

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2014 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bowman (Chairman), Councillors P Atkinson (as substitute for Councillor Bowditch), Graham, McDevitt, Mitchelson, Nedved, Watson and Whalen.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bradley – Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
Councillor Ms Quilter – Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder
Councillor Glover – Leader (Observer)

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Economic Development
Director of Local Environment
Policy and Communications Manager
Project Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

EEOSP.21/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Bowditch.

EEOSP.22/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted in relation to the business to be transacted at the meeting.

EEOSP.23/14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014 be agreed as a correct record of the meetings and signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2014 be noted.

EEOSP.24/14 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

There were no matters which had been the subject of call in.

EEOSP.25/14 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.10/14 which provided an overview of matters related to the work of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Details of the latest version of the work programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Panel were also included.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that.

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 7 February 2014. There were no issues that fell within the remit of this Panel:

- Minute excerpt EX.23/14 Environmental Health – Business Support had been submitted from the Executive’s meeting held on 10 March 2014:
- The draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2013/14 was appended to the report and Panel members were invited to comment on the draft which was being considered by all three Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The report would then be formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group before submission to Council on 29 April 2014.

The Panel discussed the draft Scrutiny Report and agreed that the following training issues be included in the report:

- Information briefing session for Panels on large topics prior to their scrutiny
- Questioning skills
- Reading and understanding reports
- Speed reading
- What Scrutiny is and how to achieve the best outcomes

- The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that the meeting scheduled for 15 May 2014 had been moved to 2 May 2014 to accommodate the attendance of representatives of Local Enterprise Partnership. The Chairman urged Members to attend the meeting.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Notice of Key Decision items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That the decision of the Executive (EX.23/14) be received.

EEO SP.26/14 RECYCLING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted the final report of the Recycling Task and Finish Group which made a number of recommendations for consideration and action by the Executive.

Councillor Nedved, the Lead Member of the Task Group summarised the purpose of the Task Group and outlined the recommendations made. As part of the research a survey had been carried out of customers in the Council’s poorest performing area and the Group had visited a Recycling Collection Round at Scotby. The results had been considered by the Task Group and were included in the report and recommendations.

Councillor Nedved thanked all Members who had contributed to such a worthwhile piece of work and gave special thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer for her input, support and research. He added that he hoped that the Report would stimulate discussion and education.

The Director of Local Environment commented that the report was a very good example of how scrutiny added value to the review of services. The recommendations had been sensible, well thought out and based on evidence. The Re-thinking Waste project was just beginning and all the findings from the Task and Finish Group would be fed into the project.

In considering the Task and Finish Group report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The Task Group had been interesting and worthwhile but there was some work needed to improve the Council's website for recycling issues.
- A Member asked if consideration could be given to giving the green box 'hats' out free of charge to help reduce litter in local communities.
- The report did not have any costs for the recommendations or any comparative costing.

The Director of Local Environment responded that there would only be a cost associated to any recommendations that changed the collection frequency design; many were about good practice. The recommendations would be taken into account for the Re-Thinking Waste Project and any associated costs would be considered at that time.

- A Member felt that the report was thorough and detailed and asked that operatives take more care in return recycling receptacles to the correct houses when they had been emptied to reduce littering.
- The Task Group had found the visit to Scotby very informative and were impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of the operatives who carried out a very difficult, dirty job at unsociable hours and in all weather conditions.

RESOLVED: That the Recycling Task and Finish Group Report and recommendations (OS.11/14) be agreed and referred to the Executive for a formal response.

EEOSP.27/14 TOURISM REPORT

The Director of Economic Development presented Report ED.17/14 which provided Members of the Panel with further detailed information on Tourism as requested at the previous meeting.

The report gave detailed information on Phase 2 of the Old Town Hall Scheme, Cumbria Tourism Partnership, Carlisle Ambassadors and the Events programme including the draft Business Plan for the Old Town Hall, advertisements for the place to be campaign, Carlisle Place Plan and the Carlisle Tourism Retail Policy.

In considering the update Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Could the coat of arms be flown at the Old Town Hall as well as at the Civic Centre to promote Carlisle?

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder agreed to consider this as part of the Old Town Hall rebrand.

- Was there a structure available to show all the partners involved in Tourism within the City including the City Council?

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Panel that Tourism was very diverse and involved a large number of partners.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder added that the Tourism Strategy would contain a diagram of which partners were involved alongside the contribution the City Council made.

A Member added that it was important for Members to know who delivered tourism.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder reminded the Panel that the tourism function was shared out to a number of officers across the authority. There was no longer a separate tourism department due to the reduction in funding by the Government; the City Council now had to concentrate on its statutory responsibilities and priority areas as well as the economic sustainability of the City. The Council also wanted to provide activities to enhance opportunities for local people, in particular young people to encourage them to stay in Carlisle. She added that the relevant portfolio holders and the Director of Economic Development had overall responsibility for tourism within the City Council.

- The report stated that tourism was in decline and the Panel asked how this was being addressed, what other organisations were doing and how the Council fit in. There was also questions regarding the money that had been contributed to the Hadrian' Wall Partnership and how it would be used in the future and what monitoring the Council had in place to ensure it was achieving value for money from the partnerships.

