

At a meeting of the PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Mordey in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Cuthbert, D. Forbes, P. Gibson, Howe, Old, J.B. Scott, Snowdon, A. Wright and T. Wright.

Also Present:-

Councillor D. Wilson – Safer City and Culture Portfolio Holder.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence with all Members being present.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 22nd September, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 22nd September, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Response from Cabinet – 24th June, 2010 – Policy Review – Tourism and Marketing in Sunderland

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Safer City and Culture submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with feedback from the Cabinet meeting held on 24th June, 2010 where consideration was given to the Committee's policy review into tourism and marketing.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that Cabinet had approved the recommendations from the review in their entirety and the Committee's attention was drawn to Appendix A which provided the action plan relating to each recommendation.

Councillor D. Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Safer City and Culture, presented feedback in relation to each recommendation in the Action Plan and was joined by Allison Clarke, Library Manager, to address any comments or questions from Members.

The Chairman referred to the presentation he had given earlier in the week to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee in which he had made reference to the Hotel Study being undertaken by Tourism Tyne and Wear ATP. He asked Councillor Wilson to request Cabinet to take interest in the outcome of the study as even if Sunderland had assets such as the Empire Theatre, the City would be unable to maximise the benefits if people were forced to stay in places such as Durham and Newcastle. Councillor Wilson stated that he fully agreed, however for developers to build a hotel they would need the confidence that Sunderland was interesting enough to attract visitors to enable them to make a return on their investment.

Councillor T. Wright stated that he had been given the same answer over numerous years with regard to the dearth of hotel provision. He informed Members that the City was currently hosting a visit from African and Belgian students. They were however staying at the Radisson in Durham and shopping at the MetroCentre. He added that the provision of decent hotels in the City would enable it to compete in the market for major conferences. If delegates visited the City on business and were impressed with what they saw they might be encouraged to return as a tourist.

Councillor A. Wright believed that greater use should be made of Herrington Country Park as a venue. He cited the tremendous success of the Radio 1 Big Weekend, however this had not been built upon. He also believed that an opportunity had been missed on election night to raise Sunderland's profile as a visitor destination while the City was in the glare of the media spotlight.

Members also noted that the lack of a coach park in the City meant it was handicapped in developing itself as a place to visit.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor A. Wright, Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, advised that the figures referred to at the Committee's previous meeting regarding the percentage increase in visitors to Sunderland as compared to Newcastle/Gateshead had been forwarded to potential hotel developers. The developers were using these figures in negotiations with the banks to provide evidence that Sunderland was worth investing in.

Councillor Gibson referred to the vast amount of paintings held in storage at the museum and believed that these should be loaned out to public buildings and schools. Councillor Howe mourned the loss of the model ships which had been displayed in the museum as part of Sunderland's shipbuilding heritage. Councillor Gibson believed that the models were currently housed at Gillbridge Police Station.

Councillor Forbes referred to the success of the former 'Nice One Sunderland' campaign and regretted that its success had not been developed.

Councillor Howe stated that there had been little change over the last 15 years. The Council had had a vision of what it wanted to achieve but had been unable to do so. He stated that the motivation was there and that everyone in the room shared the same desire to improve the City. He stated that it might take a long time but there needed to be a starting point. Change needed to be made and it needed to start now.

Councillor Wilson having advised that he had taken Members' views on board, the Chairman thanked him for his attendance and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Low Carbon Economy – Policy Review 2010/2011: Task and Finish Group Update

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed Members on the background to the establishment of the Task and Finish Group for the Committee's Policy Review of the Low Carbon Economy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that the first meeting had been held on 20th October, 2010 following the publication of the agenda and therefore Councillor Snowdon was present to brief the Committee on key aspects of the meeting. Councillor Snowdon advised that the Group had received evidence from Catherine Pope, Home Energy Co-ordinator in respect of retro fit and low carbon homes. There was a lot of work that needed to be done and the Group would need to give careful thought as to the approach it took. Councillor Snowdon added that Claire Harrison, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, would be devising a Work Programme for the Group which initially would include a visit to North Tyneside to view examples of retro fit projects. It was also intended that the Group would look at initiatives at Sunderland University and the work being done through schools in the City.

Councillor Cuthbert welcomed the report but requested that to maximise Member attendance, meetings of the Task and Finish Group were held in the evenings.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Snowdon for her update and advised that given the size of the task facing the Committee it was likely that the review would continue into the next municipal year.

