

Scrutiny Management Committee

24 March 2009

Report of the Head of Civic, Legal & Democratic Services

Final Report of the 'Cultural Quarter' Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee

Summary

1. This report presents the final report of the 'Cultural Quarter' Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee regarding their review on the proposed 'Cultural Quarter' for York.

Background

2. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Committee recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

Aim

3. 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.

Consultation

4. As part of the review the following organisations and individuals were consulted:
 - Head of Arts & Culture at City of York Council
 - External Relations Manager at Visit York
 - The Chief Executive & the Director of Finance and Business Development at the York Museums Trust
 - Officers and Elected Members at Gateshead Council

- Officers at Newcastle City Council
- York Theatre Royal
- Head of Libraries & Heritage – City of York Council
- Representatives of the National Railway Museum
- Dean of York Minster
- Representatives of St John’s University
- Representative of Rushbond PLC
- Various Officers in the City Strategy Directorate at City of York Council
- Members of the public at a public drop in session held on 4th November 2008
- Public Affairs & Stakeholder Manager and the Head of Property at National Express East Cost

Options

5. Having considered the findings contained within the final report and its annexes attached, Members may chose to support all, some or none of the recommendations shown in paragraph 7 of this report, and provide their comments prior to the report being considered by the Executive.

Analysis

6. In regards to the aims and objectives of this review, the final report attached analyses all of the information gathered.

Summary of Recommendations Arising from the Review

7. The recommendations arising from the ‘Cultural Quarter’ Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review are:

The following recommendations should be seen within the context of York being a ‘Cultural City’ and its culture not being confined to any one area.

- i. That City of York Council takes the lead in the comprehensive business plan and design masterplan for this area, especially in terms of implementing any changes to the public realm works, pedestrian links etc between the various investment areas.

REASON: To ensure that a robust business plan and design masterplan are in place.

- ii. That, with the backing of partner organisations*, the Chief Executive of City of York Council opens negotiations with Yorkshire Forward and other appropriate public bodies with regard to funding the proposed cultural master plan for the city and seeking major investment for realising the opportunities available for improvements to the public realm and civic spaces.

*Yorkshire Museums Trust, Rushbond PLC, York Theatre Royal, York Minster, National Railway Museum, Kings Manor (University of York), Visit York, York @ Large and appropriate departments within the local authority.

REASON: To source appropriate funding streams.

- iii. In view of the fact that development of the York North West site will create more traffic both vehicular and pedestrian:
 - i. The Committee recommends that substantial improvements be made to the area known as 'Marble Arch' (both road and pedestrian tunnels).
 - ii. The Committee recommends that City of York Council should seek to agree a new pedestrian/cycle river crossing (linking the National Railway Museum and Museum Gardens) as part of the York North West development plans.

REASON: To ensure that access and egress from the York North West site is appropriate and the area around the NRM receives better connectivity to the rest of the city.

- iv. That the Head of Arts & Culture prepares the relevant documentation to propose York as a British City of Culture, should this proposed government initiative go ahead.

REASON: To promote the city as an outstanding centre of culture.

- v. That a wider strategy for 'Cultural Development Areas' within the city as a whole, be pursued by York @ Large to engage other cultural attractions and leisure providers e.g. a Castle Area.

REASON: To ensure cultural inclusivity across the city.

- vi. That the boundary of the proposed 'Cultural Quarter' be used for investment purposes only. That a fixed boundary is not the most appropriate for a 'Cultural Quarter' in the long term and the position of a permeable boundary should, therefore, be revisited by York @ Large at a future date.

REASON: To find the most beneficial way of defining the area.

- vii. That York @ Large be requested to revisit the name 'Cultural Quarter' as part of the work on the comprehensive business plan and the group should consider either a geographical or historical name for the area.

REASON: To reflect the views of the Committee and of comments made by local residents.

- viii. That the recommendations of the report commissioned by City of York Council to look at the future of York City Archives be fully implemented to ensure that the Archives are suitably funded and are presented as a key part of the 'Cultural Quarter' area.

REASON: To ensure the future of the Archives within the city.

Corporate Strategy – Priorities & Direction

8. This review related to the following corporate priority for improvement of this Council:

‘Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the City’s streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.’

Implications

9. **Financial** – Financial implications may arise for CYC if all the recommendations in the final report were to be fully implemented. CYC would need to source funding (both internal & external) for major works to the public realm, the upkeep of the Archives and production of appropriate business and master plans. As there is currently no additional funding available, these financial implications would need to be addressed in more detail in future reports to Members should the Executive approve the recommendations arising from this scrutiny review.
10. **Legal** – There are no known legal implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review
11. **Human Resources** – The Head of Arts and Culture led on this review within her service; it may have further impact on her service in terms of putting forward proposals for York to be a British City of Culture. It may also impact on the resources of the Economic Development Team within the City strategy Directorate in terms of producing a comprehensive business plan and design master plan. Any resource issues would need to be addressed in more detail should the Executive approve the recommendations arising from this scrutiny review.
12. There are no known Equalities, Property, Crime & Disorder, or other implications associated with the recommendation within this report.

Risk Management

13. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations within this cover report or with the recommendations arising from the review.

Recommendations

14. Members are asked to note the contents of the attached final report and its annexes and provide comments on the recommendations as shown in paragraph 7 of this report.

Reason: To inform the Executive’s consideration of the final report.

Contact Details

Author:

Tracy Wallis
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel: 01904 551714

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Quentin Baker
Head of Civic, Legal & Democratic Services
Tel: 01904 551004

Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officers

Finance

Patrick Looker
Finance Manager
EXT: 1633

Richard Hartle
Head of Finance
Learning, Culture & Children's Services
Ext: 4225

Wards Affected: Guildhall, Holgate & Micklegate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Listed within the Final Report

Annexes

Annex 1 – Final Report

- Annex A** Questions used as a premise for investigating other cultural areas.
- Annex B** Timings and costings for stakeholders' future plans
- Annex C** Further information from the NRM and Rushbond PLC
- Annex D** Timings and costings for York St. John University
- Annex E** Further information from York St. John University
- Annex F** Draft Business Plan
- Annex G** Executive Summary of Draft Business Plan
- Annex H** Public Drop in Session Results
- Annex I** LDF & CCAAP Information
- Annex J** Sir Ron Cooke's Suggested Model