

Meeting	Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	23 February 2021
Present	Councillors Kilbane (Chair), Daubeney (Vice-Chair), Douglas, Pearson, D Taylor, Hollyer and Hook

6. 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. In respect of agenda item 5 [Inward Investment Strategy Update] and 6 [Economic Recovery Strategy Update] Cllr Daubeney declared a non-prejudicial interest as a former employee of the council in economic development and inward investment. There were no further declarations of interest.

7. Minutes

Cllr Taylor asked for clarification on the resolution in minute 61 of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020. The Chair agreed to follow this up with the Chair of the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee. Concerning the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020, Cllr Douglas expressed concern about the minutes not reflecting the full discussion at the meeting.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020 and 24 November 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair at a later date.

8. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registered speakers registered under the councils public participation scheme.

9. Q3 Finance and Performance Monitor

The Committee received the Quarter 3 Finance and Performance Monitor. Annex A of the report detailed the Economy and Place Performance against the Council Plan Outcomes. Annex B detailed the Scrutiny Performance Scorecard. The Finance Manager, Assistant Director Transport, Highways and Environment, Interim Director of Place and Head of Economic Growth were in attendance to answer questions about the report. The Finance Manager outlined the report, highlighting the deficit and reductions in income, some of which were expected to worsen, for example in parking income. In response to questions from Members they noted that:

- The vacancy rate was up but below the national average
- There were six property vacancies across the council portfolio
- Income was formulated differently for different lines in budgets according to different MHCLG formulas.
- In relation to COVID-19 spending an overspend was forecast and the council may need to tap into its reserves to cover this
- The council was behind in costs received from the government. Where costs for COVID-19 were from the covid grant and from the MHCLG, funds had been received for the first quarter
- The checks and balances for covid grants were undertaken by the Customer, Resident and Exchequer Services team and there were specific web checks for this. Additional resources had been put into the team to support this.
- An overview of the grants available to support businesses was given and businesses were encouraged to apply for the grants even if they did not think they were eligible
- Concerning the drop in recycling there had been challenges in quarter two because of the covid response and introduction of social distancing
- The Assistant Director Transport, Highways and Environment undertook to check why there had been a drop in recycling rates
- Litter had reduced as there were less people out due to COVID restrictions

Following discussion about support for residents it was

Resolved:

- i. That a recommendation be made to the Customer and Corporate Service Scrutiny Management Committee for the council to make sure that residents were in receipt of their full entitlement to benefits.
- ii. That the latest finance and performance position be noted.

Reason: In order to be updated on the latest finance and performance position.

10. Inward Investment Strategy Update - Information Only Report

Members considered a report that provided an update on York's approach to Inward Investment. The Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning, Interim Director of Place and Head of Economic Growth were in attendance to update Members on inward investment.

The Head of Economic Growth detailed the different types of inward investment and noted the development of the prospectus for inward investment in the city. He explained how inward investment was brought into York and the importance of the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in supporting work on inward investment. He noted the brief to the master developers for York Central. In response to a question from a Member he explained that immersive storytelling was the use of modern media and technology to produce compelling stories.

[The meeting adjourned from 17:27 to 17:32 to allow external participants to be brought into the meeting]

The Chair welcomed the Managing Director of Make it York (MiY), President of the York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (CoC) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to the meeting. They were in attendance to participate in discussions with the Committee on inward investment. They each, in turn explained the work of their organisations and its relationship with the council.

Members asked about the resources available for inward investment. The MiY Managing Director explained that there was a limited resource for inward investment and that its profile needed to be raised. He added that beyond MiY, inward investment was a regional function of the LEP. The COO of the York and North Yorkshire LEP noted that there was value in sharing resource for inward investment back office functions, which would encourage collaborative working and understanding how tasks could be broken down. The President of the York and North Yorkshire CoC noted that the pandemic had demonstrated the effectiveness of working together and encouraged participation in the consultation process. The Interim Director of Place added that the pandemic response had shown how well public private partnerships could work.

Members asked how many inward investment leads there had been and were advised that in 6 months there had been 13 enquiries from a mix of indigenous and foreign investors. They were advised of a further lead,

which if realised would create 200 jobs in the city. The COO of the York and North Yorkshire LEP noted that for foreign direct investment, larger sites were needed which were not available in York. The MiY Managing Director highlighted the importance of York Central and the Head of Economic Growth noted that there was a number of companies moving into York.

When asked about the process for inward investment, the MiY Managing Director explained that it was about relationship building which was a long term process. The Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning noted that he had been directly approached with enquiries and added that it was about maximising awareness. This was supported by the Head of Economic Growth who added that it was about converting interest into real investment. The COO of the York and North Yorkshire LEP noted the need to get the process right and the President of the York and North Yorkshire CoC added that Hiscox was a good example of partners working together.

In response to a question from the Chair concerning whether York needed something specific for foreign direct investment, the COO of the York and North Yorkshire LEP explained that there aren't large enough site in the City of York boundary for this. He added that York had good facilities for innovation and research and development.

A number of Members expressed concern regarding resources for inward investment and the change in geography for the LEP. The COO of the York and North Yorkshire LEP explained that the geography of the LEP was being examined at the moment and noted the potential impact of devolution on this. The Interim Director of Place noted that the council was still in receipt of funds from West Yorkshire in relation to infrastructure improvements.

Resolved: That delegation be given to the Chair and Vice Chair to devise a recommendation to the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee to the effect that there needed to be a joined up process for inward investment with a person to take the lead, including the guilds and twin cities.

Reason: In order to support the work on inward investment.

The Managing Director of Make it York (MiY), President of the York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (CoC) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

11. Economic Recovery Strategy Update - Information Only Report

Members considered a report that provided an update on the economic recovery strategy. The Head of Economic Growth outlined the report and its annexes, noting the challenges around employment. He explained that the progress of the economic strategy had been impacted by COVID-19. He advised that engagement would take place during early summer and there was a number of pieces of engagement, for example the Local Transport Plan. He added that the Skills Board had met and was meeting that week to look at the Skills Plan to ring forward a one year Skills Plan. The Interim Director of Place noted that the council would like to have an inclusive conversation about the economic strategy and the enforced partnership working through the pandemic would continue. She also advised the need to understand the impact of the pandemic and Brexit on the economic strategy.

In response to Member questions they explained that:

- Work on secondary shopping areas had begun with a proposal for growth funding for capital projects being written up.
- Work in inclusion in the heritage skills sector had begun.
- Regarding the expected influx of domestic tourists to the city post lockdown in summer this was a balance of safety and security in the city centre, this would begin with a focus on outdoor spaces via footstreets and café licences. It was noted that York needed to be promoted as a good place to visit.

Members recognised the contribution of local businesses during the pandemic.

Resolved: That the Economic Recovery Strategy Update be noted.

Reason: In order to be update on the Economic Recovery Strategy.

Cllr P Kilbane, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.47 pm].