

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2019 at 4.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Turner in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Blackett, M. Dixon, Fagan, Jackson, Jenkins, Taylor and Thornton

Also in attendance:-

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Ms Gillian Robinson, Area Coordinator

Ms Rebecca Ball, Creative Director of Sunderland Culture

Mr Keith Merrin, Chief Executive of Sunderland Culture

Mr Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer, 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 Foster, Marshall and Scanlan.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9th April 2019

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9th April, 2019 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9th April, 2019 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Sunderland Cultural Strategy- Update

The Chief Executive of Sunderland Culture submitted a report (copy circulated) and powerpoint presentation, informing the Committee of the progress that had been made in relation to the Sunderland Cultural Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Rebecca Ball, Creative Director of Sunderland Culture and Mr Keith Merrin, Chief Executive of Sunderland Culture provided the Committee with a presentation informing the Committee of the £60 million 7 year strategy to show how culture could achieve a step change in Sunderland through improving

- Profile and reputation
- Children and Young People
- Connecting Communities
- Health and Wellbeing
- Creative Economy

Councillor Jackson wished to congratulate the team on the superb high profile events carried out and enquired how the overall plans translated into smaller events as there was a gap in the Sunderland market for contemporary drama. Empire had very successful events but it would be nice to see more.

Councillor Jackson also commented that the Cinema only showed the very broad mainstream films and whilst she understood this was driven by demographics was it possible to fill the gaps through film clubs etc or any plans to link up with the University.

Ms Ball agreed that there were gaps and they were not able to offer the smaller scale events at the moment but the opening of the Fire station auditorium should help make a difference in the range of offer available. In relation to Film, there was nothing concrete planned that she was aware of but it was something that she could look into as something worth exploring.

Councillor Jackson commented that we lose people to Newcastle due to this and she believed there was a genuine appetite for this so she would be pleased if officers were to consider it.

Councillor M. Dixon referred to the potential to link up with the cinema and suggested that there was also a market to show foreign films and the potential to link up with the Royalty Theatre also.

With regards to the recent art exhibitions that attracted interest from outside of the city, Councillor M. Dixon suggested that we were missing out in highlighting the hotel offer we could provide.

Mr Merrin agreed that the city did need to show the whole package of Sunderland and there was a job to be done to join all this up.

Councillor M. Dixon wished to congratulate the Team on their work to keep the momentum of the project going following the failed bid.

Councillor Fagan enquired if there were any plans for live music in the streets similar to the brass music event Durham had held. Ms Ball advised that the SCC Events Team had plans for a September music event and the Summer Streets event would be held on 13th July, which did really well the previous year. They were also looking at trailblazer events as part of the fire station opening.

In response to Councillor Blackburn's query over potential support from the team with regards to the Steam Train fair proposal at Hetton Lyons Country Park, Ms Ball advised that she would be able to provide contacts to discuss the matter further.

In relation to Councillor Blackett's query over any plans to make more use of St Peters Church, Mr Merrin advised that whilst the church was its own entity, there was a lot more to do with telling its story, raising the profile and inspiring people of the city.

The Chairman referred to Plays performed in local community buildings and queried if there were any chance of these being brought back and suggested that those performed at the Washington Arts centre tour the different communities. Ms Ball advised that she would investigate the idea further.

Councillor Jackson supported the suggestion advising that the RSC had provided performances at the Seaburn Centre.

Councillor M. Dixon also supported the Chairman's suggestion and referred to the productions in the park that had been put on in the past and also requested that the Royalty Theatre be considered as a venue.

The Chairman commented that communication was an issue as many residents had claimed not to know when events were held as there was a reliance on social media, which was not used by everyone.

Mr Merrin advised that they had now brought everything together into one website so that tickets could be purchased for all the different events and they were to address how to advise of what's on via paper form.

The Chairman thanked Ms Ball and Mr Merrin for their informative presentation and wished the Team well with the projects to be provided over the coming year.

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

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and presentation and the information brought out during the discussion be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2019-20

The Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2018-19 Municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that the Industrial Strategy report would now be brought to the November meeting.

Mr Diamond also advised that Councillor M. Dixon had requested an item be brought forward in relation to the change of ownership of Siglion. Senior Officers were happy

to present a report to the Committee but the next meeting scheduled for July was not feasible therefore another date may have to be arranged.

Councillor Blackburn enquired if there was a specific urgency to consider this item as the change in ownership had already taken place.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that his concern was that this committee had never been given the opportunity to scrutinise the decision.

Mr Diamond advised that the Cabinet report had been included on the Forward Plan of previous agendas and Members did have the opportunity to request consideration of this.

Councillor Jackson agreed that the decision did need to be scrutinised and that there may be some urgency needed as many of the proposals coming forward were linked, such as the Stack development in Seaburn and residents were concerned and understandably wanted clarity.

Councillor M. Dixon commented that he did feel that important decisions had been made with the Council going in a different direction that the Committee should have been afforded the courtesy of being informed of, and that they should be given the opportunity to ask questions on this.

In response to Councillor Blackburn's query as to if a visit to the IAMP was to be arranged, Mr Diamond advised that as a visit to the centre of excellence was proposed, it may be worth holding this together with the visit to the IAMP as part of consideration of the Strategic Transport Corridor.

Mr Diamond also advised that he would look into Councillor M. Dixon's enquiry over Gentoo attending the meeting with regard to the Housing Strategy.

3. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2018-2019 be noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 26th March, 2019 (copies circulated).

(For copy report and notice – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to contact him if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

Councillor M. Dixon expressed an interest in the report on Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy. Mr Diamond advised that he would obtain further details and provide these to Councillor Dixon.

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

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

(Signed) D. TURNER,
Chairman.