

‘Cultural Quarter’ – Interim Report

Background

1. This topic was originally registered in early 2008 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. He 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.
2. 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.
3. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Scrutiny Management Team recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

Aim

4. To contribute towards achieving a long-term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum (NRM), York Railway Station and the Minster, and to consider any positive and/or adverse effects on the city in doing so.

Objectives

- i. To understand the Council’s strategic approach, and that of its key partners, to the cultural design for the area.
- ii. To contribute to a business plan for achieving the required funding for developing the area into a ‘Cultural Quarter’
- iii. To develop and establish some key principles for guiding a collaborative approach to cultural development in the future, including connectivity to other areas of the city
- iv. To understand the implications for the whole city in terms of retail, its economy and other cultural or leisure based events within the city.

Consultation

5. This review, has so far, been carried out in consultation with the Head of Arts and Culture, the External Relations Manager at Visit York, The Chief Executive of the York Museums Trust and the Director of Finance and Business Development at the York Museums Trust

Information Gathered

6. At a formal meeting on 21st July 2008 Members of the Committee received a presentation from the Head of Arts and Culture on the 'Vision' document. The discussions arising from this are attached at Annex A to this report.

Issues Arising

7. The following issues were brought to light as part of these discussions:
 - A Cultural Quarter was not a re-branding exercise but the chance to regenerate an area and an opportunity for York to attract finance to support it
 - There may be difficulties sustaining the evening economy around the NRM area
 - If the proposals went ahead the evening culture in York may shift
 - The Authority would need to have a leadership role to provide links between the areas and partners to ensure funding was sought for the benefit of the Cultural Quarter as a whole
 - There was a need to encourage visitors to return to the city and stay longer and get the correct balance between residents and visitors
 - There was a need to be sensitive to other strong cultural offers outside the proposed Cultural Quarter i.e. Castle Museum, Micklegate, Gillygate, Clifford's Tower, Walmgate
 - Poor use of the river frontage
 - Improvements to connectivity between NRM and Minster
 - Air Quality issues in Museum Street and Exhibition Square from queuing traffic and bus manoeuvres.
 - It was important to source trees, cycle racks, seats etc suitable to the conditions
 - Any works on the river frontage should take account of flooding e.g. easily washed down seating.
 - There was a need to tackle the problem with geese along the river corridor
 - It was important to get the pedestrian hierarchy correct
 - Connections between all the areas of the proposed Cultural Quarter needed to be reinforced
 - It was important to make the most of York's stunning buildings
 - Members should walk around the study areas
 - A public drop in session should be arranged to gauge public views.
8. Members of the Committee agreed to find out more about an individually chosen Cultural Quarter to help inform their understanding of the best strategic approach for York. A list of questions that could be asked was circulated at the last meeting and Members agreed to use these as a premise to their

investigations. Results of these investigations are attached at the following annexes:

- **Annex B** Information regarding Leicester
- **Annex C** Executive Summary document for Belfast [the full document is available at:
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events/docs/CelebrateBelfastReport.doc
- **Annex D** Information regarding Wolverhampton
- **Annex E** Information regarding Glasgow and Brighton
- Members have also been provided with a colour brochure in relation to Doncaster's Civic and Cultural Quarter.

Timetable of events

9. In order to assist Members of the Committee with their understanding of the 'Vision' document and proposed Cultural Quarter, and to progress the review, Members have agreed the following fact finding timetable:

| Date | Event | Findings |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21.07.2008 to 17.09.2008 | Members to individually look at specified Cultural Quarters. | It is hoped that the findings of this exercise can be presented at the formal meeting scheduled for 17.09.2008. |
| 15.08.2008 | Visit to St Mary's Precinct, the Museum Gardens and City Art Gallery. | Members of the Committee were given a guided tour of this area. The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance & Business Development of the York Museums Trust informed Members of some of the future plans for the area. The Master Plan for this area will be presented as part of the Council's Draft Business Plan at the meeting scheduled for 29.10.2008. |
| 23.09.2008 | Visit to Newcastle/Gateshead | |
| 15.10.2008 | All day tour of the Study Area(s) with stakeholders | |
| 29.10.2008 | Formal meeting to receive the Council's Draft Business Plan and discuss this is | |

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|------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | relation to key objectives (ii) and (iv) | |
| 04.11.2008 | Public drop in session | This event will be held at the Central Library. Stakeholders would be invited to attend and provide plans/models of their proposals and Officers would also be available to answer questions. |

10. At the same meeting Members also agreed to defer inviting a representative from another Local Authority to speak to them until after they had undertaken their visit to Newcastle/Gateshead.
11. In relation to decisions taken at the last meeting:
 - i. A report went before the Scrutiny Management Committee on 15th September 2008 to request the formal appoint of Sir Ron Cooke as a co-optee to the Committee for the duration of this review.
 - ii. Copies of Simon Roodhouse's book 'Cultural Quarters: Principles and Practice' have been ordered.

Options

12. Having regard to the aims and objectives of this topic remit, and having considered the information provided in this report Members may choose to:
 - i. Agree further fact-finding events to add to the timetable, if required.
 - ii. Arrange a date for inviting a representative from another Local Authority to speak to them.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that Members consider:
 - i. Approving the fact-finding timetable as set out in paragraph 9 to this report.
 - ii. Further deferring the invite to a representative of another Local Authority to address them.

Contact Details

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**Interim Report
Approved**



Date 08.09.2008

Wards Affected: Guildhall, Holgate & Micklegate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

- Annex A** Extract from the minutes of the formal meeting held on 21st July 2008
- Annex B** Information regarding Leicester's Cultural Quarter
- Annex C** Executive Summary – Celebrate Belfast
- Annex D** Information regarding Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter
- Annex E** Information regarding Glasgow and Brighton