
MEETING	ECONOMIC & CITY DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	20 JUNE 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS LEVENE (CHAIR), WATT (VICE-CHAIR), RICHES, SEMLYEN, MCILVEEN (SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNCILLOR BURTON), HODGSON (SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNCILLOR POTTER), RUNCIMAN AND TAYLOR (SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNCILLOR D'AGORNE)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR WISEMAN

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked at this point in the meeting to declare any personal or prejudicial interests, other than those listed on the standing declarations of interests attached to the agenda, that they might have had.

No other interests were declared.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 March 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Keith Marquis, a representative of Strensall with Towthorpe Parish Council, spoke regarding Agenda Item 5 (Proposed Scrutiny Topic-E-Planning Facilities).

He spoke about how the Parish Council supported the Council's scheme towards putting all planning documents online, and due to this had purchased a laptop and projector and had created an electronic record of applications in their area.

However, it was noted that access problems on to the Planning Portal website had been encountered in February 2012. This had led to information being inaccessible and meant that Officers had a significant backlog of documentation to upload after this date. He was advised by Officers that the backlog had recently been cleared, but in his view had found that this was not the case. He added that in his experience, revised drawings and plans from applicants often had been uploaded on to the website after a decision notice had been produced. He informed Members that often the Parish Council were alerted to these documents only when the decision notices referred to them. Finally, he spoke about how he had been informed that there was a current delay of 3 months, which he felt affected Parish Councils as well as Planning Officers who were not able to access the information.

4. INTRODUCTORY REPORT- YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Members received an introductory report on Youth Unemployment.

Officers informed the Committee that the scrutiny review had decided to focus on vacancies in the care and business administration sector in the city, because this was where a large number of vacancies currently existed. They also added that there was a demand for these places to be filled.

An Officer who was responsible for working on the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme, with a particular responsibility for those in 16-18 year old age group, attended the meeting.

He suggested that the Committee could look at how young people could navigate the labour market. He felt that the young people in the city knew what jobs existed, but support that they might receive needed to direct them more clearly to the jobs. He also added that the support offered to young people needed to explain that some vacancies were not available in the city, and that they might have to travel to attain more preferable employment.

Further to this he reported that there had been high demand for apprenticeships in hands on areas such as Park Rangers and working in cafés, but that it was more beneficial for young people to have a realistic view of the current employment situation.

Discussion between Officers and Members took place which concerned what questions the review might seek to focus on. One Member suggested that the Committee could ask employment agencies if gaps and overlaps in provision existed in the care and business administration sectors, and to decide following the receipt of this information if gaps and overlaps were particularly significant.

Officers also pointed out that for those aged over 18 there were multiple funding schemes along with agencies and contractors responsible for their distribution. They suggested that perhaps the Committee could look at whether the contractors were working effectively together.

Other Members felt that a motivation problem existed and that current training gave young people the chance to go to interviews, but did not train them on how to successfully complete an interview.

Members decided that they wished to proceed with the review through a Task Group. They agreed that the Task Group membership be comprised of Councillors D'Agorne, Riches and Semlyen. It was also agreed that one of these Members would attend the Skills Summit on the 9th July, as a representative of the Task Group.

Members also considered the draft remit set out in paragraph 2 of the report. A third bullet point was added to the key objectives section of the remit as follows:

- To investigate whether there are any gaps and/or overlaps in provision and if so make recommendation to address them.

RESOLVED: (i) That the report be noted.

 (ii) That the topic be progressed to review and that a Task Group be formed in order to examine this.

- (iii) That Councillors D'Agorne, Riches and Semlyen be appointed to make up the Task Group.
- (iv) That the draft remit for the review as set out in Paragraph 2 of the Officer's report be agreed with the addition of a third bullet point in the key objectives section as set out in the minute above.
- (v) That a member of the Task Group attend the York Skills Summit on 9th July 2012.

REASON: In order to progress the review.

5. PROPOSED SCRUTINY TOPIC- E-PLANNING FACILITIES

Members received a report which presented them with information on E-Planning Facilities.

Councillor Wiseman attended the meeting as the Member who had submitted the topic for review. She explained to Members her reasons for why she felt the topic was important namely that;

- Although some Parish Councils could use internet access for some it, caused upheaval.
- Planning applications could often be more contentious in villages and were made more so if residents could not have access to plans.
- That perhaps the Council could set a charge for paper copies of Officers and Developers plans, in order for those without the Internet or access to a computer to be able to examine them.

