
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON 23 JUNE 2011**

**EEOSP.40/11 DEVELOPMENT OF CARLISLE'S VISITOR ECONOMY – PROJECT
INITIATION AND UPDATE**

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) presented report SD.04/11 that provided the Panel with an update on the proposals to bring together the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership to form a new “not for profit” company limited by guarantee. The proposals had been agreed by the Executive, the Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership and had been set out in a Project Initiation Document.

A key part of the project was to develop a Business Improvement District (BID) designed to cover a specific city centre area, where additional business rates would be levied to provide investment funding for new activities that would increase visitor numbers and trade. The proposals had also sought to deal with the withdrawal of County and regional public funding from the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the proposals sought to draw together both of the existing partnerships – the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership – and devise one managing arrangement that would be more cohesive and efficient.

Mr Crossley outlined the progress made since the Executive agreed the new way forward. He advised that progress had been slower than originally forecast due to the additional work generated by the Radio 1 Big weekend and restructure arrangements within the Economic Development Team.

Mr Crossley concluded by explaining that the next key actions for the project would be the successful set up of the Project Board and the recruitment to the post of Tourism and City Centre Director.

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

- *One area for concern was the slippage in timescales.*

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) stated that some of the slippage was due to a reduction in resources within the Directorate. He believed that the project was approximately 6-7 weeks behind schedule and that in partnership terms it was important to appoint a Tourism and City Centre Director and hold the first meeting of the shadow board as soon as possible.

Mr Crossley explained that external support had been identified but that job descriptions were still to be produced. There were a number of people who may be interested in

forming a shadow board. He believed it was important to have a meeting as soon as possible and to progress on issues such as an events programme.

- *Was that the right way round to do things? Should the board not be set up first?*

Mr Crossley stated that interested parties had been identified from the constituent groups and they had been asked what kind of community investment company should be set up and what they would want.

- *Who would the company be accountable to?*

Mr Crossley advised that the company would be accountable to the City and County Council and therefore scrutiny would be involved. The City Council would invest resources and services such as city centre cleanliness. When the company was being set up some of those responsibilities could be relinquished to the company. There had been difficulties trying to get larger businesses to engage in the process and Officers had worked hard to explain the purpose of the project.

- *What would be the membership of the Board? Would City Councillors be included and would there be politically proportional representation?*

Mr Crossley advised that that discussion had not taken place but that consideration would be given to ensuring the right balance.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that there had been a lot of meetings but that the project needed to move forward. She advised that more information would be provided as the project progressed.

- *How accurate were the timescales?*

Mr Crossley stated that the consultation had used advice from similar projects outside Carlisle but that Officers had been specific in what was intended from the project for Carlisle. He confirmed that he would report back to the Panel at the meeting on 8 September 2011 and again on 1 December 2011.

- *There were representatives from a variety of retailers, large and small, and it was important that they were all included.*

Mr Crossley confirmed that there was a dual balance between retailers within the City Centre and the district in respect of tourism. There was also the issue of night time and the cultural economy.

- *The last project that the consultant was involved with may have been with a much larger city than Carlisle that would allow the City Centre to be split into separate BID areas. Carlisle had a very compact City Centre and Members felt that it was more appropriate, for example, that Botchergate be included in that BID rather than be the focus for a separate one at a later stage.*

Mr Crossley advised that the consultant's report contained a number of models some of which were larger than others.

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Ms Meek) advised that there were different ways of classing a city centre and the definition was contained within the Local Development Framework in respect of planning considerations.

- *The project was not a complicated one. Why was an external consultant used?*

Mr Crossley explained that the consultant was employed to advise what steps to go through to form a company and to apply those conditions to the City Council. The consultant had also undertaken some market testing. The consultant had brought experience from other areas and advice on how other areas had developed similar companies. His advice was technical rather than conceptual.

- *The report mentioned a City Marketing Group. Would it be possible to see the outcome of the consultation of that group?*

Mr Crossley advised that the first meeting of the board would look at all possibilities. He and Ms Meek had spoken to retailers and had come to the conclusion that Carlisle did not sell itself. He hoped that the project would enable people to work together to market Carlisle more successfully and "sell" the City with realism and integrity. He added that the Discover Carlisle website was a great service for marketing Carlisle.

Mr Crossley further advised that the next step would be to look at costings. He added that the group consisted of the City Council, CN Group, Investors in Cumbria and representatives from the private sector.

Mr Crossley believed that the completion of the CNDR would be a good starting point for the project.

Ms Meek advised that the project was about a public/private sector partnership and the first meeting would highlight that the City Council was not wholly responsible for promoting Carlisle.

Members agreed that the project was an important and necessary development for the success of Carlisle and that they were aware that money was in short supply and Officers needed to be forward looking. Members were also aware that it was important that both large and small investors were involved in the project.

RESOLVED – 1) In order that the Panel could monitor progress and timescales update reports would be presented at the Panel meetings on 8 September 2011 and 1 December 2011.

2) That consideration be given by the Executive to cross party representation when the board was set up.