Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee.

#### **47. Make it York bi-annual Update**

Members were given a bi-annual update on the progress of Make it York by the Managing Director of Make it York (MiY). He highlighted a number of points:

- The new Service Level Agreement (SLA) was under discussion and the budget had been considered by the Stakeholder Committee.

- The role of MiY in supporting a number of activities (such as the Guildhall, York Central and Castle Gateway) would develop over the next year.
- There were opportunities for the city for economic and tourism development, through upcoming festivals such as the Bloom! flower festival, Great Yorkshire Fringe, York Mystery Plays, York Balloon Fiesta and York Mediale.

Following the update and in response to Members' comments and questions, the Managing Director of (MiY) commented that:

- As a result of the piece of work with the top 100 businesses in York, MiY had been able to form new relationships, and the data on turnover had showed that turnover for those top 100 businesses had grown by 6%.
- Not having enough resources to meet the MiY mission was of concern to the Managing Director. He confirmed that MiY had grown revenue by £1million with a 45% reduction in contribution from City of York Council (CYC). MiY tried to be resourceful and were investing in inward investment and business support.
- Following an explanation of the decision making process around the new SLA and its delivery, the Managing Director explained that for the most part, MiY had delivered the original SLA.
- In the context of One Planet York and encouraging companies to sign up to sustainability and cycling, there were many businesses interested in sustainability and MiY assertively promoted that York had good Park and Ride facilities.
- In order to address the balance of secondary shopping areas that had seen a decrease in footfall and standards, MiY had been trying to make sure that shoppers to York were dispersed around the city centre through the promotion of trails, for example the Easter egg trail and ghost trail at Halloween. It was suggested that a future focus for the committee could be secondary shopping areas outside of the city centre.
- The CYC Chief Executive was driving York as a cultural centre within the Leeds City Region. It was noted that LCR was at the centre of the Channel 4 bid.
- MiY promoted business rate relief, which was CYC led.
- The Managing Director was asked if there was a skills shortage which resulted in businesses not being attracted to York. He explained that

there was a shortage in IT skills which may be as a result of the Leeds area being attractive to potential employees. In York there was a shortage of skills in the hospitality sector, in particular a shortage of chefs. He confirmed that the biggest issue limiting companies investing in York was the lack of available space in the short term. However, long term, there was the York Central site and there had been interest in this.

Members discussed the number of empty shop units on Coney Street and asked the Managing Director what initiatives were being taken to attract businesses to those empty units. He explained that the number of empty shops on high streets was a national problem and that York had some of the highest occupancy rates nationally. He advised that MiY was trying to promote York as a great place for retailers but rents on Coney Street were high, and some of those properties were unsuitable for the needs of some types of businesses. The Managing Director confirmed that the data showed that York had a high rate of return and it was the suitability of stock that was more of a concern.

The Chair thanked the MiY Managing Director for his update.

Resolved: That Members note the Make it York bi-annual update.

Reason: In order to be kept up to date on the work of Make it York.

#### **48. Update Report from the Executive Director of York Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Executive Director of York Business Improvement District (BID) provided Members with an overview of the projects and initiatives that the BID was undertaking in the city and highlighted the following points:

- The BID was a limited company funded by 1100 members.
- The BID covered a range of activities such as the street rangers, street cleansing and York Winter lights. Part of their current activities included working with CYC and York Civic Trust on way finding.
- The number of large vacant units in the city was of concern and BID had tried to engage with landlords to address this. The continued growth of online retail was one of the reasons attributed .
- The amount of visible drug taking in the city was problematic and its impact on tourism was discussed. It was noted that a response to this was needed.
- The BID's good relationships with trade associations in York was noted.
- the Executive Director confirmed that car parking was one of BID's top priorities and that BID was working with CYC on a car parking strategy.

- Future activity for the BID included work on communications (encouraging residents in York and within a 15 mile radius of York to spend in York shops), business cost savings (for which specialists had been brought in); and a focus on the months of February and March which were particularly challenging for retailers.

Having noted the excellent work of the BID, in particular the work of the street rangers, Members then made comments and asked a number of questions:

- In response to a question regarding BID support to business and trading associations, the Executive Director explained that BID had funded Spark:York's planning application but had not funded any further requests for support from them. BID had also given out a number of small grants and had committed a sum of money to a larger project.
- The Executive Director acknowledged the concerns raised by Members related to street cleaning on Micklegate. He confirmed that BID had been working with staff to minimise disruption caused by street cleaning and that it was the role of their Operation Manager to check on the work of their contractors.
- In relation to the public realm and the removal of the toilet block on St Sampson's Square, a Member noted that this was the only covered cycle parking in the city centre. The Executive Director advised that consultation with York Civic Trust was being undertaken and a plan was in place to address this.
- In the context of encouraging people living within a 15 mile radius to shop in York, a number of suggestions were made to encourage travel by park and ride and how loyalty schemes could be used to promote this. The importance of investment in technology for this was also noted.
- Citing the budget cuts in public health, particularly in relation to drug and alcohol abuse support services, a Member asked which organisation undertook the clean up of drug taking. The Executive Director explained that it was a complex picture and whilst the street rangers had the relevant PPE to dispose of drug paraphernalia, they were not trained to work with drug users. The street rangers were well connected with the support available for homeless people although some of this work was not within the remit of the street rangers. The Executive Director suggested there needed to be some short term action on this. The Chair noted the importance of those concerns being fed back to the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy & Scrutiny Committee, in line with the consensus of the Committee.

The Executive Director was thanked for his update.

Resolved: That Members note the York Business Improvement District (BID) update.

Reason: In order to be kept up to date on the work of York BID.

#### **49. Draft Workplan & Discussion regarding potential Scrutiny topics for 2018/9**

Members were asked to consider the Committee's draft work plan and potential Scrutiny topics for the 2018/19 municipal year. It was suggested that the Committee could meet jointly with the Economy and Place Policy Development Committee. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a covering report on how sickness absence in the Economy and Place Directorate impacted on service delivery.

Members thanked Councillor N Barnes for chairing the Committee over the previous year.

Resolved: That the workplan be approved with the addition of a covering report on how sickness absence in the Economy and Place Directorate impacted on service delivery.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee has an agreed programme of work in place.

Councillor M Pavlovic, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.25 pm].