In response to comments raised by Keith Marquis and Councillor Wiseman, Officers informed the Committee that in their opinion, E-Planning was work in progress. They added that those involved in planning had been informed about how major applications would continue to be sent out on paper from June, but that smaller applications would only be available electronically. They suggested that if Members wished, they would inform Parish Councils and interested parties that these changes would not be made until October 2012.

It was noted that some Parish Councils did not have equipment to access plans online, and that one model did not suit all.

However, Members were informed that steps were being taken to improve access, such as encouraging developers to produce smaller plans so that they were easier to view online and be printed if necessary.

Some Members raised a number of concerns such as;

- Logistical problems, i.e. that some public libraries could not provide space for large plans to be accessed.
- That some residents and Parish Councillors who wished to see the plans were not happy using IT.
- That most people were in favour of E-Planning but needed further support such as training and help understanding how the system worked.
- Where would the equipment needed by Parish Councils to view applications be stored?

Further to these comments, it was also noted that Parish Council budgets were in the process of being set, and would be finalised in November. If equipment, such as laptops and projectors needed to be purchased then time was of the essence and should be taken into consideration if it was decided to progress the proposed scrutiny topic to review.

In response to comments raised by Members, Officers provided more detail to the Committee about the problems that had been encountered earlier in the year. Members were informed that delays had taken place due to a number of factors such as; an unexpected increase in planning applications, and a restructure which had led to reductions in the numbers of staff, in particular those who had inputted this information on to the Planning Portal website.

It was reported that a number of Council staff had been redeployed and a person would be appointed specifically to deal with the backlog of planning documents. Members were also informed that Council Officers had worked extremely hard to clear delays that had affected applications, and had put forward suggestions as to how the process of dealing with planning applications could be improved.

Some Members felt that a scrutiny review did not need to take place, as they felt that some Parish Councils did not want to have to pay for the additional equipment that would be needed in order to view planning applications online. They also suggested it could be advantageous for Officers to be prompted, in order to speed up performance.

Members felt that a review into E-Planning Facilities was important, in particular examination into how processes were happening. Additionally, it was felt that Members could help form proposals on how the e-planning facility could be improved. They agreed to establish a Task Group of three Members to investigate this further.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the report be noted.
 - (ii) That a Task Group be formed to investigate the topic.
 - (iii) That the membership of the Task Group be comprised of Councillors Levene, Runciman and Watt.

REASON: In order to progress the review

6. WORK PLAN 2012-13 AND LIST OF SCRUTINY TOPICS PROPOSED AT THE SCRUTINY WORK PLANNING EVENT HELD ON 2 MAY 2012

Members considered a report which presented them with the Committee's work plan for 2012-13. Attached to the report was a list of Scrutiny topics, that were proposed at a Scrutiny Work Planning Event held on 2 May 2012.

Discussion took place between Members about receiving Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports at future meetings. The Chair felt that it would be useful to have these reports on future agendas but that it would be particularly beneficial for Officers and Members, if questions about the reports were submitted prior to the meeting so that Officers could come prepared with answers.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the reports had originally been included in the agenda, in order for Members to identify areas which they might want to review. Members agreed that they would like to continue to receive these reports.

In relation to the list of Scrutiny Topics attached to the report, it was reported that briefing notes on all topics listed would be received by the Committee at their next meeting (except for the topic on Science City York as the Committee had already received a briefing on this).

Councillor Watt suggested that another topic on post development adoption procedure be added to the list. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to also have a briefing note on this topic at their next meeting.

The Chair suggested that a December meeting be added into the work plan in order to review the Committee's workplan for the latter part of the municipal year. Members also agreed to change the time of their next meeting in July from 4.30 pm to 5.30pm.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the work plan be noted.
 - (ii) That the start time of the Committee's July meeting be changed from 5.30 pm to 4.30 pm.
 - (iii) That the Committee continue to receive Financial Quarter Monitoring Reports, and that Members try to submit questions relating to these to Officers prior to the meeting.
 - (vii) That a briefing note on a potential scrutiny topic relating to the Post Development Adoption Procedure be added to the list of topics to be considered by the Committee at their next meeting.

RESOLVED: To keep the Committee's work plan up to date.

Councillor D Levene, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.40 pm].