
MEETING	"CULTURAL QUARTER" AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	17 SEPTEMBER 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS TAYLOR (CHAIR), CRISP, FUNNELL, GALVIN AND HYMAN
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR HOGG

4. 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 Taylor declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Cultural Quarter – Interim Report) as he was due to start a new job as Marketing Manager for City Screen in York.

Councillor Crisp declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Cultural Quarter – Interim Report) as a member of the York Theatre Royal Board.

5. 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.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the "Cultural Quarter" Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee held on 21 July 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the wording in Minute 3 – "Cultural Quarter" Scrutiny Review – Scoping Report – being amended as follows:

List of bullet points on 4th page of minutes under wording "Members Made the following points":

First bullet point should read "*A cultural quarter **should not be a re-branding exercise but the chance to regenerate an area and an opportunity for York to attract finance to support it;***

Third to last bullet point should read "*Getting the **transport hierarchy correct, ie with pedestrians at the top of that hierarchy***

7. CULTURAL QUARTER - INTERIM REPORT

Consideration was given to an interim report and timetable of events 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.

Officers advised the Committee that Sir Ron Cooke, former Vice Chancellor of the University of York, had now been formally co-opted onto the Cultural Quarter Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee for the duration of the review. The Chairman formally welcomed him to the Committee.

Officers updated that they were still trying to source copies of the book “Cultural Quarter” – Principles and Practice’ by Simon Roodhouse.

Public Drop In session

- Arrangements for a public drop in session to take place on 4th November 2008 were underway.
- Members discussed possible venues, costs and timings.
- Members discussed the format for the session including possible use of visual aids, questionnaires etc.
- Officers agreed to arrange a press release closer to the date of the session.³
- The aims of the session were to engage the public, disseminate factual information on the proposals and encourage discussion on the vision.
- Members raised the point that care should be taken not to raise public expectations unduly over what could be taken forward.
- Concerns were raised over the use of the term “cultural” and how it could be perceived and stressed the need to explain it properly.

Visit to Newcastle/Gateshead

Officers had arranged for Members to visit Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council on 23rd September 2008. The visit would include tours of the Sage Gateshead (live music venue), the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, the Gateshead Quays and Newcastle City Centre. Members would also have the opportunity to see how the Cultural Quarter has expanded from the original area and meet with Council Officers and Members who had been involved in the process of creating the Quarter.

Investigations into other cities.

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members had agreed to investigate other cultural quarters and provide feedback on their findings at this meeting. The findings are reported below:-

Belfast

Celebrate Belfast was launched in October 2005 and was a 15 month programme of events and activities centred on the programme themes “City Hall Centenary”, Festivals, Cultural Quarters and Sporting Activities. The aim of the Celebrate Belfast Programme was to help stimulate economic activity and contribute to the cultural life in Belfast through increased arts activity, increased tourism and economic activity, increased community activity and a change in the perception of Belfast as a place to live and visit.

Belfast City Council commissioned an independent evaluation of the programme and the report entitled Belfast City Council Evaluation of Celebrate Belfast 2006 Final Report – Draft Version 2 – April 2007” was produced. This outlined the key achievements, additional outcomes, legacy, and future focus. The Executive Summary to the report was appended to the agenda as Annex C. The full report can be accessed through Belfast City Council’s website.

The drivers behind the projects were the promotion of the festivals and drawing attention to different areas of the city. Lessons to be learnt included having a robust plan and robust and certain funding.

Wolverhampton

Members reported that Wolverhampton had decided to locate their Cultural Quarter in an area which already held most of the city’s existing cultural assets including the Art Gallery, Arena Theatre, Light House Media Centre and Grand Theatre and which had a number of vacant premises which would be suitable for conversion into cultural uses.

Wolverhampton had a vibrant night time economy based predominantly around bars and clubs appealing mainly to the 18-30 age group and one of the key objectives was to broaden the appeal to families and other age groups.

Consultation with residents had taken place and there was a Local Area and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA) Coordinator co-ordinator who liaised directly with city centre residents. The creation of a Cultural Quarter had had no significant effect on areas outside it.

When asked if they were to start again, what would they do differently, representatives from Wolverhampton stated “Probably try to secure longer term funding. Our biggest issue had been the predominance of brewery owned and run premise in the area which had somewhat diluted the impact we wanted to achieve. We are in the process of looking more broadly at this area particularly in terms of diversifying its current function and to this end a number of studies are being undertaken to assess how we can achieve this”.

The results of investigations into Wolverhampton were attached to the agenda as Annex D.

Bolton

A handout was circulated in respect of Bolton. Bolton does not have a Cultural Quarter but does have a 5 year Tourism Development Plan. This plan sets out the vision for tourism in Bolton which Bolton Council aims to achieve by working with, advising and influencing key strategic partners who impact on tourism. The Tourism Development Plan can be accessed online through Bolton Council's website.

Bolton promoted the fact that it was part of Greater Manchester with good transport links and good access to the countryside. Drivers behind the developments were economic.

Leicester

The results of investigations into the Leicester Cultural Quarter were attached to the agenda as Annex B.

The Cultural Quarter in Leicester is currently being developed as part of the regeneration of the St Georges Area of the city and major cultural projects include a performing arts centre (due to open in December 2008), a three-screen digital media centre (construction scheduled to be completed by July 2009) and a depot providing workspace for the city's designers, artists and other creative businesses (now operational).

Members who had recently visited Leicester had reported that the city had improved visually with the introduction of pedestrian streets with angled seating improving views and providing a pleasant environment to sit in. Leicester also had some very interesting public realm works. They confirmed that building work was still taking place with many of the projects still in progress and therefore it was too early to measure any success factors.

