

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 18TH JULY at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor David Snowdon in the Chair

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

Also in attendance:-

Cllr Dianne Snowdon, Vice Chair Scrutiny Coordinating Committee (Observing)
Ms Sharon Appleby, Head of Operations, Sunderland BID
Rebecca Ball, Director, Sunderland 2021
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Curran and Porthouse.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26th June 2017

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26th June, 2017 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26th June, 2017 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Business Improvement District (BID) – Annual Update

The Head of Member Services and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced Sharon Appleby, Head of Business Operations, Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Appleby provided the Committee with a comprehensive powerpoint presentation detailing what had been delivered by the BID to date together with key projects for the future.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Blackburn, Ms Appleby advised that details of the 50 restaurants that took part in Sunderland Restaurant week were posted on the BID website. The event had been widely promoted on social media and via the restaurants concerned.

Councillor Taylor suggested that in order to encourage people to dine in the city centre, thought could be given to the introduction of a 'dine around scheme' that included as many of the city centre restaurants as possible. Councillor Turner highlighted similar schemes operated in other cities by hotel chains such as Holiday Inn.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dixon, Ms Appleby informed members that the BID had stepped in to assist Sunderland Pride when it was struggling to organise its annual event. It had been important to do so in order to 'bust the myth' that the city centre was not a welcoming place for all.

The Chairman referred to the Sunderland Diwali Festival held in November where the atmosphere had been 'buzzing'. Ms Appleby advised that this aspect was something that the BID was keen to develop. To this end the Team had recently undertaken a fact finding visit to the long established Middlesbrough Mela.

Councillor Dixon referred to developments in Sunnyside which he felt was 'on the up' and asked Ms Appleby for her opinion. Ms Appleby replied that she felt Sunnyside had a really strong offer but perhaps suffered from not being publicised enough. She worried that the public realm was not being looked after and there was the potential for a degree of anti-social behaviour during the day time.

With regard to future plans, the BID was preparing to re-launch itself to its levy payers alongside a rebranding featuring a new red and white logo. The re-launch would focus on the themes of Reputation, Reposition and Transformation. The ultimate aim was to keep people coming back to the city. The rebranding would be a feature of the new 'pop up city centre' which could be used to market the city at key events such as the airshow. Based around a shipping container, interest had been expressed in using it for meetings, as a pop up restaurant or bistro, as well as being used as a promotional tool.

Councillor Blackburn suggested that Hetton Lyons Country Park could host the shipping container during events such as the Dragon Boat Race and Councillor Dianne Snowdon cited Albany Park, Washington as another possible venue.

In response to enquiries from Councillors Blackburn and Dixon, Ms Appleby confirmed that parking enforcement operated in the city centre up until 10pm. Councillor Dianne Snowdon advised of a scheme operating in South Shields where on street parking was charged at a rate of £2 all day. In addition you received a

voucher that could be used in certain shops that refunded your parking fee if you spent over a certain amount.

Councillor Dixon welcomed the design of the new logos and wished Ms Appleby success on their introduction. He referred to the relation between the BID and the Local Authority and asked if the Council provided any support. Ms Appleby advised that the BID received £40,000 in the form of grant funding and other services in kind such as the collection of the BID levy.

Councillor G Galbraith believed the future plans to be exciting but stated that in attempting to attract families to the city centre they would need to feel safe. In this regard she asked, did the BID work in conjunction with the police? Ms Appleby replied that the BID had a close working relationship with the Police however there were increasing concerns around response times. A current issue was the growing number of beggars who appeared to see Sunderland as a soft touch with little chance of being moved on. Some of the larger BIDs such as Liverpool were of a size where they could actually employ two police officers to tackle issues such as this.

Councillor Dixon expressed his disappointment at the on-going problem with beggars as both he and Councillor Marshall had received assurances that the problem was being addressed. He believed that it was something the Police could do more to control. Councillor Marshall suggested that perhaps the problem could be addressed by the extension of public place protection orders.

