

Meeting	Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date	18 June 2013
Present	Councillors Semlyen (Chair), Watt (Vice-Chair), Barnes, Burton, D'Agorne, Riches and Hyman
In Attendance	Councillor Alexander

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests, other than those listed on the standing declarations attached to the agenda, that they might have in the business on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

2. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 March 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

4. Attendance of the Leader (to include information on the City Team)

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting to update Members on priorities within his portfolio area.

His verbal update included comments on;

- Levels of unemployment in York.
- Proposed arrival of large retailers in the city.
- International links.
- York Central site.
- Membership of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- Local Plan and housing issues in the city.

The Leader reported that unemployment levels had decreased since 2008. He stated that the level of youth unemployment in the city was amongst the lowest in the UK. The level of unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds had also stabilised.

He added that a large retailer, had expressed interest in establishing a store in the city and that the Marks and Spencer building in Piccadilly had been recommended to them for use.

In regards to the city's international links, it was reported that the number of international students at York St John University had increased, and that the University of York held an annual graduation ceremony in China.

In regards to the York Central Site, the Leader commented that significant funding was needed for infrastructure works, particularly the provision of access into and out of the site. He added that the current uncertain situation surrounding the funding of the National Railway Museum (NRM) might affect the site's future.

The Leader informed the Committee of the reasons for why York is now a member of one LEP, the Leeds City Region (LCR), as opposed to its previous membership of both the LCR and York and North Yorkshire LEP, namely differing priorities on transport and housing.

Members asked a series of questions to the Leader including;

- Whether the Local Plan would be revised if there was major opposition to it.
- Whether the proposed figure of 1090 new homes a year was sufficient?
- Whether new entrance criteria for the city's Universities to take on larger numbers of international students would be to the detriment of home students.

In response to the questions the Leader responded that;

- The consultation on the Local Plan would provide the first definition of the Green Belt, and that he would disagree with a policy which did not set out a Local Plan.
- That as York was one of the fastest growing cities in the UK, more homes were needed and 1090 new homes a year was only an average figure.
- That he did not think that house prices in the city would fall with an increase in house building but it would allow supply to match the current unmet demand.

The Chair thanked the Leader for his attendance at the meeting.

5. York Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) Presentation on Volunteering Opportunities for under 16's and the York Charter for Volunteering

Garry Jones, the Support & Development Team Manager and Liz Hamilton, the Volunteering Manager from York Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) gave a presentation to Members on volunteering for under 16s in the city and the York Charter for Volunteering.

Members were informed that it was important to distinguish between work placements and volunteering. Work placements developed skills and provided references. Volunteering diversified workforces and gave organisations links to and a commitment to the community.

It was reported that previous funding had allowed the CVS to run taster work on volunteering with 14-16 year olds which in turn had allowed for a legacy to start to develop, but lack of funding had stopped this. This funding then had been targeted towards 16 year old NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Members were informed about the current work of the CVS in schools, particularly about the inauguration of the Youth Volunteer Award (which was presented by the Lord Mayor) and a project around Disabled Young Volunteers. However, there were still organisations in specific areas who were reluctant to provide volunteering opportunities for young people, such as in health and social care and safeguarding.

It was acknowledged that in these particular areas a higher level of supervision of young volunteers was needed, which might dissuade organisations from offering opportunities in these areas. It was also recognised that a large number of volunteering opportunities had been solely used by people to expand their skills in order to gain employment.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

Reason: To inform the Committee about volunteering for under 16s in York.

6. Verbal Update on Implementation of Recommendations Arising from the Scrutiny Task Group E-Planning Facilities- Reasons for Being Behind Schedule

The Council's Head of Development Management attended the meeting to give Members a verbal update on the recommendations arising from the E-Planning Facilities Scrutiny Review Task Group.

He gave Members a short verbal summary on the progress of the review, and commented that the training sessions had taken place with over 50 Parish Councils and Planning Panels on how to use the new facilities. These had been successful, and although there was initially some scepticism, given that the Task Group's recommendations did not mention funding for equipment to display the plans, there was less resistance to the principle of E-Planning.

