

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the HOPE STREET XCHANGE on TUESDAY 6TH MARCH, 2018 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor David Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Curran, M. Dixon, G. Galbraith, I Galbraith, E. Gibson, Marshall, Porthouse and Turner.

Also in attendance:-

Councillor Dianne Snowdon, Sunderland City Council
Rebecca Hall, Director Sunderland 2021
Nick Wood, Head of Property, Sunderland City Council
Louise Whitaker, Valuation Surveyor, Sunderland City Council
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr Paul Wood, Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Taylor.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February, 2018

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February, 2018 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February, 2018 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Library Services Review – Progress Report on Property Outcomes.

The Chairman made an open declaration in relation to paragraphs 3.4 and 3.6 of the report as he was Secretary for the Millennium Centre and employed by SHARP.

Developing Sunderland's Cultural Action Plan 2018-2024

The Director of Sunderland 2021 submitted a report (copy circulated) which was to set out the vision and implementation plan for Sunderland's UK City of Culture bid legacy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman welcomed Rebecca Hall, Director Sunderland 2021 to the meeting who presented the report and was on hand to answer Members queries.

Councillor Curran commented that whilst Sunderland may have been unsuccessful in its bid for City of Culture, the programme of events planned was wonderful and the inclusion in the WW1 Armistice Day Centenary event was a real coup.

In relation to the Canny Space Project under Paragraph 7.2, Councillor Curran enquired as to what would be entailed within the £3.6 million budget. Ms Hall advised that this was Capital budget to restore the building.

In response to Councillor Porthouse's comment over Sunderland Representation on the Great Exhibition of the North, Ms Hall advised that the Inventors exhibition was originally commissioned in Sunderland along with the involvement of artists from Sunderland so we were represented. There was also huge links to the Tall Ships.

Councillor M. Dixon enquired if the profile of the City and the external perceptions of the City had improved through the Bid for City of Culture.

Ms Hall commented that at the start of the process they did not have the benchmarks or figures in relation to perception and this had been purely anecdotal, however they were getting a great deal of interest now and Ms Hall believed this was an indicator in a change of the national perceptions.

Councillor Gillian Galbraith queried how they planned to raise the £20 million budget hoped for over the 7 year period. Ms Hall advised that they already had submitted a National Centre for Imagination bid for £5 million and also applied to Arts Council looking for a £3-4 million of funding so there were substantial sums already in the works.

Councillor Curran referred to the recent BBC Sea Cities Programme and that Sunderland was viewed very positively with the people speaking passionately about the area and he wished there was more programmes like this to put us on the map.

Councillor Porthouse commented on the need for T.V broadcasters to include Sunderland on the weather maps etc. in order to give the city more coverage and advised that he had expressed this concern to the networks.

In response to Councillor Blackburn's query over the lack of representation for the Coalfield area, Ms Hall advised that through the Great Place Spark Programme they would be focussing on different areas and they were talking with Groundworks about art and health in Coalfields so it was absolutely their intention to make sure this wasn't just a City Centre Programme. The producers had just been recruited for the programme to shape the project and Ms Hall advised that she could inform of the figures in relation to how much a specific area would be allocated in budgets.

The Chairman requested that Ms Hall include the brief of what the Producers work entailed along with the figures on the programme budgets.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that he believed the fact we were a coastal city needed promoting.

Councillor Porthouse advised that Herrington Heritage had produced a fantastic book which had raised the profile of the area. Councillor Porthouse also referred to enquiries received with regards to viewing areas for the Royal Party on the Northern Spire Bridge and that he believed it was a fantastic opportunity to have a viewing stage, an opportunity which was missed to promote the City.

The Chairman commented on the need to have a greater input as a Committee on such issues.

Councillor Porthouse suggested that The Chairman of North East Chamber of Commerce be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to discuss his plans for the City. Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer was to look into this.

In response to Councillor Marshall's query over the budget for marketing, Ms Hall advised that the communications budget was a real challenge but there was some money included through the Great Place Spark Programme and she agreed that we needed to keep promoting the city more proactively.

Councillor Marshall commented on the need for much more promotion in prominent areas such as Keel Square for instance, to highlight what was happening within the City.

Councillor G. Galbraith commented that as a City we have always been poor at signage and enquired if there was any ongoing work to look at signposting events and places.

Ms Hall advised that signage was not within her remit but agreed that closer working was needed to better highlight attractions with better signage/blue plaques.

The Chairman enquired as to the Council funding that had been allocated for the Bid and what funding had been expected if we had been successful. Ms Hall advised that they had initially been awarded £250,000 over 2 years to deliver the bid and set up the Culture Action Plan. If we had been successful we would have received £3 million from Heritage Lottery and it was estimated an income of £100 million from all the money to be raised over the term.

The Chairman advised that £40 million had already been obtained from the £60 million target.

In response to Councillor Dixon's enquiry, Ms Hall commented that despite not being successful in the bid, there was still fantastic enthusiasm amongst the team in meetings and the people were so passionate, buoyant and determined to keep going.

The Chairman having thanked Ms Hall for her attendance, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and comments made be received and noted.