In drawing the debate to a close, the Chair welcomed the future plans highlighted by Ms Appleby. He asked if businesses in the City were aware of the number of exciting events due to take place such as the opening of the new bridge, the Tall Ships Race and potential City of Culture status. Ms Appleby replied that it was fair to say that the reception had been mixed, ranging from real excitement and enthusiasm to scepticism. She felt there was a need to get out and about, talking to businesses to understand why people felt the way they did. Sometimes using feedback from a newsletter or flyers was not enough.

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

2. RESOLVED that the progress being made and the information brought out in the report and presentation be received and noted.

UK City of Culture Bid 2018 – Progress Report

The Head of Member Services and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided background information on Sunderland's bid to be UK City of Culture for 2021 and introduced Bid Director Rebecca Ball who was present to provide members with an update on the progress made to date.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman welcomed Ms Ball who confirmed the exciting news that since the publication of the Agenda, Sunderland had been shortlisted along with four other cities (Paisley, Stoke, Coventry and Swansea) following the first round of the process.

Sunderland had produced a film '21 Reasons Why Sunderland Should be UK City of Culture 2021' which could still be viewed on the Bid's Website. The Bid was based on the premise that Sunderland had always been a cultural city but had recently suffered a loss of confidence to the extent that residents no longer viewed it as a city of culture. The Bid was an attempt to invest in and reignite the confidence and pride in the city. The 21 reasons had been distilled down to the 3 main themes of Light, Inventiveness and Friendship.

Ms Ball advised that the shortlisting had been a major milestone for the Bid. It was seen as a vote of confidence and a major endorsement of the vision and ambition in the city. With regard to the next steps, a second bid would need to be submitted by 29th September, following which the Judging Panel would visit Sunderland during October. Sunderland would then be invited to make a final presentation to the Judging Panel in Hull during early December 2017 with the winning city announced shortly afterwards.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Blackburn, Ms Ball advised that the Panel comprised 8 members. Its composition had been kept a secret until after the short listed cities had been announced.

Councillor Dixon asked Ms Ball if she would receive feedback on the performance of the other cities bids. Ms Ball replied that she believed that each city would receive feedback only on their own bid. If there was one thing she had learned from the bidding process so far, it was the importance of running your own race. Councillor Dixon informed members of a conversation with a foreign resident of the city who had chosen to live in Sunderland because it was a city by the sea. She had told him that the treasure within Sunderland was its people. Given this enthusiasm he asked if the Bid had involved overseas students living in the city. Ms Ball advised that they had been involved in the 21 Reasons film however it was something that could perhaps be utilised to a greater extent.

Councillor G Galbraith referred to conversation she had had with a woman who was aware that Sunderland had been shortlisted for something but wasn't quite sure what. It was apparent therefore that some additional awareness raising may be required. Ms Ball replied that this was something that she was seeking to address. The executive summary of the Bid document included in members' agenda papers was something that had been kept deliberately quiet so as not to fore arm rival cities. Now that the shortlist had been announced it was something that could easily be transformed into a promotional leaflet given its format and design. Councillor G Galbraith stated that it needed to allow everyone to feel the passion that there was for the city and let them know the benefits that would accrue from a successful bid.

Councillor I Galbraith stated that he imagined that there would be Councillors from the other shortlisted cities sitting in meetings like this discussing the merits of their own bid. He asked what would be Sunderland's unique selling point to give it an advantage over its rivals. Ms Ball advised that she had deduced that the judges were looking for three things. Firstly, a city where the award would make a tangible difference, secondly, a city that could deliver something brilliant and thirdly, a city that had shown the passion to demonstrate they really wanted it.

The Chairman thanked Ms Ball for her attendance and presentation. He stated that the bid needed to cover the whole of the city and ensure that everyone was engaged and encouraged to celebrate. The city had only one stab at the award and needed to make it work.

3. RESOLVED that the progress being made and the information brought out in the report and presentation be received and noted

Annual Work Programme 2017/18

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), requesting the Committee to consider and agree the draft work programme for the municipal year 2017-18.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that approval be given to the work programme for 2017/18 as detailed in the report and that emerging issues be incorporated into the programme as and when they arise throughout the forthcoming year.

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 June 2017 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

5. 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.