

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 17TH APRIL, 2018 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor David Snowdon in the Chair

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

Also in attendance:-

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr Dan Hattle, Regeneration Manager, Sunderland City Council

Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation, Sunderland City Council

Mrs Christine Tilley, Governance Services Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors G. Galbraith and Taylor.

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

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

In response to Councillor Porthouse's enquiry, Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation advised that a presentation on the Northern Spire Bridge could be provided to Members.

Mr Jackson advised that the Northern Spire Bridge had been nominated for a number of awards and had already won a special award from the Institution of Civil Engineers in recognition of its engineering excellence, community engagement and high national profile and was due to receive the award at the awards ceremony later that week.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Sunderland Station Redevelopment Project

The Head of Infrastructure and Transportation submitted a report (copy circulated) updating Members on the Sunderland Station Redevelopment project.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Dan Hattle, Regeneration Manager, Sunderland City Council briefed the Committee on the report advising that the Council and Nexus remained committed to the project and had allocated funds to support the delivery of a new station, however the funding previously allocated by Network Rail had been withdrawn as part of a wider Government spending review in 2010/11 and there remained a shortfall in funds to construct a new station.

Mr Dan Hattle advised Members of the current strategy for the project. This was to develop a detailed design that was deliverable within a realistic budget and would give it a stronger chance of attracting the additional funding required to deliver it.

In response to questions from Councillor Marshall, Mr Hattle briefed the Committee on the proposals being developed, adding that although it was hoped the station would be as visually as strong as possible, that realistically, it would not be as grand as some stations around the world. The need was to develop the station first and then develop any retail opportunity around it. Mr Hattle advised that different options were being looked at with regards to the future location of the taxi rank and vehicular access in general by private cars, as well as pedestrian access to the station and things needed to be balanced out between the competing needs of users. It would be a challenge to find an option that worked best as no option would tick all boxes. He informed the Committee that a preferred option had not been selected at present and that a couple of options would be developed.

In response to Councillor Turner, Mr Hattle advised that there were no plans at the moment to provide a roof from the station over into the Bridges Shopping Centre as this was only a short walk. If a roof was included this would raise the cost of the initial development project and result in maintenance costs for the future which someone would need to pick up.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that it was imperative to improve the station as the current station was not providing a good first impression for visitors coming to the city by rail.

Mr Hattle confirmed in respect of the above, that the station was a key part of the city centre in terms of investment and gateway funding had been allocated.

In response to Councillor M. Dixon, Mr Hattle advised that it would be a minimum of 12 months, up to 18 months, before a preferred design was ready, however in terms of being deliverable further funding would be needed.

Councillor Curran commented that the current station was awful. Footfall was quite large and he agreed that the station needed to take priority with the retail element being secondary.

In response Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation, confirmed that the Sunderland City Centre station was a priority of the North East Combined Authority (NECA) and was written into the Strategic Transport Plans. It was about having better connectivity and getting people into the city centre. As a functional station it worked, however they were looking at how the project could grow. He advised that Officers would be engaging both formally and informally as the project developed.

Councillor Blackburn enquired if the project was on the Department of Transport's priority list.

Mr Jackson stated that there was a priority list. NECA had to put in its priorities for the 'Transforming Cities Fund' which had a value of £840m. There was recognition that Sunderland needed a new station and it was in a strong position as the Council and Nexus had identified funding towards the project. All had different schemes they wanted to push forward for funding. It was a competitive, national bidding process. However, The Sunderland station project was the most deliverable rail scheme from the NECA point of view. Mr Jackson clarified that Network Rail owned the station and the freehold of all the buildings above the line.

In response to Councillor Porthouse, Mr Jackson stated that the region was receiving funding from Network Rail, however no funding had been identified as yet for Sunderland. He added that as the business case for the project was developed he anticipated that Network Rail would write a letter in support.

Mr Jackson commented that the real selling point of the current station was that it was located right in the centre of the city.

The Chairman having thanked Messrs Hattle and Jackson for their attendance, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the information provided during the discussion, as detailed above, be received and noted and a further update on the project be provided in due course.

Annual Report

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out a report from the Committee on the work it had carried out over the course of the year as part of the overall scrutiny Annual report 2017/18 to be presented to Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members commented that it was a good report.

In response to Members' enquiries concerning the work programme for 2018/19, Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, advised of arrangements to be made to bring

Members of the Scrutiny Committee together in May to draw up a work programme for the year ahead.

3. RESOLVED that the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee report be approved for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18.

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).

4. 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 27th March 2018 (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 and contributions over the year.

(Signed) D. SNOWDON,
Chairman.