
MEETING	"CULTURAL QUARTER" AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	21 JULY 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS TAYLOR (CHAIR), CRISP, GALVIN AND HOGG
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS FUNNELL AND HYMAN

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Hogg declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 3 ("Cultural Quarter" Scrutiny Review – Scoping Report) as an employee of the National Railway Museum, a member of the York Museums Trust and Visit York.

Councillor Crisp declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 3 ("Cultural Quarter" Scrutiny Review – Scoping Report) as a member of the York Theatre Royal Board.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme on general issues within the remit of the Committee.

3. "CULTURAL QUARTER" SCRUTINY REVIEW - SCOPING REPORT

Consideration was given to the suggested scoping report and timetable for the "Cultural Quarter" Scrutiny review. The review aimed to contribute towards achieving a long-term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum, York Railway Station and the Minster, and to consider any positive and/or adverse effects on the city.

It was reported that this topic had originally been registered in early 2008 by Councillor Hogg to examine the 'Vision' developed in 2007 for a Cultural Quarter for York. This would link the city centre with development sites in York North West. He had 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.

Members were reminded of the objectives of the review which were:

- 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.

Officers updated that a change was required to the timetable on page 5 of the report. Reference to a meeting on 25 October 2008 should read 15 October 2008. They also confirmed that Roger Ranson, Assistant Director, Economic Development, was unable to attend the meeting on 15 October 2008 when it was proposed that the Council's Draft Business Plan was considered and he had requested this be considered at the 29 October meeting.

The Authority's Head of Arts and Culture circulated the following documents:

- Cultural Quarter in York prepared by Austin, Smith, Lord LLP, dated 8 January 2007;
- A list of Cultural Quarters Exemplars;
- A list of draft Cultural Quarter Questions.

She introduced Ian Tempest, External Relations Manager, Visit York, who had been involved in the initial discussions when consideration had been given to the vision for a cultural quarter in York at the York @ Large Partnership Board meetings.

Members were then given a presentation of the 'Vision' document and updated on the processes that had taken place and the following were some of the points raised:

Brief and Definition

Members were informed that the area between the National Railway Museum and the Minster had been chosen as it was an area which Sir Ron Cooke, former Vice Chancellor of the University of York, had noted as unique in Europe for containing buildings of all ages and in particular a large number of Grade 1 and 1* listed buildings.

It was proposed that the cultural quarter would be a vibrant, clearly defined area that any customer/user would be aware they had entered. The aim of the vision was to generate additional external funding than that which was currently achieved through an ad-hoc approach, to ensure that the whole quarter would benefit from investment.

Study Area – NRM and South of the river

It was pointed out that the proposed study area was a surprisingly green space - however it was not easy to move around. The walk from the National Railway Museum to the Minster took 9 minutes and the first task was to obtain more clear connectivity between these two points. Reference was made to redevelopment plans for York Station and the proposal to open both sides of the station. It was pointed out that the majority of

coaches dropped visitors adjacent to the Memorial Gardens and that there was no easy direct access to the river at this point. It had been pointed out that the city made poor use of the river frontage and that work was required to improve this area.

Officers pointed out that as part of the York Central plan consideration had been given to the provision of a central plaza – between the two halls of the National Railway Museum; Officers confirmed that a lighting strategy had been proposed which would assist navigation around the proposed routes.

Study Area - St Mary's Abbey Precinct Gardens

The proposals for these Gardens included seeking to open up access to the Art Gallery and the Library from rear entrances in the Museum Gardens and suggesting how people could move through this space. Research with visitors had indicated that Scarborough Bridge and Marble Arch were unsatisfactory routes and suggestions from the original consultants had included the provision of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the river from the National Railway Museum/Station into the Museum Gardens. The proposals were intended to cover both daytime and evenings, and would involve reviewing the evening opening of the Gardens.

Officers referred to work that could be undertaken on trees in the Museum Gardens to lift the crowns to restore the view across the river to the Yorkshire Museum.

Study Area – St Leonards, Art Gallery and Exhibition Square

There were proposals to alter the traffic which at present used St Leonards Place, the first phase involved reducing traffic to 1 lane each way and the second phase closing the road to all traffic except buses, cyclists and taxis. In the timescales of this development traffic would be much reduced in this area. St Leonard's Place was owned by a private developer who was considering mixed use of Hotel, retail and residential. The new Visitor Information Centre would be located across the road at the corner of Blake Street. In relation to Kings Manor, it was proposed that the existing car park on the frontage could be moved and replaced by a formal garden and Exhibition Square replaced by civic space. There were also proposals for the Theatre Royal to link into De Grey House, thereby improving Theatre facilities; Reference was made to air quality issues in Museum Street and Exhibition Square from queuing traffic and bus manoeuvres.

Study Area – The Library, St Leonards Hospital, Multangular Tower

The railings around St Leonard's Hospital meant that there was restricted space for pedestrian traffic and bus queues. The York Library was a magnificent building but in an inappropriate setting and it was thought that this could be turned into civic space. Internally in the Library there were already plans to make much better use of its relationship with its outdoor space. There were some tentative plans to redevelop St Leonard's Hospital site as a new retail and workshop space.

