

**Introductory Report on Proposed Scrutiny Topics for Review in
2014/15**

Summary

1. This report provides introductory information on the topics proposed for scrutiny review during this municipal year. Given the limited time available for review work due to the forthcoming elections in 2015, Members are asked to decide which topics are to proceed to review, and agree a timeframe for their completion.

Background

2. At a meeting in April 2014, the Committee agreed to propose the following topics at the annual Scrutiny Work Planning Event held on 12 May 2014:
 - i. Narrowing the Gap – possible topic subject to overview report on project plan for Narrowing the Gap - due to be received in July 2014.
 - ii. Disabled access to York’s cultural sector - especially those bodies that benefit from City of York Council (CYC) revenue or capital funding. The city has a clear aim to grow the value of the tourism sector. There have been well-documented concerns recently over disabled access to public services in York. The review could look at what cultural providers currently do for disabled access, what barriers exist against improving access and what CYC could do to help providers improve access.
3. At the work planning event an additional topic was submitted by Cllr Semlyen for this Committee’s consideration on ‘School based teaching of skills related to self employment / entrepreneurship at secondary ages and at York College’. In support, Cllr Semlyen provided the following information:

'York has low average wages relative to house values. Since public sector jobs aren't growing the extra Gross Value Added has to come from the private sector. Yet York has a very low record of creating new business or graduate start ups - 316th out of 326 English districts. There were 28% fewer York business start ups in the first 3 months of the year compared to 2013. The University of York had 24 Graduate start ups in 2012/13 and 21 spin outs. Kingston had 201. The teaching of entrepreneurial skills should start early – ideally at school. The best councils are doing this from primary age, but certainly it should be part of secondary school education – e.g. the idea of different types of borrowing for a business start up from a relative, bank or venture capital, borrowing money at various interest rates, how to set up a bank account, basic accounting and balance sheets, basic marketing skills on the internet, what it is to rent property, cash flow and how to make a business profit, taxation and filling in a tax return.'

4. Finally, at the work planning event it was also agreed that another corporate review would be undertaken during this municipal year. A number of possible scrutiny topics were discussed and the consensus was a corporate review around 'Supporting Elderly People'.
5. Whilst each Overview & Scrutiny Committees is responsible for agreeing its own contribution to the corporate review, Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) will consider some topic suggestions at its next meeting on 23 June 2014. The suggestion for this Committee is around 'Supporting and Encouraging Physical Activity including exercise, social activity and/or volunteering'.

Consultation

6. At the work planning event it was suggested that the views of Cabinet Members should be sought on all proposed scrutiny topics relevant to their individual portfolios. Their views on the topics for this Committee are included in the information gathered below. The appropriate Service Managers have also been asked to provide feedback on the suggested topics.

Information Gathered

7. 'Narrowing the Gap'
The Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Young People has expressed some concerns about the proposed 'Narrowing the Gap' topic:

“We are just about to embark on some significant work around this issue, and it might be felt to be somewhat premature to Scrutinise it before it has begun. A general presentation on what is going on might be most useful at this stage, and to note it for a possible scrutiny topic a little way down the line when we are beginning to get some results.”

8. The comment above is in line with what was discussed when the Cabinet Member attended a meeting of this Committee in March 2014 , And as a result at that time this Committee agreed that any review of this topic would be best considered in the latter half of this municipal year, once the results are known.

9. School Based Teaching of Skills Related to Self Employment / Entrepreneurship

In regard to the topic proposed by Cllr Semlyen, the Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Young People Tourism has provided the following response:

“This topic is interesting. We could certainly do with a review of the skills agenda and the employment opportunities for young people. But grappling with the school’s curriculum is a tricky place to be. Schools organise their own curriculum and are sometimes hard pushed to cover the National Curriculum.

But it might be useful for someone to do a scoping exercise – and I wondered does it cross over into Economic Development as a joint piece of work. One of the significant areas we have problems with, is not so much companies starting up, but being sustainable into the future, either around financing or sometimes premises.”

10. Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECDOSC) has subsequently confirmed their intent to proceed with an associated review focussing on young adult entrepreneurs. And, following advice from officers, agreed it was not suitable for joint review with this Committee. Therefore, whilst a review of the topic proposed by Cllr Semlyen i.e. the teaching of entrepreneurial skills at school, would be separate to the ECDOSC review, the joint effect of the outcomes from both reviews could support improvements in the culture of enterprise in the city overall.
11. The council’s Principal Adviser 14-19 has confirmed that the issue of entrepreneurship and linked statistics setting out performance issues for

York is one which has been identified in strands of work on economic development, skills, education and training:

- The annual 14-19 Local Area Statement of Need (October 2013) identifies the development of broader employability skills (including enterprise / entrepreneurial behaviours) as a priority.
- “Unlocking York Talent” (Skills Strategy 2013-16) includes a focus on core employability and enterprise skills in its “Skills for the future workforce” strand.
- Ambition 2 of the York Economic Strategy (2011-15) aims to strengthen the city’s culture of enterprise.

