

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 Glyn Jenkins (Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Carole Jones
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Roger Steel

Absent

Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Pat Ferguson
Councillor Marcia Watson
Beverley Denby (third sector advocate)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Chris Henning	- Director of Economic Development
Rav Kalsi	- Senior Governance Officer
Councillor Nick McDonald	- Portfolio Holder for Jobs and Growth
Cath Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Pat Ferguson)	
Councillor Thulani Molife)	Other Council Business
Councillor Mohammed Saghir)	
Mrs Beverley Denby)	

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 and Chris Henning, Director of Economic Development delivered a presentation, outlining progress made in implementing the Nottingham Growth Plan during the past year. The Committee previously considered the item at its meeting on 2 October 2013 (minute 30).

During the presentation Councillor Nick McDonald highlighted the following points:

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- (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:
 - fostering enterprise - such as the creative industries and bioscience, to encourage job creation;
 - infrastructure - including the digital infrastructure and transport;
 - 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 and 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;
- (d) the establishment of the Creative Quarter has significantly reduced the number of shop vacancies in the Key Street and Market Street areas however, there is still work to be done to develop domestic and international investment and this continues to be a focused drive;
- (e) 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. Improvements to this area could involve the creation of an internship scheme or graduate placement scheme, potentially with Nottingham City Council. A new initiative is being developed to encourage graduate students to stay in Nottingham by offering 'new business support';
- (f) 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. It is a legally contentious subject but Nottingham can learn from the experiences of other successful locations, such as Hammersmith, where a similar project has proved a success;

Following questions and comments from the Committee, the following information was provided:

- (g) 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 (DWP) 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;

- (h) 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;
- (i) 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 which could include graduate student loans and/or cheaper mortgages;
- (j) the lack of skills in the textiles sector can be attributed to textile manufacturers moving abroad 20 years ago. The Growth Plan recognises and aims to focus on attracting companies to the city which requires a skilled workforce as this establishes sustainable employment and training;
- (k) Nottingham provides a reasonably strong package of business support but there are still gaps which need to be plugged including improvements to the business infrastructure;
- (l) Nottingham City Council 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;
- (m) 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. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures and the Youth Employment Fund are currently working with 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;
- (n) 'Notts TV' is an example of a successful franchise developed locally within the existing infrastructure. Media students from local universities operate a local television channels which promotes the Nottingham brand and raises the profile of the city;
- (o) 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;
- (p) 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;

- (q) 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;
- (r) performance of programs is assessed against the Growth Plan. With one third of Nottingham's households being workless, Nottingham is ranked worst amongst comparative cities. Concerted efforts are being made to address this however, Government assistance is required;
- (s) 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 be achieved.

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 to note the items scheduled on the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Review Panels for 2014/15;