Study Area - The Minister

It was pointed out that at present Duncombe Place at the front of the Minster provided a taxi turning circle, improvements had been suggested

but vehicular access needed to be considered. There were some south entrance plans for a plaza already in progress and there was a need to build in consideration of the setting of the West end of the Minster and access to Deans Park.

Study Area – River Corridor

It was pointed out that no seats had been provided on the south bank of the river between Lendal and Scarborough Bridges;

Any works on the river frontage should take account of flooding eg easily washed down seating;

There was also a need to tackle the geese problem.

It was confirmed that this was a long term vision, possibly 15 years, in which to obtain the funding and for all the proposals to be completed.

Members made the following points:

- A cultural quarter was not only a rebranding exercise but the chance to regenerate an area and an opportunity for York to attract finance to support it;
- That it may be difficult to sustain an evening economy in the areas around the Railway Museum;
- Need to be sensitive to other strong cultural offers outside the Quarter, i.e. in Micklegate, Castle Museum, Gillygate, Clifford's Tower, Walmgate;
- If the proposals went ahead the evening culture in York would shift;
- Members should walk round the study area;
- The Authority should 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;
- Need to encourage visitors to return to the city and stay longer, and get the correct balance between residents and visitors;
- Possible investigation of the practicality of holding a public drop in session, early one evening in November, to gauge public views at which stakeholders would provide plans/models of their proposals;
- Important to source trees, cycle racks, seats etc suitable to the conditions;
- Getting the pedestrian hierarchy correct;
- Making the most of York's stunning buildings;
- To reinforce the connections between the areas.

Members then examined the list of cities and their different types of cultural quarters, circulated at the meeting, and the suggestion that they each choose one to look at in detail, identifying positives and negatives for York. Discussion also took place on a possible visit by the Committee to a city with a cultural quarter to further investigate and discuss the benefits and receive feedback from the public.

Members agreed that the Committee should go on a fact-finding visit to the Newcastle/Gateshead Cultural Quarter and meet key individuals involved in the establishment and operation of this Quarter.

Members agreed to individually investigate the following existing Cultural Quarters:

Cllr Taylor – Doncaster
Cllr Galvin – Belfast
Cllr Hogg - Brighton/Glasgow
Cllr Crisp – Wolverhampton

Councillors Hyman and Funnell to be offered Bolton, Leicester, Vienna or any other cities with cultural quarters to further investigate.

In relation to the list of draft questions suggested to obtain information from each city on their cultural quarters Members suggested amendments to the list as follows:

Cultural Quarter Questions

How did you decide which area to designate as a cultural quarter?

What were your objectives in establishing a cultural quarter?

Has designating the areas a Cultural Quarter had any effect on those cultural institutions outside the designated area?

Which partners are involved in developing the area?

How did you engage local residents in the process of establishing a cultural quarter?

What have been the successes of the cultural quarter initiatives?

What are the key factors in gaining that success?

Have your visitor numbers increased as a result of establishing a cultural quarter? If yes - by how many over what length of time?

What have been the problems of the cultural quarter initiative?

How were these issues overcome?

If you were to start it again today what would you do differently?

Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED: (i) That subject to the following changes to the timetable for the review approval be given to the proposed timetable and scoping: ¹.

17 th September 2008	i. To receive feedback from Members on their findings in relation to various different Cultural Quarters. ii. To receive feedback on public consultation
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	that has taken place in relation to the City Centre Area Action Plan being undertaken as part of the LDF process. iii. That inviting a representative from Sheffield or Brighton be deferred until after Members had visited Newcastle/Gateshead cultural quarter.
15 th October 2008	Invite stakeholders to attend this meeting i.e. representatives from the Theatre Royal, York Museums Trust, Rushbond and National Railway Museum.
29 th October 2008	To receive the Council's Draft Business Plan and discuss this in relation to key objectives (ii) and (iv)

- (ii) That Sir Ron Cooke, former Vice Chancellor of the University of York, be invited as a co-optee onto the Committee for the duration of the review;²
- (iii) That the Scrutiny Officer investigate the purchasing of copies of the book "Cultural Quarter": Principles and Practice by Simon Roodhouse for members of the Committee;³
- (iv) That arrangements be made on 15 October 2008 for an informal day to meet stakeholders and walk around the cultural quarter and its buildings;⁴
- (v) That Officers make arrangements for a visit to Gateshead/Newcastle's cultural quarter in early September if possible to meet those involved;⁵
- (vi) That further consideration be given to the possibility of inviting representatives from other Local Authorities to present information on their Cultural Quarters following the visit to Newcastle/Gateshead;⁶
- (vii) That an informal 'public drop in session' explaining the cultural quarter be arranged by the scrutiny officer on a date towards the end of the review.⁷

REASON: To ensure the progression of this review and compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

Action Required

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| 1. To amend the review timetable as agreed. | TW |
| 2. To invite Sir Ron Cooke as a co-optee onto the Committee. | TW |
| 3. To investigate the purchase of copies of this book for Committee members. | TW |
| 4. To make arrangements for the Committee to meet stakeholders informally on 15 October 2008. | TW |

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| 5. That arrangements be made for the Committee to visit Gateshead/Newcastle's cultural quarter. | TW |
| 6. That further consideration be given to this invitation following Members visit to Newcastle/Gateshead. | TW |
| 6. That a 'public drop in session' be arranged on a date towards the end of the review. | TW |

Cllr D Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.25 pm].

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