

Economy & Place Policy Development Committee

Assessment of Trial Period 2017-18

This Committee was formed at the start of 2017/18 and met from June of that year. As its Chair, I felt that I understood what would be needed but recognised that the emphasis on policy development as opposed to scrutiny would present challenges. It quickly became clear that there was some uncertainty (shared by officers and members alike) about how it would work and what it would do.

The Committee's first meeting centred on a discussion of its terms of reference and introductory presentations by the three Assistant Directors and the Programmes Lead Officer about the main workstreams of the directorate and the policy development process. It was envisaged that the Committee would use formal and informal meetings, workshops and discussions with partners and external advisors who have the relevant expertise and that its conclusions would both respond to the work of officers and inform future decision-making by the Executive. Members engaged in a useful preliminary discussion of the areas covered by the Assistant Directors and the Programmes Lead Officer.

The following meeting received two presentations on priorities and challenges for 2017/18, from the Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement and from the Executive Member for Environment; both generated many questions and resulted in useful discussion. An informative presentation on CYC Fleet Emissions also produced questions and a decision to examine fleet renewal policy.

At our third meeting, a presentation on the medium-term future of urban transport from the CYC Transport Systems Manager added to members' awareness of the nature of car ownership and usage, the future of autonomous vehicles and the introduction of smart traffic control systems in which vehicles take a more active part in speed and junction control mechanisms. A report on the Impact of Arts and Culture on York's Economy initiated by the predecessor Scrutiny Committee was considered and it was decided to extend it to embody recent reports from NESTA and Sir Peter Bazalgette on the Creative Industries. A workshop on CoYC's Asset Management Strategy was arranged.

A presentation on priorities and challenges for 2017/18 from the Executive Member for Planning and Transport at the next meeting attracted some

public participation and generated both questions and a lively discussion which considered the impact of the emerging Local Plan. The report on Impact of Arts and Culture on York's Economy, now strengthened and emphasising CoYC's strategic role in this area, was accepted for presentation to the Executive.

An initial discussion of the MakeltYork SLA was held at January's meeting and, after discussion, it was agreed to hold an informal workshop to discuss a draft SLA. A report on CoYC Fleet Renewal, which had been discussed earlier at an informal workshop, was also considered and was approved by the Committee.

At the Committee's last formal meeting for 2017/18, the report on Asset Management Strategy was received, discussed and accepted. A presentation on Local Cycling and Walking Strategy by the Head of Transport generated many relevant questions and a lively discussion. A briefing on York's creative industries by the Head of Economic Development followed and stimulated a productive discussion.

Finally, an informal workshop on the draft MakeltYork SLA also generated a productive discussion and some observations on the initial draft document.

Conclusions

A fuller appreciation of both the breadth and depth of discussion over a wide range of subjects can be obtained by reading the Minutes of each of the meetings. As Chair, my feeling is that many of the initial concerns about changing our way of working from the previous 'scrutiny-oriented' approach can be overcome - noticeable progress has been made, though there is still some way to go. Members are still not entirely clear that the Committee's work is essentially forward-looking and is about formulating approaches rather than specifying do's and don'ts in exact terms.

The discussion of the draft MakeltYork SLA has demonstrated that such agreements, designed to describe target behaviours as opposed to imposing specific performance figures, need a different approach – one which, while including only the relevant numbers-based metrics, relies more on its content, clarity of language and written style to evoke the required behaviour. One additional observation is that it would be helpful if the policy formation process could be linked more tangibly to the workplan of the Committee. Nevertheless, it has been satisfying to be able to achieve what has been done during 2017/18.