

**ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 29 JULY 2021 AT 4.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Brown (Chair), Councillors Ms Ellis-Williams, Mrs Glendinning, Meller, Mrs Mitchell (as substitute for Councillor Mitchelson) and Mrs McKerrell.

**ALSO**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Mallinson, Leader  
Councillor Ellis, Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder  
Councillor Nedved, Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

**OFFICERS:** Deputy Chief Executive  
Corporate Director of Economic Development  
Policy and Communications Manager  
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

**EGSP.40/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mitchelson and Paton.

**EGSP.41/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

**EGSP.42/21 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

**EGSP.43/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – It was noted that Council, on 20 July 2021, received and adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 12 April and 17 June 2021. The Chair signed the minutes.

**EGSP.44/21 CALL IN OF DECISIONS**

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

**EGSP.45/21 CARLISLE PLAN 2021-2023**

The Policy and Communications Manager submitted an update on the new Carlisle Plan 2021-2023 (PC.24/21). Following the previous scrutiny of the Plan it had been possible to arrange public consultation between 2 and 6 August, consultation was online and physically in the Tourist Information Centre.

The Policy and Communications Manager had circulated the design draft of the Plan and reported that an illustrated map had been designed to showcase the developments in both the urban and rural areas.

The Panel discussed the wording in The Vision. Some Members felt strongly that the line 'prosperity being the most important determinant of health and wellbeing' should be reconsidered by the Executive. They agreed that prosperity was important but felt that it was not the most important and asked that their views be taken into consideration. They asked, unless the statement was evidence based, that the word most be removed or reworded.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the Executive believed that an impoverished city could not improve the health and wellbeing of its residents, there could not be a distribution of wealth if there was no wealth. The Executive had listened to the concerns of the Scrutiny Panels but believed that prosperity was still the most important determinate.

Some Members of the Panel did not agree that the wording should be amended, and it was moved and seconded that the Panel support and endorse the Carlisle Plan as written.

It was then moved and seconded that the Executive reconsider the wording of The Vision and either remove the word most or reword it.

Following voting it was

RESOLVED – That the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel support and endorse the Carlisle Plan as written (PC.26/21)

### **EGSP.46/21    EVENTS – PLANNED EVENTS AND HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT CITY VITALITY**

The Corporate Director of Economic Development presented report ED.24/21 outlining key work streams that would contribute towards Carlisle's recovery from the challenges presented by Covid-19 lockdown and the work being undertaken for economic recovery and renewal.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development gave an overview on the city centre along with details of the City Centre Economic Recovery Action Plan. The Corporate Director of Economic Development summed up by setting out why events would be important in city centre vitality and detailing the events planned for the forthcoming year.

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

- How was the footfall in the City Centre monitored? Could a report on the 2021 summer footfall be brought back to the Panel in the autumn?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development explained that there was equipment placed in key areas of the city centre which monitored and reported on the footfall. She agreed to bring a comparison report back to the Panel.

- The report referred to the Grimsey Review, did the Review influence the direction of the city centre development?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development explained that it had been clear that there needed to be change in direction for the city centre and it was the reason that the application for the Future High Street Fund had been submitted. In addition in the Economic Strategy and action plan also supported the shift in how the city centre would be used in the future and how people would be attracted to it.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the Council commissioned an economic impact study on key events such as the City of Lights so that they could be improved, changed or repeated if successful.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio acknowledged the changes happening to city centres and reiterated the need for Carlisle to evolve to keep a vibrant city centre.

- It was suggested that future reports included a list of the planned events for the city centre, in particular those that were family orientated and would take place after 6pm. It was important that families felt safe coming into the city in the evening.
- Carlisle had been ranked 27<sup>th</sup> out of 110 towns and cities to be the most vulnerable post pandemic, who were the other 26 towns and how did Carlisle compare to them?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development to provide the Panel with a written response.

- A Member commented that it had been disappointing news that the Fire Show would not take place in 2021; she asked if this decision had been premature, and she expressed concerns about future shows going ahead.

The Deputy Chief Executive set out the lead in time for the procurement of resources and event planners for the fire show and explained the financial risk to the Council should the event be cancelled. Officers had advised the Executive on the matter and recommended not holding the show in 2021. He clarified that there had been no discussion regarding the future of the fire show however it was a good opportunity to review the event, how it operated and how it could be improved in future years.

The Leader confirmed that the Executive had not discussed cancelling the fire show on a permanent basis. Following advice a decision had been taken to suspend the show for 2021, this had been the most sensible and logical decision in the circumstances to mitigate the risks.

- Referring to the successful Carlisle Hawker Festival a Member asked:  
How the Welcome Back Fund had been used to support the festival and what was the financial involvement of Market Place Europe?  
Was there a possibility that the City Council could run a similar local event to showcase local businesses?

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to provide a written response regarding the funding for the festival.. He stated that Market Place Europe hired the space from the Council with the usual agreement. The event had been successful but parts of it did need to be reviewed or reprofiled. He added that it could be possible for the Council to deliver a similar event, however, the infrastructure, expertise and knowledge for the event would be challenging. There also needed to be a balance of what events were held in the city centre and how they impacted local businesses that occupied retail units which could see the event as competition.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio raised the issue of street traders and asked if the situation had been resolved.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that it was a difficult matter to address, there had to be a balance between the services or products the pitches offered and the businesses which paid business rates in surrounding buildings.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development added that the Town Centre Taskforce would bring key stakeholders together to explore issues such as this and what would help the vibrancy and vitality of the city centre.

