

10 February 2020

Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

Report of the Chair of the Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee

1. The Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee has met on five occasions since the Chair's last report to CSMC in September 2020.

2. At the outset it should be noted that the Committee has taken a more focused approach to work planning, seeking the advice of city 'experts' to inform the work plan.

3. At the beginning of the new municipal year Member were asked to suggest some key issues going forward and agree how these should be prioritised. The list included:

- High value jobs;
- Pay in work poverty;
- Gender pay gap;
- Apprenticeships and skills – how we use apprenticeship levy in the council and also its use around the city;
- Low paid industries – hospitality and tourism – and how we encourage career progression in those industries;
- Graduate retention;
- Stem the loss of skilled people;
- Sustainable growth and social values;
- Community wealth
- Performance on road repairs

- Review of business rates system
- Bus services in outlying areas;
- Car parking across the city;
- Hospitality and tourism. Creating a high-value offer that benefits residents and businesses;
- Opportunities and barriers to business growth;
- Clean air zone. Next steps towards clean air;
- The changing face of the high street: Understanding and tackling the economic problems of long term empty commercial units in York's city centre;
- Planning and Planning Conditions Enforcement: How do we build the houses and commercial units our city needs while protecting the standard of living of surrounding communities?

4. At the Committee's September meeting Members further discussed their work programme and agreed to prioritise three categories:

- i. High Value Jobs and Innovation; Apprenticeships and Skills; Graduate Retention; Stem the loss of skilled people
- ii. Pay in work poverty; Gender pay gap; Low paid industries
- iii. Sustainable Growth, Social Values; Community Wealth

5. In October the Committee took part in round table discussions with representatives from City of York Council, York University, York College and York St John University to discuss issues around High Value Jobs and Innovation, Apprenticeships and Skills and Graduate Retention. As a result of these discussions Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review into Apprenticeships and Skills and this work is ongoing.

6. In November the Committee held similar round-table discussions with representatives from York University, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Yorkshire and Humber TUC and a major York retailer to discuss in-

work poverty, gender pay gap and low-pay industries. The information gathered helped inform the scrutiny review into in-work poverty, a part of the Corporate Review into Poverty in York.

7. The Committee has yet to agree a date for a third round-table discussion around Sustainable Growth, Social Values and Community Wealth.

Committee meetings:

September 2019

8. The Committee again welcomed the Executive member for Economy and Strategic Planning to further inform Member of his priorities and challenges for the year, including the challenges facing the city centre, York Central, business rates, doing business with the Council, the Local Industrial Strategy, planning and work in developing a new Economic Strategy.

9. The Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change also outlined the priorities and challenges within her portfolio which relate to the remit of the Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee, including waste collection and disposal, improvements to the public realm, flood protection and air quality.

10. Members also received their bi-annual update on CYC Flood defences Action Plan from the Council's Flood Risk Manager and the Partnership and Strategic Overview Manager from the Environment Agency.

October 2019

11. In addition to round-table discussions around apprenticeships and skills the Committee also invited representatives from the Leeds City Region and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnerships for discussions around the Local Industrial Strategy. This gave members the opportunity to make constructive comments that could potentially influence the drafting of the Local Industrial Strategy.

November 2019

12. In addition to the round-table discussions around in-work poverty, gender pay gap and low-pay industries, the Committee were given an update report on the implementation of recommendations from the scrutiny review into the Economic Health of York City Centre. Members were advised that engagement activity on MyCityCentre had been

delayed until the New Year because of purdah and the Committee agreed they would consider this matter again in six months.

December 2019

13. Following concerns raised at a previous meeting about the condition of the city's roads, the Head of Highways presented an update report on the Council's performance on highways maintenance in the context of the assessments and repairs process and the allocated budgets.

Members were told that officers were obliged to prioritise main roads, in accordance with the national code of practice, and that ward funding could be allocated for repairs to local roads with lower usage.

14. The Committee were given an update report on the implementation of recommendations from the Residents' Priority Parking Scheme Scrutiny Review, which had been endorsed by Executive in March 2019. In November 2019 Executive approved further proposals to address issues identified in the review and the Chair of the Task Group which carried out the scrutiny review, who is now the Executive Member for Transport, attended the meeting to answer Members' questions.

15. Members also received a scoping report suggesting a remit and methodology for the previously agreed scrutiny review into Apprenticeships and Skills and a Task Group was appointed to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf.

January 2020

16. Members received an overview report sickness levels and workloads within the economy and place directorate. This issue was referred to E&P scrutiny by CSMC after a report indicated that E&P and Health and Adult Social Care have the highest levels of sickness absence across CYC. Additionally a CYC staff survey shows that 24% of those responding (and only 38% of staff responded) did not feel that their workload was manageable. Within E&P this was much higher at 42%. E&P was given an update on ongoing activities to support the wellbeing of staff and to reduce absence levels. Members noted that within E&P there was too much work and not enough resources and asked for a further report later in the year.

17. The Committee also received a Scoping Report on in-work poverty. The Committee had previously considered in-work poverty as part of its work programme for the year and this scoping report follows a request by CSMC for each of the standing scrutiny committees to undertake a

review into elements of poverty which falls within their remits, as part of a corporate review of poverty in York. As part of their discussions Members considered employers' charters from Liverpool and Manchester. If work on such a charter was instigated in York it could feed into the developing Economic Strategy.

February 2020

18. Members will receive an overview report on the developing Economic Strategy and have invited the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning to join them in their discussions.

19. They have also invited the Managing Director of Make It York to present his bi-annual update report with a specific request for information around possible changes to the Shambles Market.

20. The Committee will receive their six-monthly Finance and Performance Monitoring Report. This item was slipped from the December meeting because of the election and the timing of the January Executive meeting.

21. Members will also receive two Pre-Decision Reports – EV Charging Strategy and Fleet Strategy – which were on the 6 January 2020 Forward Plan and reports were requested for the February meeting in advance of the strategies going to Executive on 19 March. This is in line with Executive's endorsement of recommendations of the Scrutiny Review into Scrutiny Operations and Functions. These included that Pre-Decision Call-In be removed from the Constitution and that the Executive's Forward Plan be used to guide scrutiny and help inform committee work plans while chief officers should promote scrutiny involvement in policy development by bringing issues early to scrutiny for discussion.

Reviews

22. Members are currently involved in two scrutiny review – Apprenticeships and Skills and the Corporate Review into Poverty. Task Groups have been agreed to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf and this work is progressing.