12. It is therefore the view of the Principal Adviser 14-19 that a scrutiny review of this topic would be both timely and would add value. He has suggested that the review could identify the best councils referenced by Cllr Semlyen, review examples of best practice from them and make recommendations which would support CYC in influencing schools and colleges in York, to improve their provision for young people. This could, in turn, lead to development of higher levels of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in our young people.
13. As an adjunct to this review proposal his team have also identified a strand of activity which might subsequently be linked to it. They are currently looking to support the development of the Computing Curriculum in Primary Schools and build on the existing engagement of some of the Primary Schools with the Code Club, which provides school based computing activity supported by volunteers. This has the potential to link small businesses with individual primary schools for activity centred on one of the city’s key economic sectors. The review outlined above could influence the work on this project and provide an initial York based case study which raises the profile of small businesses and entrepreneurial activity.
14. Cllr Semlyen has been invited to attend this meeting to discuss her topic proposal. The appropriate officer(s) will also be in attendance.
15. Corporate Review on Supporting Elderly People
In regard to the new corporate review and the suggested topic for this Committee (see paragraph 5 above), Members are asked to note that the latest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) recommends continuing support for physical activity initiatives across the whole population with priority given to vulnerable groups including the elderly.

It also recognises the contribution of the voluntary sector and carers in encouraging physical activity.

16. However, Members are welcome to consider other possible areas for review in support of this year's corporate theme. For example, one suggestion might be to expand the topic proposed by Cllr Barnes on 'Disabled Access to York's Cultural Sector', as many patrons with hearing and sight impairment and many wheelchair users are also elderly.

17. Disabled Access to York's Cultural Sector

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Tourism has provided the following response to the proposed 'Disabled Access to York's Cultural Sector' topic:

"I would welcome this topic, but would ask that scrutiny take into account that with dwindling government funding to the council, so council funding for cultural organisations has also fallen significantly with a view to them becoming sustainable as soon as possible and as such any influence we have or had may inevitably also dwindle.

However, please be assured that I don't see that as a barrier or a negative to this particular scrutiny topic, quite the contrary in fact. An accessibility scrutiny of some of the cultural institutions we fund may well uncover barriers to inclusion hitherto overlooked by those organisations. Some cultural organisations very survival may depend on a larger and more diverse customer base, especially with funding and grants in short supply and if there are barriers that can be addressed then I'm sure that it would be extremely useful to try to highlight those barriers by effective scrutiny and partnership working."

18. The Assistant Director for Communities, Culture and Public Realm agrees the topic may have potential to lead to positive outcomes if it were to cover York's full range of cultural activities rather than just the organisations who CYC support i.e. Explore, York Museums Trust, and York Theatre Royal. The Council also provides tiny grants to the National Centre for Early Music, and Accessible Arts and Media.
19. The Head of Visit York has confirmed that Visit York does not hold any information on the type of assistance that York's tourist attractions and entertainment venues provide for those patrons with impaired hearing or sight, or for wheelchair users. The only information of this nature held

by Visit York tends to focus on accommodation providers rather than the cultural sector.

20. So, in an effort to assist the Committee in deciding whether this topic is suitable for review and whether access is an issue for patrons with disabilities, Information has been gathered from the websites of the following attractions and venues on their current access arrangements – see detailed information in Annex A:
- Minster
 - Fairfax House
 - Barley Hall
 - National Railway Museum
 - York Dungeon
 - Jorvik Viking Centre
 - York Wheel
 - City Screen
 - Reel Cinema
 - National Centre for Early Music
 - The Barbican
 - Grand Opera House
 - Theatre Royal
21. In the case of the following attractions it was not possible to find access information on their websites. However it was possible to find some information on these (included in Annex A) from the ‘DisabledGo’ website:
- Castle Museum
 - Yorkshire Museum
 - Art Gallery
 - Ghost Walk Tours (three Companies website were viewed)
 - York River Boat Trips
22. ‘DisabledGo’ provides free detailed information about access to all sorts of places across the UK, allowing those with disabilities to judge the access to venues for themselves. For York their website provides information on a whole range of venues – see:
<http://www.yorkshire.com/disabled-go>.
23. York Museums Trust has confirmed that they have not previously provided information on access for any of their venues via their website. When their general enquiry line receives a call regarding access they put them through to the relevant venue to speak directly with staff. Work is currently underway to improve access at the castle Museum - a lift is being installed to enable wheelchair users to access the first floor.

24. Cllr Barnes has been invited to attend this meeting to discuss his topic proposal. The Assistant Director for Communities, Culture and Public Realm will also be in attendance.

Council Plan

25. The proposed topics for review all support priorities within the Council Plan 2012-15. The following proposed topics support the priority to 'Protect Vulnerable People':
- Narrowing the Gap
 - Disabled Access to the Cultural sector both
 - Supporting Elderly People
26. The topic on School Based Teaching of Skills Related to Self Employment / Entrepreneurship supports the priority to 'Create Jobs and Grow the Economy'.

Risk Management & Implications

27. There are no known risks, and there are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime & Disorder, ITT, or Property implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Recommendation

28. Members are asked to consider the information within this report and with the support of the officers present, agree:
- A remit for this committee's review in support of the corporate scrutiny theme for 2014-15.
 - Which of the other proposed topics should proceed to review during this municipal year (bearing in mind the limited time available for carrying out review work during this municipal year due to the forthcoming elections).
 - A suitable review remit for the reviews being progressed and a timeframe for their completion.
 - Whether those reviews are to be carried out by a Task Group or the full Committee.

Reason: To progress the work of the Committee.

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Report Approved



Date

6 June 2014

Wards Affected:

All



Background Papers: None

Abbreviations:

CYC - City of York Council
JSNA - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
YMT - York Museums Trust
ECDOSC - Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee
CSMC - Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee

Annexes:

Annex A – Information on Accessing York’s Heritage & Cultural Offer

Annex B – Visual Story for York Grand Opera House