

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at LB31-32 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 3 December 2014 from 14.02 - 15.33

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Roger Steel

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Pat Ferguson
Beverley Denby

RAV –can I have the attendance list please?

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Chris Henning - Director of Economic Development
Rav Kalsi - Senior Governance Officer
Cath Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Pat Ferguson
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Mrs Beverley Denby

Rav – what reasons?

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

42 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

43 NOTTINGHAM GROWTH PLAN

Councillor Nick McDonald, Portfolio Holder for Jobs and Growth delivered a presentation, a copy of which was submitted to the online agenda following the meeting.

Chris Henning, Director of Economic Development, was also in attendance to inform Councillors of the progress made in implementing the Nottingham Growth Plan during the past year and had submitted a report to the agenda.

During his presentation Councillor Nick McDonald highlighted the following points:

- (a) the Growth Plan which is a practical plan with a tangible approach to achieve goals, has a total of 42 proposals, is reviewed regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose and progress is monitored annually;
- (b) 3 areas identified for focus included;
 - (1) fostering enterprise - such as the creative industries and bioscience, to encourage job creation;
 - (2) infrastructure - including the digital infrastructure and transport;
 - (3) skills - for many years there has been a large skills gap in the city;
- (c) improvement targets for 'access to employment' and 'business support' are improving well;
- (d) several streams of funding have been achieved for the City including £42 million from the Venture Capital Fund and an N-Tech £10 million grant;
- (e) the establishment of the Creative Quarter has significantly reduced the number of shop vacancies in the Key Street and Market Street areas;
- (f) there is still work to be done to develop domestic and international investment and this continues to be a focused drive;
- (g) talent retention is fundamental for Nottingham but in spite of 2 fantastic universities and several colleges, the City does not retain many of its graduate students. This is an area which needs attention to ensure Nottingham's offer is better communicated. This could involve the creation of an internship scheme or graduate placement scheme, initially with the Council. A new initiative is to encourage graduate students to stay in Nottingham by offering 'new business support';
- (h) it is planned that free Wi-Fi will be provided to the whole of the City Centre, as has been achieved in other cities. Digital connectivity is an area in which the City struggled last year but a 'concessionaire scheme' is in progress where 'dark fibre' has been laid under repaved streets to provide an alternative to high-speed broadband. The infrastructure is now in place and a provider is being sought. Is a legally contentious subject but Nottingham can learn from the experiences of Hammersmith where such a project has proved a success;

Councillor Nick McDonald and Chris Henning responded to members' question as follows:

- (i) youth unemployment is a national crisis and while it may not appear that youth employment is improving in some areas of the City, as much as possible is being done with programs in place which are achieving results. Apprenticeship and placement schemes are in place but there is a barrier to the success of some programs as the Department for Work and Pensions is not willing to share information on young people who may be eligible for the assistance

provided by programs. Frustratingly Job Centres are not referring many eligible young people to the schemes;

- (j) PricewaterhouseCoopers has reported that Nottingham has the highest level of growth outside of London. There is a massive challenge ahead to maintain the momentum as the growth funding available from Central Government is one of payments and does not include long-term assistance when 5-10 year settlements would ensure sustainable growth;
- (k) approximately 23% of students who graduate from Nottingham's universities remain in the City. This is comparatively low compared to other Core Cities and needs to be examined to find out why graduates are leaving. Nottingham needs to create an offer to students to stay. This could include graduate student loans and/or cheaper mortgages, including improved communication graduates;
- (l) the persistently postponed re-development of the Broadmarsh Centre now has a target date of 2018 for work to commence. Previously issues arose as the 2 main shopping centres were opened by 2 different companies, whereas now ownership is with one company. The redevelopment may not be as ambitious as some had hoped, but will be a great improvement;
- (m) the lack of skills in the textiles sector can be attributed to textile manufacturers moving abroad 20 years ago. Where skills are not needed, they are lost and where there is no demand there is no reason for skills to be taught in colleges. The Growth Plan recognises and aims to focus on attracting companies which require a long term skilled workforce as this establishes sustainable employment and training. Sustainable employment is vital for the City;
- (n) Nottingham provides a reasonably strong package of business support but there are still gaps which need to be plugged and the business infrastructure improved and maintained. The Growth Plan is working well but long-term results will not be seen for another 10-20 years and ongoing investment is required;
- (o) during 2015 the Growth and Innovation Hub will be launched and there will be a new emphasis on encouraging BME groups to engage;
- (p) the City Centre Regeneration Strategy is working well and there are noticeably fewer vacant shops within the City Centre;
- (q) the quality of Further Education needs to improve within the City as it is well below the national average standard. The Council is working with large providers to encourage them to provide training in skills which match the labour market requirements;
- (r) City Council teams, such as Procurement, are encouraging contracted businesses to help local people into work by the inclusion of clauses in contracts. The care sector is growing but staff are low paid and often from abroad. This is an area that the Council can work with the further education establishments to encourage provision of courses which match the economic