It was reported that a Good Practice Guide for Parish Councils and Planning Panels was in development in conjunction with Task Group Members and representatives from Parish Councils. However, Officers had asked for further nominations to be received from Parish Councils and Planning Panels that had not been involved. Councillor Watt offered his assistance in further development of the Guide. Members were informed that the Guide would be circulated to all interested parties once further nominations had been received.

In relation to a recommendation regarding providing a function to download all documents relating to an application, it was reported that IDOX had been slow to respond to individual requests for packs of documents.

However, they suggested that all documents related to a specific planning application could be sent within one email. This could be done by contacting Planning Officers using the Planning Enquiries email inbox (planning.enquiries@york.gov.uk). It was also suggested that this method be promoted to Members in their fortnightly e-Newsletter.

The Scrutiny Officer requested that the Head of Development Management provide Members with a detailed written update on the implementation of all the recommendations so that the Committee could decide at their next meeting which of the recommendations could be signed off as fully implemented. Officers confirmed that they would circulate to Members an amended Terms of Reference for Parish Councils and Planning Panels regarding E-Planning and asked that any further questions be emailed to the Head of Development Management.

- Resolved:
- (i) That the update be noted.
 - (ii) That a written update on the implementation of the recommendations be provided by Officers to Members.¹
 - (iii) That an alternative method on how to access all documents related to individual planning applications be promoted through the Members' Newsletter.²

Reason: To be able to complete the scrutiny review.

Action Required

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| 1. Circulate information to Members. | JC |
| 2. Include in the Members Newsletter. | JB |

7. Update Report- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

Members received an update report on the progress with the two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in which the City of York had been involved in to date.

In reference to the Leader's verbal update, it was confirmed that York had chosen to leave the York and North Yorkshire LEP and remain in the Leeds City Region (LCR) LEP.

Members questioned Officers on what a "Combined Authority", which was an aim of the LCR LEP, meant. In response Officers reported that the establishment of a Combined Authority (CA) was a requirement under the city deal process and gave additional flexibility and decision making powers to member councils with regard to transport and economic infrastructure funding. It would also help lever in additional transport funding from Government, as agreed through the Leeds City Region City Deal process.

In response to what was meant by York being a "non constituent" member of the CA, Officers reported that current legislation does not allow York to become a full constituent member of the Combined Authority due to requirements that constituent members must share a contiguous geographical boundary. However York would become a 'partner/ non-constituent member' on the Combined Authority. Officers reported that discussions with Government with regard to removing the legislative barriers to full membership were ongoing and that the recent parliamentary response by Communities and Local Government (CLG) Minister Brandon Lewis, indicated that he was open to representations on the best way to deliver the practical change required including examining the potential scope for removal of regulatory restrictions.

It was confirmed that the scheme detailing the establishment of the Combined Authority would be considered by Full Council and had already been submitted on to the Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

Reason: In order to update Members on the progress of LEPs and proposals for a Combined Authority.

8. External Funding Scrutiny Review Interim Report

Members received the interim report of the External Funding Scrutiny Review Task Group.

It was reported that a typo had been made in the report, regarding a proposed changed objective of the Task Group. Objective i) meant to say “To assess how Leeds City Region are articulating investment priorities, including looking at the case of LEP European Regional Development Funding Programme and broader European Funding.” rather than access.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the changes to the review objectives as set out in paragraph 36 of the Officer’s report be agreed.

Reason:

To allow the External Funding Scrutiny Review Task Group to progress their work on this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

9. Workplan 2013/2014

Members considered the Committee’s updated work plan for the municipal year 2013-14.

Discussion took place regarding items for consideration at the meeting of the Committee on 23 July 2013.

The Chair suggested that two briefing notes on suggested scrutiny topics that had arisen from the Scrutiny Work Planning event be added on to the agenda for the 23 July. These were;

- Building/Improving Construction Skills (as a significant gap to promoting employment)
- Supporting Online Work (supporting York’s superfast network to create jobs at home)

Further amendments to the workplan included;

- A further update on E-Planning Facilities to be considered in July, following the receipt of additional information from Officers.
- Moving the item of the Impact of ‘The Spare Room Subsidy’ (often called the ‘Bedroom Tax’) from consideration in September to the July meeting.

- Moving the Green Travel Plans item to be considered in September.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted subject to the changes detailed above.

Reason: To progress the work of the Committee.

Councillor A Semlyen, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.10 pm].