

Report to
Council

Agenda
Item

12(iii)(b)

Meeting Date: 7th March 2017

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Chairman's Report – Councillor Paul Nedved**

The Panel met on the 19th January to consider Reports on the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, Tourist Information Centre update, Progress Update to Business Support Task and Finish Group, Call -in Portfolio Decision - Hadrian's Cavalry Programme with Roman Turma Event and the Overview Report and Work Programme.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership

Mr Graham Haywood, Director Cumbria LEP was welcomed to the meeting and provided a presentation followed by a Q and A from Members.

An overview of work undertaken by the LEP in Carlisle in 2016 was provided by Graham Haywood covering the following:-

- Carlisle Station Gateway
- Durrhill Infrastructure Project
- Enterprise Zone
- Garden Village
- Growth Deal Funding 2017
- Skills Funding
- M6 Strategic Connectivity.
- Emerging Government Policy

Alongside this a background report was provided by the Investment and Policy Manager concentrating on 4 key areas, Funding Impact of Brexit on European Funding, Tourism and Rural Issues, LEP Governance Review.

A wide ranging discussion ensued around the level of funding anticipated from Growth Deal 3. At this stage no announcement had been made however it became clear that the allocation would be lower than bid for and Members expressed disappointment that

Cumbria had received low allocations in rounds 1 and 2 and the impact that a Low Growth Deal 3 would have on the Strategic Plan.

Reasoning for the low allocation could be the per capita criteria or failure to agree a devolution deal.

Questioning on the quality of the bid and governance arrangements for the LEP were uppermost. Other key queries revolved round Citadel Development, support for SME's availability of funding from the EU, scrutiny arrangements of the LEP, new Garden Village and future economic expansion and how the LEP prioritised the monies received for projects.

Mr Haywood made stress of the point that the Growth Agenda and recruitment of staff were challenges as was the lack of a single body responsible for marketing and promoting the County.

The next Panel meeting in March would be looking at the Carlisle Economic Strategy which no doubt would cover some of these factors.

Tourist Information Centre Update

Members of the Panel have been actively involved in the TIC throughout the upgrade works both at Scrutiny and through a Task and Finish Group at the developmental stage. The Deputy Chief Executive, at the request of the Panel, provided a developing Business Plan and Marketing Strategy looking at the retail, commercial and web services at the TIC.

A detailed visitor survey was provided and subject to detailed scrutiny, especially reasons for a decline in visitor numbers.

Key discussions revolved round income targets from the Assembly rooms, low sale of goods income to 16th November and what steps were being taken to address this and any impact of the closure of the S&C Railway north of Appleby. Progress on signage throughout the City Centre was seen as crucial and had been identified in the Visitor Survey. Reassurance was provided that plans to install obelisks containing maps, signage and historical information were well underway.

TIC budgets and targets were examined.

A suggestion to reconvene the TIC T&F Group would be looked at in the next Civic Year as would a complete Business Plan and Marketing Strategy be forthcoming. Staff of the TIC were thanked for their contributions at the Centre.

Progress Update to Business Support Task and Finish Group

A Report and Recommendations were provided to the Panel by the T&F in October 2015.

The Investment and Policy Manager and Economy and Enterprise Officers provided an update.

Recommendation 1: Relating to audit of networks had clearly demonstrated good progress in engagement with local businesses and in particular the development of the Council's business website.

Establishing links with the Chamber of Commerce, LEP, UoC and Carlisle Ambassadors were progressing.

Recommendation 4: Which related to Communications and Marketing Strategy outlined the business website has attracted over 2,000 views and had been a useful tool for signposting people over 11 months.

Further improvements would be sought.

Recommendation 2: Rebranding the Enterprise Centre was subject to considerable discussion by the Panel. Tenants of the Enterprise Centre had been consulted on a broad range of issues including rebranding.

For the time being this suggestion was on hold as was thought to be a burdensome cost to the tenants.

Networking among tenants and the current occupation levels were also discussed.

Recommendation 3: Business Support and devolution were subject to any future devolution deal for Cumbria progressing.

Overall there was recognition that there had been some progress made in response to the Task Group's recommendations.

Call -In Hadrian's Cavalry Programme with Turma Event 1st – 2nd July

The context of the call-in revolved round a decision by the Leader to support the 2017 Hadrian's Cavalry Programme with funding for the Turma, marketing and exhibition at Tullie House provided from the Events Budget of £38k from 2016/17 and £7k from 2017/18 budget.

The programme of events for Carlisle comprise of live re-enactments of Roman Cavalry exercises over 2 days on Bitts Park and themed exhibition in Tullie House.

Reasons for the Call-In were outlined by the Chairman - Lack of Business Case, uncertainty of the financial liability and risk to the Council, whether the project provided value for money.

The Leader responded to a series of questions posed by the Chairman as to why £45k was the optimum level of contribution, what financial risk was the Council expected to carry, how was the event's success to be gauged and why funding was to be allocated to Tullie House, an Independent Trust.

The Leader detailed the purpose of the event, would be capped at £45k, and was part of a number of events and activities at different locations along Hadrian's Wall. Programme was largely funded by the Arts Council and was expected to attract a significant number of tourists contributing to economic growth and promoting the City.

A wide ranging discussion and probing of the programme ensued by Panel Members.

Members were supportive of the project however the Call-In had been useful bringing more information into the public domain, allowed scrutiny of the decision making process, discussed the underwriting of the project / financial risks and finally the proposed marketing and promotion of the programme. A decision not to be referred back was taken by the Panel on the basis that:-

A Briefing Note to all Members setting out details of the Hadrian's Cavalry Programme and Turma event was to be circulated (this item has now been included in a forthcoming Informal Briefing to Councillors); Projected visitor numbers to be provided; Panel should be involved in discussion of events in the future and this could be included in the next Civic Year Work Programme.

Full details of the discussions are to be found within the Minute Book.

Cllr Paul Nedved
Chairman