
MEETING	HUNGATE AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	10 MARCH 2009
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS ASPDEN (CHAIR), BROOKS, GUNNELL, HOLVEY, PIERCE AND TAYLOR (NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER)

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillors Pierce and Aspden both declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Item 4 (Hungate Review – Interim Report) as they are both members of English Heritage.

Councillor Taylor also declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Item 4 (Hungate Review – Interim Report), as he is a member of York Civic Trust.

17. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

18. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment being made:

Page 5, second bullet point, second sentence, to replace the word confirmed with the word "stated": 'Officers *stated* that this would not be normal practice...'

19. HUNGATE REVIEW - INTERIM REPORT

Members considered an interim report of the Hungate Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Review.

In regard to the financial information at Annex B, the Head of Property Services reiterated that the estimated costs in the table were only a forecast estimation of the future committed expenditure and that any abortive costs would not be known until later.

Officers confirmed that:

- the costs included the demolition of the Peasholme hostel and the new hostel at Fishergate

- in regard to the demolition costs, the Hungate site was now a larger and more valuable site and that knocking down the Peasholme hostel had added to the value of the site. Also the Peasholme hostel was no longer fit for purpose therefore a new hostel needed to be built anyway
- the interest from selling St Leonard's was more than the rent
- it was likely that St Leonard's would still be in use by the Council in 2010, therefore the additional rent for that period had been included
- in relation to the additional fees paid to the consultant architects of £125,000, five models had been produced of which the Council had purchased one model subsequently, CABA were not happy with the model chosen so the Council decided to change their brief resulting in additional work for the architects
- information on the current procurement process for a new HQ would be available once the new site had been agreed

While recognising the increased value of the site, Members suggested that market variables should also be taken into account.

In regard to the strategic site study, Members noted that there was conflicting information from the consultant and English Heritage about massing and queried whether the issue of the adjoining public house had been taken into account. Officers confirmed that information had been taken from the Hungate Masterplan, that software models had been used to show the massing, and a massing study had been undertaken. It was acknowledged that the pictures in the strategic site study were stills and did not show everything.

Members considered the documentation provided by CABA as a result of their Freedom of Information request, and expressed concern at some possible gaps in the information provided. Members referred specifically to the CABA meetings held on 28 February and 4 August 2008 and requested that the Scrutiny Officer write to CABA¹ and to thank them for their response and to request copies of the full notes from those meetings. Members also expressed their disappointment at the decision of English Heritage not to attend the meeting and requested that a letter be sent urging them to attend the next meeting or respond in writing to the queries raised by the Committee at their last meeting. It was suggested that both the letters be copied to the Information Commissioner.

In regard to objective (i), officers confirmed that the initial budget set was sufficient for a basic office block as specified in the original brief given by Members. But, as the public's expectations for a civic building came to light, it became necessary to change the business case to enable a move from a standard office block to a 'reasonable building'. This in turn made the budget insufficient and resulted in a number of increases to the budget, totalling £8m. An audit trail of the decisions surrounding each increase had previously been provided.

After discussion on the information gathered under Objective ii, it was agreed that in understanding the decision taken in respect of agreeing which part of the CYC would act as internal client, and the relationship

between planning and client it was agreed that the separation of roles between the client and planning authority was right and proper.

On the issue of consultation, Members agreed that the pre-application consultation with staff had been exemplary, but held different views on the issue of whether public consultation had been sufficient. Community involvement was questioned as evidenced by the level of public interest and disquiet with the design expressed in letters to the local press. Officers confirmed that there had been huge community input into the Masterplan through community panels and other groups in York.

Concern was also expressed about the issue of a single council building with one main entrance, and of vulnerable children using this entrance. Members queried whether this had been considered at the start of the planning process, and officers confirmed that it had been raised with service departments and that the project team had responded to what the service providers had told them.

In seeking the views of statutory consultees, it was agreed that best practice had been followed throughout the process, but that these views had been received too late in the process. It was also felt that there were gaps in the information and some unanswered questions, and that publicly funded bodies needed to be sharper in their views on such projects.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to invite York Civic Trust and Quentin Macdonald, former Councillor and Executive Member for Resources, to a private informal consultation session on 9 April 2009.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Annex A be updated in line with the findings from this meeting
- (ii) That further information be requested from CABE in relation to their meetings of 28 February and 4 August 2008
- (iii) That English Heritage be invited to attend the next formal meeting of the Committee or provide a response to the queries previously raised by the Committee
- (iv) That the Chief Executive of York Civic Trust and Quentin Macdonald, former Councillor and Executive Member for Resources, be invited to attend a private informal consultation session on 9 April 2009
- (v) That a draft final report be presented to the next formal meeting of the Committee
- (vi) That the Democracy Officer contact Members to arrange the next meeting

Action Required

1. Scrutiny Officer to write to CAGE, and invite York Civic Trust and Quentin McDonald to the private consultation session on 9 April 2009. GR
2. Democracy Officer to arrange the date for the next meeting with Members. GR

Councillor Aspden, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.03 pm and finished at 9.10 pm].