

**COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 DECEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: Councillor P Dillon (Chair)

Councillors: P Craig, D Davidson, J Graham, T Graham, F Hindle, M Hood, J McClurey and C McHugh

Also Present: Councillors M Graham and J Wallace

CPL19. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors L Caffrey, B Coates, J Simpson and A Wheeler

CPL20. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report that proposed changes to its current work programme.

RESOLVED - That the revisions to the work programme be agreed

**CPL21. REVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE RURAL GATESHEAD
- EVIDENCE GATHERING**

The Committee undertook its third evidence gathering session which focussed on the Angel of the North site and surrounding area.

The Committee were provided with a presentation from Jenny Allinson, Culture Manager and Anna Pepperall, Public Art Curator that informed of:

- The history of the site of the Angel and the development/installation of the Angel
- Possible development opportunities for the site/surrounding area
 - Including opportunities to enhance visitor numbers
 - Funding opportunities
 - Issues which limit development
 - Partnership potential and key stakeholders
- Opportunities to support local businesses and practitioners through merchandising of Angel related products and other 'local wares' on a newly developed site.

It was highlighted that a feasibility study would give an evidence base of what could form potential proposals / opportunities at the site and surrounding area however there is a need to be mindful of issues such as land ownership, existing public rights of way, legal issues etc and how this may impact on opportunities.

The Committee were advised of the potential funding opportunities which could be explored and that the feasibility study would help obtain the evidence necessary to meet any funding criteria.

The Committee were informed that whilst the creator of the Angel of the North holds the copyright for the artwork, the copyright has not been exercised so not to prohibit other artists using the image within their own work. The Committee suggested that the need to have to consult with the artist on possible future development opportunities be looked in to.

It was queried that if a visitor centre were to be located at the Angel of the North site, is there a specific place that this would be situated. The Committee were informed that there may be an opportunity for it to be set back, towards the car park, as the topography and landscaping within this part of the site would be sympathetic to accommodate this. It is however acknowledged that there may be mixed opinions about a centre being located on the site and also whether consideration should be given to other facilities close to the site.

The Committee recommended that where any new possible developments are proposed, an appropriate maintenance/landscaping scheme should be in place. The Committee were satisfied that should a private provider which to invest in the tourism infrastructure there would be controls, such as those through planning permission to protect the area.

The Committee commented that it is felt there has been missed opportunities for the local economy due to there not being any other facilities at the site of the Angel. It was suggested that there could be opportunities to promote volunteering within a visitor centre. There would also be scope to provide a tourist information hub within a visitor centre that would inform of the links to the assets within rural Gateshead.

The Committee commented that they would hope the park and ride facility that will be introduced at Birtley will also link in to the Angel site.

It was suggested that the possibility of other pieces of artwork, similar to the Angel, could be commissioned and placed within different parts of the borough with the aim to attract visitors to different areas to promote more rural parts of the borough.

It was suggested that due to the common characteristics of the sites at the Angel and Gibside in that there is forestry on both sites, there should be greater promotion of this industry along with forestry products in addition to the structures (Angel and Liberty) at each site.

RESOLVED - That the views of the Committee on the evidence presented be noted

CPL22. VISION 2030 AND COUNCIL PLAN – DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE

Consideration was given to a report that provided the six month assessment of performance for 2015/16 and also an update on the performance and delivery of the Council Plan 2015-2020.

The Committee referred to the percentage of waste that cannot be processed if there are maintenance issues at the recycling plant and queried if there would be opportunities for the plant in neighbouring Northumberland taking the waste in such circumstances. The Committee were advised that this is something which could be explored however it may be complex due to legal contracts associated with the collection and treatment of waste.

Queries were made in relation to the new Morrisons stores and whether any research has been undertaken by the Council to establish if any local businesses have closed due to the introduction of such stores.

The Committee were advised that when any new large store such as Morrisons is considered, a retail impact assessment is undertaken. The new Morrisons store at Blaydon is not competing with local businesses but more the Metrocentre. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Co-op food store (and post office located within it) had closed but other local stores within Blaydon Centre are now doing well. Within Birtley, the Morrisons store is in greater competition with shops in neighbouring Washington.

The Committee suggested that it would be useful to obtain information / talk to local businesses to understand from their point of view of any impact as a result of changes to the local centres.

Reference was made to school solar PV systems and the benefits obtained from this. The Committee were advised that previously, the Council were in a position to be able to invest in such systems. However, since the government's removal of the feed-in tariff, the Council are no longer able to do so but, the occupiers of the building(s) are still benefitting from the systems that are in place.

The Committee advised that it was aware that Small Business Saturday had taken place on 5 December but that that it had not been aware of what promotion had been done for the event. The Committee were informed that advertising had taken place and that the Committee would be updated on the detail.

It was also suggested by the Committee that where car parking charges have been introduced within local centres, could there be scope to remove the charge and limit the amount of time for parking to prevent people parking all day.

RESOLVED – i) That the Committee are satisfied that the activities undertaken during the last six months are achieving the desired outcomes in the Council Plan 2015-2020

ii) That the report be referred to Cabinet on 9 February 2016, along with the comments from the Committee for their consideration