
Scrutiny Management Committee

21 April 2008

Cultural Quarter for York, linking the City Centre and the York North West development sites - Feasibility Report

Summary

1. This report asks Members to consider a scrutiny topic registered by Councillor Hogg to examine the 'Vision' developed in 2007, for a Cultural Quarter for York, linking the city centre with development sites in York North West. The aim of the vision is to generate substantially more external funding than that which is currently being achieved through an ad-hoc approach. The vision recognises that getting the link between the city centre and York North West right, will support and guide future city centre development.
2. The suggested scrutiny review would test this vision by working with wider city partners and examining best practice in other Local Authorities – see topic registration form attached at Annex A.
3. In submitting this scrutiny topic, Councillor Hogg would like to achieve a long-term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum, York Railway station and the Minster, by:
 - agreeing an overall approach to the design of the public realm in the area;
 - encouraging a more co-operative working environment to produce new and exciting cultural activities, and;
 - creating a sense of place to improve longer term visitor figures.

Criteria

4. Councillor Hogg believes this topic fits with the following eligibility criteria as set out in the topic registration form:
 - Public Interest (ie. in terms of being in the public interest and resident perceptions)
 - National/local/regional significance e.g. A central government priority area, concerns joint working arrangements at a local 'York' or wider regional context
 - It is in keeping with the following corporate priority – 'Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces'.

5. The Head of Arts & Culture agrees that this topic is in line with the above criteria as the area defined as our cultural Quarter has major Grade 1 and Grade 2* listed buildings from every major building period since the Romans and there is no other site like this in Europe. It is important therefore that the Council gets the proposals for the area right as it could have a significant effect on visitor and tourism figures.
6. The Policy Development Unit has also provided comment on how this topic fits with the above criteria – see Annex B.

Background

7. The Cultural Quarter proposals for the city were one of the Council's main objectives in the Sub Regional Investment Plan which was submitted to Yorkshire Forward by the Economic Development Unit (EDU). At that time, the vision document that Cllr Hogg refers to in his topic submission, was created. This defined a Cultural Quarter as:

'A complex cluster of activities, embedded in a particular place which are iconic and identifiable, and which together are more than a sum of the parts'

8. The vision identified six distinct study areas within the Cultural Quarter, and looked at existing patterns of pedestrian movement together with a number of improvement strategies. The issues under consideration within each study area are shown below:

Study Area	Issues
South of the river	NRM & York Central Plans Links Above or Below the Tracks Status of Leeman Road Views & Orientation
St Mary's Precinct	Restoration of the Historic Landscape East / West /North / South Linkage The Relationship to the River The North Garden
The Library, St Leonards, Multangular Tower	Forecourt to the Library Opening up the Site St Leonards Hospital Public Realm
St Leonards Place	Traffic Management The Terrace Theatre Royal Exhibition Square
The Minster	Routes & Links Landscape Setting Information & Signage

The River Corridor	A New Crossing A Sense of Place Events & Activity Links into Landscape

9. The Head of Arts & Culture is responsible for co-ordinating the discussion and planning around the cultural quarter from the Council viewpoint, which involves other significant institutions e.g. York Museums Trust, NRM etc. This work is currently ongoing but without the direct involvement of Council Members.

Consultation

10. Consultation with other relevant Members and officers and has been carried out and their responses are shown at Annex C

Conduct of Review

11. A scrutiny review involving our external partners and stakeholders would allow Members to:
- a) *enter into an in-depth discussion of the topic thus ensuring the understanding of Members and partners about the potential and how the proposals work closely with both City Centre Redevelopment and York North West proposals.*
12. Councillor Hogg has suggested using the 2007 Vision document to explore the relationship between the six areas of the quarter (area 1 to include the Railway Station), including pedestrian and vehicular movement, design, open spaces, a river crossing, performance areas, lighting, landscaping, cultural production, promotion and public art.
13. If a decision is taken to proceed with this review, It may be beneficial if the ad-hoc scrutiny committee either visit other successful Cultural Quarter programmes e.g the Art Quarter at Wolverhampton or the Creative Industries Quarter at Sheffield. Alternatively they could invite external experts in the process to come and demonstrate their learning – for example, Simon Roodhouse, author of ‘Cultural Quarters – Principles & Practices’ (Academic at University of London).
14. A scrutiny review involving our external partners and stakeholders would also allow Members to:
- b) *support the ongoing work by contributing to the production of a business plan, which in turn could support the Council in a submission for funding from Yorkshire Forward / the Lottery Fund*
15. In doing this, Members would have to work within a fixed timescale in order not to delay the submission of a business plan.

16. As the Head of Arts & Culture is already leading on this within her service area, and has indicated that a scrutiny review of this nature would only incur minimal additional admin work which could be contained within her team.
17. Having contributed to a business plan, Members could choose to progress the review by establishing some key principles for guiding future collaborative work aimed at cultural development in the City. They could also explore the relationship between cultural activities and their long-term attraction to visitors.
18. Taking this and the comments made by key officers into consideration, it is agreed that a topic of this nature would require no more than 3-6 months to complete

Implications

19. **Human Resources (HR)** – The HR implications associated with carrying out a review of this scrutiny topic are limited as detailed in paragraph 14 above.
20. **Legal** – There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations within this report.
21. **Financial** - There is money available within the scrutiny budget for research relating to ongoing reviews, therefore there are no financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report.
22. There are no Equalities, Property, Crime & Disorder, or Other implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Risk Management

23. There are no known risks, associated with the recommendations within this report.

Recommendations

24. Based on the evidence presented within this report and its annexes, Members are advised to proceed with the review. It is suggested that this review commence immediately in order to reach a conclusion prior to the submission of the Council's business plan scheduled to happen in approximately 6 months.
25. In making this recommendation, an overall aim for this review was recognised together with a number of key objectives. A suggested remit for the review is therefore attached at Annex D, and Members are asked to consider this and make any changes necessary, prior to approving a remit for the review.

Contact Details

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Feasibility Study Approved



Date

14 April 2007

Wards Affected: Holgate, Clifton & Guildhall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: 2007 Vision Document

Annexes

Annex A – Scrutiny Topic Registration Form

Annex B – Response from Policy Development Unit to Feasibility

Annex C – Feedback from Member & Officer Consultation

Annex D – Suggested Remit