



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 29th September 2022

ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

12th July 2022 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Freeston (in the Chair)
Councillors Callison, Cairns (substitute for Lindley), Dawkins, Reynolds, Smith, Wheatley and Wilson.

Officers in attendance:

- David Baker (Contract Business Manager, EQUANS)
- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Rachel Carey (Strategic Lead – Financial Planning, Treasury and Capital)
- Wendy Fisher (Estate and Business Development Manager)
- Maggie Johnson (Head of Economy and Funding)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law, Governance and Assets)
- Mark Nearney (Assistant Director Housing, Highways, Transportation and Planning)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director, EQUANS)
- David Tipple (Relationship Manager)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing)
- Councillor Harness (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Councillor Shreeve (Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care)
- Councillor Holland

There were no members of the press or public present.

SPE.5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Lindley.

SPE.6 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Dawkins declared a pecuniary interest in SPE.15 as his spouse is employed by EQUANS.

Councillor Wilson declared a personal interest in item SPE.14, he is employed by Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited (HETA), a local skills training provider.

SPE.7 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Economy Scrutiny Panel held on the 1st March 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

SPE.8 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPE.9 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the published Forward Plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this Panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPE.10 2021/22 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance at the end of the 2021/22 year. Members noted this report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 15th June 2022 and was referred to all scrutiny panels.

Members raised the following issues:

Ms Carey committed to respond in writing to all panel members regarding delays in progress with South Humber Industrial Investment Programme.

In response to questions about additional costs affecting the Town Deal investment scheme, Councillor Jackson advised that the Grade II listing of the site had led to increased costs notwithstanding current inflationary escalation of building materials. Additional and necessary negotiations with Heritage England and National Lottery had also caused some delay. Tenders for the work were now returned and it was anticipated that work on site would commence in September 2022.

The Leader advised that there had not been a wholesale review of current capital projects to estimate the anticipated impact of the current economic climate. Each scheme would need to be considered individually. It was acknowledged that projects could require additional contributions, increased borrowing and/or a re-scope to meet the funding available.

Regarding potential clawback on junction improvement works through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Ms Carey committed to respond in writing regarding the options available regarding this overspend.

Mr Nearney would respond in writing with information about Estate Road Number Two to include details about contamination risk mitigation.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport was able to provide details on a legal challenge to the tender process which caused some delays to works to Corporation Bridge. This work would commence towards the end of July 2022. It was initially anticipated that the road would be closed for approximately 18 months, however, it was now forecast that the road would open in November 2023.

RESOLVED –

1. That written responses to queries be provided as indicated.
2. That the report be noted.

SPE.11 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Assistant Chief Executive) tracking the recommendations of the Economy Scrutiny Panel. The panel noted that there were no matters outstanding in terms of its previous recommendations.

RESOLVED – That item referenced SPE.38 Council Plan be removed from the tracking report as completed.

SPE.12 ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME – 2022/23

The panel considered a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Assistant Chief Executive) summarising the panel's agreed 2022/23 work programme and the timetable of activities to undertake this work. Members were concerned about the future of Grimsby Top Town Market and agreed to add this to its work programme.

In closing, the Chair advised that should members wish to add topics during the municipal year, he would happily consider them for inclusion.

RESOLVED – That this panel’s work programme 2022/23 be approved, subject to the addition of Grimsby Top Town Market.

SPE.13 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER NEGOTIATED STOPPING AGREEMENTS

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets seeking approval of the process for negotiated stopping agreements to support the travelling community and wider communities when travellers were visiting the borough. The panel noted this report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 20th July 2022 and was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny and comment. The portfolio holder outlined key aspects outlined within the report now submitted.

Members raised the following issues:

Ms Fisher advised that the initial and lengthy search to find a suitable site for a designated stopping place had been in response to the Local Plan. An impending review of the Local Plan created an opportunity to seek expert advice and reassessment of the borough’s needs. It is this assessment which allowed the authority to pursue a different approach to gypsy and traveller visits. The suggested process was presently being used by Leeds Metropolitan Council and others with varying levels of success.

Regarding concerns and a number of queries about probable Tier 2 sites, Ms Fisher advised that Tier 1 sites were specific and described; whereas Tier 2 sites were all those that could not be classed Tier 1.

Members raised a number of issues including the existence of Tier 2 sites, the nature of travellers’ work and limited 14 day stopover, the potential for victimisation claims, legal misuse and estimated costs. Mr Jones reassured the panel that considerations of equalities and legal matters had been considered and would be a matter of balance. It was a shame that the system had not been able to be trialled as hoped, this was due to no Gypsy or Travellers’ visits being undertaken in the period of review. Colleagues in Environmental Services had been consulted to estimate the likely costs which would be incurred in the event of a stopover. This had been based on past experiences.

The panel unanimously agreed that it would like to receive an update in six months (January 2023). Furthermore, that Cabinet be recommended to review the situation in six months rather than the 12 suggested within the report as submitted.

RESOLVED-

1. That the recommendations 1 and 2 within the report now submitted be supported, namely:

- i. That Cabinet take note of the findings of the exploration work that had been conducted to understand how a 'negotiated stopping agreement' (NSA) approach could be implemented.
 - ii. That Cabinet approve the adoption of the 'NSA approach' outlined within the body of this report and authorises the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets to so implement, making any amendments or modifications as may be necessary from time to time.
2. That this panel receive an update report in six months (January 2023).

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

That the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets conducts a review of the new approach in six months time to allow an understanding for the need for changes.

SPE.14 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing seeking approval to submit an investment plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The panel noted this report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 20th July and was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny and comment.

Members raised the following issues:

Members queried how the impact of the funding would be evaluated, adding that outcomes rather than outputs should be measured and reported.

In response to questions, Ms Johnson advised that the ringfenced allocation to skills (numeracy) were based on a government gap analysis. However, within the core funding, additional funds could be spent on other skills. The Council had appointed a new Strategic Lead for Skills and Employability. The role included developing an action plan to deliver the skills framework completed last year, and determination of the borough's skills needs by undertaking a gap analysis. This would involve consultation with our partners in education plus local businesses to produce an industry-led skills plan.

In closing, the Chair thanked members for their interest in this issue and could envisage an opportunity to work with colleagues on the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, he committed to speak with the Chair of the panel in this regard.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted
2. That an update report be submitted to this panel at a date to be determined.

Note – Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, Councillor Dawkins left the meeting for consideration of the following item.

SPE.15 REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REPORT

The panel considered a report from EQUANS containing a summary of performance against agreed key performance indicators for the first quarter of 2022 (January to March 2022). The Chair commented that performance against indicators had been largely positive. There were no questions from the panel.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Note - Councillor Dawkins returned to the meeting.

SPE.16 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no members' questions to the Portfolio Holder.

SPE.17 CALLING-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members to call in decisions taken at recent meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.34 p.m.