3. RESOLVED that the report and verbal update be received and noted.

Seaburn Masterplan Draft Supplementary Planning Document

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which appended a report on the Seaburn Masterplan Draft Supplementary Planning Document which had been considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on 6th October, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment presented the report informing Members that the Masterplan was the latest in a series of documents building on the Seafront Regeneration Strategy which provided an overarching framework to guide the future redevelopment of the seafront.

The vision for Seaburn was for a family focused resort offering high quality indoor and outdoor facilities for both residents and visitors and accordingly the Masterplan advocated a leisure-led development at Ocean Park featuring a mix of uses available all year round. He advised that the Masterplan also identified low density residential development and significant enhancement to areas of green space around Cut Throat Dene as well as the protection of views across the seafront and public realm enhancements at Seaburn promenade. Members were advised that a design code and spatial masterplan offered greater detail on the urban design principles for the area and set out the Council's design ambition for the site and that a masterplan for Seaburn would help facilitate the planning and regeneration of the seafront at Seaburn in a manner that helped achieve the aspirations set out in the Sunderland Strategy and the Seafront Regeneration Strategy.

Mr. Lowes advised that the Masterplan was not a scheme, but amounted to planning guidance, setting out acceptable parameters for development. The Masterplan was designed to be cross cutting but would not encourage piecemeal development. It would however be flexible enough to accommodate individual proposals. As well as consulting with the Scrutiny Committees and Planning and Highways Committee there would be a wide public consultation to be undertaken prior to the end of November. It was envisaged that the final document would be submitted for adoption through the Committee process by the end of the financial year.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Lowes for his report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that it be reported to Cabinet that the Committee noted and accepted the report.

Employment and Skills Demand Study 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed the Committee of the forthcoming Employment and Skills Demand Study 2010 which aimed to provide an overview of the current and future demand for employment skills in the City and gather data on recent employment trends and skills forecasts across a range of organisations.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Andrew Perkin, Senior Economic Development Officer, presented the report and addressed questions and comments from Members.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Gibson, Mr. Perkin confirmed that once the study was completed it would be made available to schools in Partnership with the Learning and Skills Council.

Councillor Cuthbert welcomed that existing employers, both private and public sector, would be surveyed but asked how opinions from potential businesses that did not exist yet could be canvassed. Mr. Perkin replied that his service were currently speaking to the Software City Board to ascertain what form the future skills demand would entail. A similar exercise was being undertaken with the National Renewable Energy Centre (NAREC) with regard to the skills requirements of the offshore energy industry.

Councillor Cuthbert advised that although he lived in the City he did not work there. He asked whether the skills survey would include City residents in a similar position. Mr. Perkin advised that it would not as it would be carried out via City based employers only. The position of people in Councillor Cuthbert's circumstances could be ascertained using national statistics, however these would be greatly out of date.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Snowdon, Mr. Perkin confirmed that the results from the survey could be broken down to an Area and Neighbourhood level.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Perkin for his report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Future of Overview and Scrutiny – Feedback

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided feedback in respect of the following themes considered at the Local Government Chronicle Conference 'The Future of Overview and Scrutiny' held on 5th October, 2010 at the America Square Conference Centre, London:-

- (i) The future of overview and scrutiny: Looking beyond the 2010 general election and preparing for new legislation;
- (ii) Overview and scrutiny and its relationship with external challenge and assurance;
- (iii) Overview and scrutiny at a sub regional level: What are the advantages of these sub regional collaborative groups and how can they be scrutinised effectively?
- (iv) Understanding and improving scrutiny and accountability of Local Strategic Partnerships;

- (v) Successfully using Crime and Disorder Partnerships (CDRPs) in your community;
- (vi) The future of the NHS and what this will mean for health and social care scrutiny;
- (vii) How scrutiny can be used to promote Practice Based Commissioning (PBC) and improve health and wellbeing in the community.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Mordey having expanded on the key issues arising out of the conference, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the feedback report be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st November, 2010 – 28th February, 2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st November, 2010 – 28th February, 2011 which related to the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Cuthbert asked that the following items be submitted to the Committee prior to consideration by Cabinet – Item 01459 (to agree options for the ongoing provision of a Council-led Employability Service) – Item 01409 (to approve the employment strategy).

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee work during the 2010-11 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Cuthbert reiterated his request made at previous meetings to seek the attendance of Sunderland ARC to discuss their future and the future of sites within their purview. The Chairman having expressed his disappointment and frustration that the ARC had failed to accept the Committees invitationsttend to discuss these matters, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme for 2010-11 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) M. MORDEY,
Chairman.