Doncaster

The Chairman reported that he had visited Doncaster to see the cultural quarter at first hand and had been shown around by Doncaster's Heritage Champion and met some of the officers who were involved.

A copy of his findings and a document entitled Doncaster's Civic and Cultural Quarter were circulated to Members.

He reported that plans for a Cultural and Civic Quarter had originally been drawn up in the 1950s and had been recently resurrected as part of the town's urban renaissance master plan. The objectives behind it were to diversify the economy promoting cultural industries initiatives, create a tourism interest, reduce reliance on drinking culture, and promote better urban design with new housing, by providing new performance spaces, a new cinema, swimming pool and new council offices. The developments involved selling council buildings for other uses and providing new public buildings.

As developments were still in the planning stage, results of the proposals were not yet known. The Chairman advised Members that when Doncaster had been asked what they would do differently if they were to start again, they had said that the competitive dialogue tendering process had been too unfamiliar and they had also learnt the importance of defining better and earlier the specification to give to the private sector.

General Discussion

Members discussed the issues in depth and raised the following points:

- Members discussed the use of the term “cultural” and the need to differentiate between the concept itself and how to refer to it.
- Members understood that the term “Cultural Quarter” was used because it was a term people were familiar with.
- The External Relations Manager from Visit York, reported that the Board had met recently to discuss aspects of Visit York’s work programme. The Board had discussed the use of the term “Cultural Quarter” and not all members had been happy it. However the strength of the concept in order to attract funding was recognised as being important.
- Discussion also raised possible problems with branding part of the City as a Cultural Quarter due to concerns that York was not large enough to have areas designated for specific uses ie cultural, retail, business etc.
- Members noted that Glasgow had put itself on the Map with the Garden Festival in 1998, European City of Culture status in 1990 and the annual Merchant City Festival. Belfast was also moving forward and changing. Brighton was recognised as having a captive tourist market similar to York.
- Most of cities investigated had been hit by economic decline and the creation of a cultural quarter had in most cases been part of a greater regeneration project.
- It was too early to draw conclusions from most of the cities investigated as their Cultural Quarters had not been in existence for long enough.
- York’s challenge was not just one of regeneration but of preservation of its heritage and finding ways of promoting and sharing this heritage.
- Members raised the point that some events in York do not get sufficient publicity.
- Funding was of utmost importance.
- Stakeholder institutions had major development plans and funding needed to be requested within the proper context.
- City of York Council must play an important part in the process and has to work as a partner and co-ordinator to attract private finance.

- The fact that York had a reasonably thriving and stable economy may be a negative factor in terms of attracting funding.
- The fact that part of the York Central site was within the boundaries of the Cultural Quarter should be a strong factor in attracting funding.
- It was important to involve the people in the creative industries in York in the planning process and execution of ideas as well as specialist industries including stonemasons and glaziers rather than hiring in people from outside the area.
- The Head of Arts and Culture had received the planning brief and marketing pack for the York Central Site. This document is available online at www.yorkcentralopportunity.com
- There was a need for a clear, aspirational plan to develop the business case for funders.
- Within this plan it was important to be clear on cost and how the proposals will be funded.
- There was a requirement to undertake a scoping exercise prior to applying for funding.
- It was important to examine the Cultural Quarter proposals in the context of the City Centre Area Action Plan (CCAAP) and World Heritage Site.
- There was a need to involve the City of York Heritage Champion in all stages of the process.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the fact-finding timetable as set out in paragraph 9 in the report be approved.
 - (ii) That the invitation of a representative from another Local Authority be further deferred.

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

CLLR D TAYLOR, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.30 pm].

Cultural Quarter Questions – investigation of Doncaster

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

Original plans for a Cultural and Civic Quarter hark back to 1950s.

More recently resurrected as part of the Town Masterplan.

Compact town centre. Fuzzy boundaries to CCQ. Focus on Council-owned land and buildings.

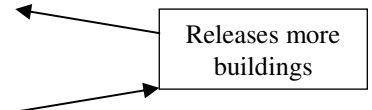
What were your objectives in establishing a cultural quarter?

Diversifying economy – cultural *industries* initiatives (though not based in 'Quarter').

Create tourism/visitor interest. Reduce reliance on drinking culture.

Promote better urban design.

New housing. New performance spaces. New cinema. New swimming pool(!) New Council offices(!)



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

No. Too early to say.

However, development of 'Frenchgate' Shopping Mall had an immediate detrimental impact on local shops.

Which partners are involved in developing the area?

Muse/AMEC, College, Arts Council, Yorkshire Forward, Temple, PCT, Courts, Police, Landowners in area.

NB: "Competitive Dialogue" tender process means developers invest and put forward plans saying how to finance.

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

Part of urban renaissance master plan, so consultation included in that. This defined CCQ and scrutinised by Members. NB: "Competitive Dialogue" means developers in competition so this denies public involvement. Consulted thereafter on 'look and feel'.

What have been the successes of the cultural quarter initiatives?

Business and public enthusiasm. Appetite for quality change. Civic pride. Kudos in developer community.

What are the key factors in gaining that success?

Have your visitor numbers increased as a result of establishing a cultural quarter?

No. Too early to measure.

What have been the problems of the cultural quarter initiative?

Finance. Priority/opportunity cost. 'Selling the family silver'.

How were these issues overcome?

Yorkshire Forward had to intervene to bridge funding gap.

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

Definition of CCQ would remain the same.

The "competitive dialogue" tendering process was too unfamiliar; only 2nd authority to use this.

Learnt the need to define better and earlier the specification to give to the private sector.

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