- Did officers look at other towns and cities that held similar markets to gauge their offer and footfall and what may work in Carlisle?

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that market research was undertaken on how local businesses were showcased. Some of the most successful towns and cities had Business Improvement Districts to support the events.

- Had the marketing budget been increased to promote the city nationally?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development reported that marketing was extremely expensive, and the budget was relatively low. The Council had been successful in promoting Carlisle; however, more could be done.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel had considered the contents of the Events – planned events and how they can support city centre vitality report (ED.24/21)

2) That an update report on the events and the footfall in the city centre be submitted to the Panel in December 2021;

3) That the Corporate Director of Economic Development provide the Panel with a written response setting out details of the 26 towns that had been ranked most vulnerable post covid and how they compared to Carlisle.

4) That the Deputy Chief Executive provide the Panel with a written response regarding the funding for Carlisle Hawker Festival.

#### **EGSP.47/21      CARLISLE ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

The Corporate Director of Economic Development provided an overview of the updated draft Economic Strategy for the Carlisle district (ED.26/21). The Strategy set out the Council's priorities, objectives and actions to drive economic growth and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic for the next five years. The Strategy had been developed in consultation with the Executive, the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel and the Senior Management Team.

In considering the Economic Strategy the Panel raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member asked that the number of houses and affordable housing that was being developed be reported to the Panel on a regular basis.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development reminded the Panel that the Housing Strategy report was presented to the Panel on a regular basis and included the details of housing developments and affordable housing.

- Who had been consulted on the Strategy?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that key stakeholders had been consulted on the draft Strategy, details of which could be found in the Economic Action Plan – responding to Covid-19 in Carlisle City Centre which had been circulated to the Panel.

- The city centre had an excellent bar and restaurant scene, how did this fit in with the statement in the report that only 8% of business in the city centre retail core contributed to the evening economy?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development agreed to investigate the statistic further and provide a written response.

- How would the Panel monitor the outcomes of the action plan?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development felt that the action plan would lead the work programming for the Panel in places. Reports would be submitted to scrutiny for individual projects and an annual overview report would be submitted to the Panel to monitoring of the action plan as a whole.

**RESOLVED – That the Panel**

- 1) noted the contents of the Carlisle Economic Strategy in terms of challenges, opportunities, strategic priorities and objectives articulated(ED.26/21);
- 2) noted the framework and context for the production of the updated Economic Strategy, particularly the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit;
- 3) noted that reports on individual projects and an annual action plan monitoring report would be submitted for scrutiny;
- 4) asked the Corporate Director of Economic Development to provide further information to the Panel on the statistic that only 8% of business in the city centre retail core contributed to the evening economy as detailed in the report.

#### **EGSP.48/21      CARLISLE CITY CENTRE TASKFORCE AND GRANTS PROGRAMME**

The Corporate Director of Economic Development gave an overview of the proposals for a new city centre taskforce, made up of key stakeholders in the city centre, and the new City Centre Business Growth Grants, aimed at building new networks in the city, and providing new businesses with meaningful support, to encourage greater vitality and viability in the city centre, and ensure resilience following the Covid-19 pandemic. (ED.27/21)

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

- What work was being undertaken to ensure a diverse Membership, not just using existing contacts/ familiar faces, and was there a possibility of including the public?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development responded that it was difficult to get a good mix of stakeholders and individuals to attend groups such as this, however, the Council would target and encourage people who did not usually get involved to join the Taskforce. Scrutiny would be involved in the work to add more variety to the input and public would be encouraged to feedback if and where possible.

A Member asked that the Taskforce try and include someone who had a particular interest or led on climate change.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that climate change ran through all of the work and she was happy to take nominations for Taskforce membership.

- Were Taskforces successful in other areas and would we pick up on their lessons learned?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development explained that other Taskforce's had been very successful, however, many were supported by BIDs. She added that learning came from other areas and the Grimsey Review to engage retailers and leisure operators to bring something different to the city centre.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder commented that Carlisle was behind in the establishment of a Taskforce and he hoped once established it would be the pre cursor for the aspiration for a Carlisle BID.

- Referring to the Carlisle City Centre Business Support Grants, a Member asked:  
How the grants would be advertised?  
Could businesses who had been supported by the grants display a logo or some publicity?  
Would there be any merit in additional criteria which assisted 'green' businesses to qualify for the strong case £5,000?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development responded that there had been publicity and there was an application process in place for the grants. She supported the suggestion of a logo or publicity and the initiative would have to be considered further depending on how successful it was.

RESOLVED – The Panel:

- 1) noted the progress and updates relating to the City Centre Taskforce, and Business Grants which aimed to strengthen city centre resilience (ED.27/21);
- 2) provided feedback on the proposals for the establishment of a City Centre Taskforce;
- 3) asked that consideration be given to opportunities to involve members of the public in the work of the Taskforce.

## **EGSP.49/21      OVERVIEW REPORT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.20/21 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating Key Decision items relevant to the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.20/21).

[The meeting ended at 5.24pm]