The Director of Economic Development reported that there was work being undertaken to look at what the end of the Hadrian's Wall Partnership meant for the north west of Hadrian' Wall. This work would take approximately six months and she agreed to report back to the Panel at future date.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the City Council had three functions regarding tourism in the City; promotion, Tourist Information Centre and events. It then relied on other organisations to do there part.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder stated that the Tourism Strategy would look at the money given to partnerships and would review those partnerships. She felt that the Strategy would answer all the Panel's questions as it was being looked at in great detail.

- Work needed to be carried out to improve Carlisle's evening and night economy particularly for the City Centre to encourage tourists to stay overnight.

The Director of Economic Development confirmed that this was a key objective to improve the economy. The key to this would be increasing the footfall and encouraging businesses to stay open. She added that the City Centre Masterplan would also help in this area.

A Member reminded the Panel that a previous Task and Finish Group had carried out a detailed piece of work on the evening and time economy and suggested that this may be of some use now.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder added that encouraging people to live in the City Centre, above shops and offices would also support the evening and night time economy and would also encourage retail owners to bring premises back into domestic use.

- A key area of concern was the lack of signposting within the City Centre especially from the railway station and the lack of historical interpretation of buildings.

The Director of Economic Development confirmed that signage within the City Centre was being considered as part of the Access Strategy and the Sense of Place to ensure the right signs were in the right place along with information boards.

- There was concern that there was not enough promotional material in the railway station for Carlisle especially for day visitors.

The Director of Economic Development responded that the Council was working closely with Virgin Rail to improve the entrance to the City from the railway station and this was included in the Access Strategy.

The Leader felt that there should be a digital way of informing people what is on offer in Carlisle when arriving at the railway station and stated that the District Wi-Fi Project would help address this.

- Following the refurbishment of the Old Town Hall there had been low revenue from the events in the Assembly Rooms, had its usage declined?

The Director of Economic Development confirmed that bookings had reduced due to the closure of the Old Town Hall but it was expected to increase following the work and the improvements to the disabled access. The space available was much more flexible and could be used for a variety of events including evening events such as exhibitions.

- Members had previously asked for a breakdown of City Council events including the cost to the authority and any sponsorship received. Members also asked for more information regarding Liquid Design.

The Policy and Communications Manager responded that the authority was developing a partnership with Liquid Design to improve its commercial marketing; the events programme was part of this new approach. It was very early days and the Council was in the process of testing the ideas.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that, following discussions with the Leader, changes had been made to rationalise the way organisations applied to the Council to fund events. There was now an application process which looked at match funding, sponsorship and value for money.

- There needed to be more promotion for Carlisle outside of the City.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder agreed and responded that this role would be undertaken by the Cumbria Tourist Board.

RESOLVED: 1) That the update on Tourism report (ED.17/14) be welcomed;

2) That an update on the future of the North West part of Hadrian's Wall be provided to a future meeting;

3) That the use of the Assembly Rooms be monitored and an update be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel;

4) That the draft Tourism Strategy, including a structure of partnerships involved in tourism within the City and monitoring of partnership work be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder left the meeting at 11:30am.

EEOSP.28/14 CARLISLE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

The Director of Economic Development presented Report ED.18/14 briefing Members of the Panel on the Carlisle Economic Partnership (CEP), its priorities and action plan.

The Director of Economic Development explained the background to the Partnership and outlined its priorities which included business, skills and employment, infrastructure and image. The Director advised that over the past year the Partnership had achieved a number of its objectives and was currently in the process of reviewing its actions and had identified seventeen actions, outlined within the report, which it wished to explore over the next twelve months.

The Partnership had set itself a challenging agenda but by working with partners a number of initiatives and projects to support Carlisle's economy had been delivered. The CEP were currently looking to build on those initiatives and would be developing a new action plan based on the recommendations outlined within the report.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- There were concerns that there were too many recommendations and how they would be prioritised. The Panel asked for an update on the recommendations.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder agreed to circulate the new Action Plan to Members when it was finalised.

- Would the work of the Digital Carlisle Group help visitors to the area to find directions? How restrictive would the Wi-Fi access be?

The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Panel on the Executive decision to work with British Telecommunications PLC to provide City Centre Wi-Fi from the railway station to the Castle. There would be 20-25 overlapping hot spots and users would access a landing page which, hopefully, would be personalised through an App. The hot spots would be rolled out over the coming months and then launched in November alongside the App. The radius of the hot spots was dependent on the height of the Wi-Fi equipment. He agreed to circulate a plan showing the hot spots in the City and added that there was a degree of flexibility to where the hot spots were located. He confirmed that there would be 2 hotspots in Longtown and 3 in Brampton.

- Recommendation 3 addressed the issue of the outmigration of young people from Carlisle, how would this be addressed?

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that Carlisle College was currently undertaking market research on post 16 education and higher education and what young people from Carlisle might want to see in Carlisle to encourage them to stay.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder added that the main concern was the loss of young graduates due to the lack of appropriate jobs in the area. Carlisle needed to attract the right businesses and organisations into the area to provide employment opportunities and boost the local economy.

RESOLVED: 1) That Report ED.18/14 – Carlisle Economic Partnership be noted.

2) That the Carlisle Economic Partnership Action Plan and priorities be circulated to Members of the Panel.

3) That the Deputy Chief Executive circulate a copy of the City Centre hot spot sites to Members of the Panel.

(The meeting ended at 11.50am)