need. However, on a wider scale, Central Government needs to play a stronger role and liaise with nursing colleges;

- (s) Ofsted is no longer required to measure employability of young people leaving school. Where schools do offer employability skills and preparation, Ofsted does not recognise this. It is disappointing that only 49% of schools approached responded to the City Council's offer to provide work placements for school leavers. 'Futures' and the 'Youth Employment Fund' are currently working to support schools to support children who are at risk of being not in employment, education or training (NEET) when leaving school. It is hoped that in the future this support can be rolled out to all young people to ensure they are provided with proper career guidance;
- (t) 'Notts TV' is a very successful, good quality franchise developed locally within the existing infrastructure. Media students from local universities operate the locally focused television channel which promotes the branding Nottingham and raises the profile of the city with regards to the film and TV industry;
- (u) the Derby Road Steering Group has secured funding to help refurbish and re-let properties in the area, improving the general appearance with the aim to attracting new businesses and new customers. To help support this work, the Council will repave some pavements and plant trees;
- (v) Nottingham has the second-highest percentage of Independent businesses for similar cities in the country. Independent retailers must be supported or high streets will fail;
- (w) Nottingham's Growth Plan is reliant on funding. Following the general election next year austerity measures will continue and this will affect the Local Authority, in turn affecting the Growth Plan which will need to adapt. As grant funding reduces, project will need to become self-funding and the Council will rely on business rates as an income;
- (x) tourism contributes to the Growth Plan and while the City has attractions such as the Castle, it is also now a City of Literature and the first City to open a video game arcade. However the City would benefit from a large-scale conference centre, especially with the city's central location and with current and proposed transport links;
- (y) the Growth Plan is on track 2 years into the 10 year plan. However there is still a lot to be done. The biggest challenge is the current dependence on one-off funding;
- (z) priorities remain the same but evolve as progress is made. In many areas new issues have arisen, including the standard of Further Education, ensuring the quality apprenticeships, employment is down but there remains a difficult pocket of long-term unemployment which is hard to tackle;
- (aa) performance of programs is assessed against the Growth Plan. With one third of Nottingham's households being workless, Nottingham is ranked worst of

comparative cities. This is not acceptable and is a priority to address. Some Central Government assistance is required to address this;

- (bb) Nottingham must look beyond its boundaries to ensure economic benefits for the City. More mature methods of working in partnership with neighbouring authorities will assist with this but further consideration is required as to how this could, would and should be done.

Councillors comments included:

- (cc) the evolution of Experience Nottingham and how Nottingham can 'up the game' in tourism could be a topic for further scrutiny;
- (dd) consideration of how the reputational impact on the City could be improved would be helpful, including examining the influence of 'live in Nottingham' TV.

RESOLVED

- (1) to suggest that the priorities for the coming year include:**
 - (i) how a support mechanism can be provided in order to deliver long-term business growth support;**
 - (ii) closer working with health partners to address the skills gap within the health sector;**
- (2) for an update on the progress made against the priorities of the Growth Plan to be presented to a future meeting.**

44 PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY

Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer, introduced a report of the Head of Democratic Services setting out the overall programme and timetable for scrutiny activity during the remainder of 2014/15.

Members of the Committee requested that a wider base of evidence is considered with balanced views presented for future items.

Resolved

- (1) to note the items scheduled on the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Review Panels for 2014/15;**
- (2) to note that the Procurement Focus Group is now scheduled to meet on 19 December 2014 at 10am.**