Library Services Review – Progress Report on Property Outcomes

The Executive Directors of Economy and Place and People Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated), providing an update on the implementation of the Library Services review by the Executive Director of People Services.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Louise Whitaker, Valuation Surveyor briefed the Committee with a summary of the revised delivery model provided for:-

- Libraries to be retained in Sunderland City Centre, Washington and Houghton Le Spring
- An expanded digital offer
- Books at Home Service
- Community delivery through community organisations
- Integrated working with the library services at Sunderland University and Sunderland College

In response to Councillor Turner, Ms Whitaker advised that the Lease agreement for Hetton Library was with the City Solicitors and they were waiting for the documents to be signed so this should be imminent. Ms Whitaker advised that she would let the Councillors know once the lease was signed.

In relation to Councillor Blackburn's enquiry as to Easington Lane Library, Ms Whitaker advised that it was still on the market due to the breakdown of the previous sale.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that due to the Doxford Park Library being one of those first to close it had been especially difficult for the families in the area as Fawcett Street Library became their closest and was expensive to travel to. Councillor Gibson acknowledged the need to carry out this work but felt it was so disappointing for those affected.

Councillor Curran referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report on Fulwell Library and wished to state that the Ward Councillors had done a tremendous job with the volunteers involved and it had been a massive success that was only getting better and should be looked at for best practice moving forward as an example of the way libraries should evolve in the future.

Councillor Curran commented that Fulwell library had become a Community Hub and a success story that should be shared more often and congratulations to everyone involved.

Councillor Dixon wished to reiterate those comments in relation to Hendon Library and the work done there had been a real plus with lots more people using it as a result.

Councillor Porthouse enquired as to the practices used in these instances as efforts had been made in East Herrington but had ultimately failed to make it a success.

Councillor Dixon commented that he believed it was due to the local people and volunteers involved.

Councillor Curran agreed that the Community involvement had been key.

Councillor I Galbraith commented that he had taken great heart from the efforts made at Hendon and Kayll Road libraries and also that Fulwell and Hendon libraries were situated ideally within busy shopping streets which others weren't so fortunate with.

In response to Councillor G. Galbraith's query, Ms Whitaker advised that she could ask Library Services to provide feedback received on the Sunderland Library/Winter Gardens offer.

Councillor Dixon also commented that he would like to see this feedback and it was agreed for the information to come to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

With regards to regular inspections of libraries, Ms Whitaker advised that these were done every five years but if concerns were raised within that period then they could look at the lease agreements at that point.

The Chairman commented that the Shiney Row Library had been transformed and the building he worked in had seen an increase in volunteers and book donations. There was also other provision and development groups so there were a lot of positives that had come out of this but we did need to keep monitoring what was happening and have a business plan going forward.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Visit to Northern Spire Bridge

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to provide feedback on the visit to the Northern Spire Bridge.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Marshall commented that it was amazing to be able to witness the work ongoing and that the new road was soon to be advertised which was positive.

Councillor E. Gibson agreed that it was brilliant to have the opportunity to visit such a project.

Councillor Porthouse suggested that this Committee should be looking at what the economic impact would be of the bridge and what we could expect from it.

Councillor Blackburn commented that the economic value of the bridge will have been calculated in order to obtain the original funding so all that information should be available to source.

Councillor Porthouse commented that the circumstances had changed since the initial bid for the funding, The Port had seen a turnaround and housing schemes had been identified therefore we needed to keep on top of the situation.

Councillor Marshall commented that hopefully the housing identified would service the additional people coming into the City to work at the IAMP and the bridge will open up access to the Port bringing more business opportunities and kick-starting an economic impact.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the initial bid for the Bridge will not have taken the IAMP into account so this would be an additional benefit.

Councillor Curran agreed with Councillor Porthouse in relation to the economic impact of the bridge, which would be similar to the Stadium Village proposals. At the moment the bridge may stand alone but within the next ten years the area would be wonderful.

Councillor G. Galbraith commented that the impact of the bridge seemed to be brilliant and in general everyone was enthusiastic over it so hopefully would generate an economic value.

The Chairman advised of the increased interest from the Schools in the Bridge which was having a real community impact and he believed it to be an impressive structure that everyone involved should be congratulated for bringing it in on time and on budget.

Councillor I. Galbraith commented that it would be nice to see a time lapse video of the development of the bridge. Councillor Dianne Snowdon advised that there was media available on the website which she would share with those who wished for it.

Councillor Porthouse suggested that it would be good to get the Engineers involved with the bridge, into the Civic Centre to give a presentation to Members.

Councillor I. Galbraith suggested that this would also be beneficial for students to receive such a presentation.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon informed the Committee that Sunderland University provided lectures so they may be worth liaising with.

Feedback having been given, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the comments be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2017/18

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2017-18 municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Porthouse referred to the upcoming item on Refuse Collection and suggested that due to the recent bad weather, this Committee should be looking at the significant economic impact resulting from the conditions we faced. Mr Diamond advised that he would liaise with the Chief Operating Officer for Place on this.

The Chairman commented that the staff had carried out a wonderful job under the circumstances and suggested that the Committee look at the priority routes for gritting and such like when considering the Refuse Collection report.

5. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

A report providing an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 20th February, 2018 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) D. SNOWDON,
Chairman.