

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Cllr David Snowdon

Vice Chair: Cllr Gillian Galbraith

Committee Members: Councillors: James Blackburn, Barry Curran, Michael Dixon, Michael Essl, Elizabeth Gibson, Christine Marshall, Stuart Porthouse, Tony Taylor, Doris Turner and William Turton.

During the year, a key priority for the Committee has been to monitor the progress being made in improving the economic prosperity of the city and assess the potential impact of the many regeneration initiatives either planned or underway.

In doing so, the Committee recognises that this work cannot be undertaken in isolation of the national and international economic forces shaping the local economy and we therefore began the year with a report commissioned by the Sunderland Economic Leadership Board on the implications for the Sunderland economy of the EU referendum. During this session we heard about the potential impact on exports and inward investment and the continued uncertainty that surrounds the long term effect on the local economy. In view of this uncertainty, the Committee will continue to review the general economic situation and receive further updates as the position becomes clearer.

The Committee has also looked to monitor the progress being made on the broad range of regeneration initiatives planned and underway within the city. To this end we heard from Chief Executive of Siglione on plans for the Vaux site, Seaburn and Chapelgarth and its potential impact on the long term economic prosperity of the city. We also heard about the Council's plans to develop the city's Minster Quarter into a key cultural quarter, improving the appearance and recreational offer and representing an important gateway into the city centre.

Another major project being undertaken in the city is the development of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP). Comprising 260,000 sq. metres of business space on a 100 hectare site, the IAMP will have a massive impact on the city and region creating around 5,200 jobs and bringing in around £300m of private investment over the next ten years. Again, the Committee heard about the very encouraging progress being made on a scheme that will have a potentially massive effect on the manufacturing base of the city and the region.

Toward the end of the year, the Committee received an update on the Strategic Transport Corridor and the new Wear Bridge; both of which will make a major contribution to the regeneration of the city centre helping to improve transport links and relieve traffic congestion. We also met with the Port Director to discuss the very encouraging progress being made by the Port of Sunderland and its plans and business opportunities for the years ahead.

Another exciting development for the city is the announcement that it is bidding to be UK City of Culture 2021. We heard the Project Director about the preparations being made for the bid and the accompanying media campaign and plans for community engagement.

Members received a report on the work of the city's three business centres – Evolve Business Centre, Sunderland Software Centre and Washington Business Centre. These act to encourage growth in expanding areas of the economy such as IT software and encourage new business development and help to diversify the local economy. Again we will be looking to continue to monitor their progress in the year ahead.

Following the review of the scrutiny undertaken in 2016, the Committee now has within its remit all issues relating to environmental services. We have therefore been consulted on proposals to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in the city which are designed to help address problems such as the consumption of alcohol in public, dog control and nuisance. The Committee has also monitored the progress being made following last year's review policy review into environmental enforcement and the approach and measures we should take to tackle the problem of litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping. The report emphasised the increasing difficulties we face in maintaining the quality of service that our residents expect at a time of unprecedented reductions in available resources. We also heard about the progress being made on maintaining and improving the upkeep of our cemeteries; again at a time of intense funding pressures.

All in all, it has been very busy and productive year for the Committee and one that should help provide the foundations for the development of scrutiny in the years ahead. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee and everyone else involved for their hard work and commitment.

Councillor David Snowdon
Chair of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee