

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - CULTURE AND TOURISM

Thursday, 14 September 2017

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair), Councillor Sam Kilby-Shaw (Deputy Chair); Councillors Aziz, Vicky Culbard, Arthur McCutcheon, Brian Sargeant and Zoe Smith

Witnesses Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety
Peter Baguley, Head of Planning
John Dale, Head of Economic Development

Officers

Ian Gray, Interim Director – Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Richard Clinton, Royal and Derngate Theatre
Graham Croucher
Arthur Mishell
Mark Barber

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Martin Sutherland, Co-optee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Graham Croucher addressed the Scrutiny Panel. He referred to transport, engineering and industry missing from the heritage promotion of Northampton. He added that the Northampton Transport Corporation was well known. Mr Croucher referred to:

- Electric tramways
- Social history of the town
- The Transport Depot open day that had been very well received

He went on to refer to:

- The bus and transport heritage

- Vehicles are important to the town and have a real heritage presence in Northampton
- There is a need for a Transport Museum for the town

Mr Croucher was thanked for his informative address and the Chair advised that he would be sent a copy of the Panel's questionnaire.

Mr Arthur Mishell addressed the Scrutiny Panel. Mr Mishell referred to two groups that had restored two double decker buses, registration numbers N1 154 and JVV 267G. The buses were built by Daimler in Coventry. He felt that engineering and technology was missing from the heritage of the town. Mr Mishell added that the double decker buses had been taken to schools and had assisted primary schools, key stage 2, regarding their learning around transport. Mr Mishell provided statistics in relation to the industry and added that Northampton is a high quality engineering town. The double decker buses, previously referred to, were part of Heritage Open Days.

Mr Mishell was thanked for his informative address.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record subject to the inclusion of an invite to the relevant Director of Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust to a future meeting. The Director would be asked if a tour of Delapre Abbey could be arranged for the Panel after its meeting in March 2018.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

The Scrutiny Panel received a response to its core questions from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning. Officers highlighted the salient points contained within the document.

A research paper submitted by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement. The salient points were noted. Councillor King highlighted the various events, such as the Ghost Walk.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- Often visitors to Northampton will come to purchase shoes and do not experience the rest of the town, there is a need to encourage them to stay. There is a need to promote the shoe factory shops.
- This would be an excellent resource to the town.
- The Borough Council has a good working relationship with the major shop companies in the town and it would be useful to ascertain better working as a cluster.
- It was commented that a lot of people are unaware of the beautiful architecture of the town, a lot of which is second floor and above of buildings. Use of the upper floors are encouraged.
- The move of the University into the town will change the culture.
- It was noted that work has previously been undertaken with the college regarding fashion shows in the town and pop up shops. This had been very well received.

- The Scrutiny Panel heard that the Grosvenor Centre is in the process of having its shop frontages finalised. It was highlighted to the Panel that guidelines are as such and cannot be enforced. It is very much by negotiation. However, organisations are encouraged to comply with the guidelines when installing new frontages.
- It was suggested that the Grosvenor Centre Manager and the Director in relation to the BID are asked to attend the next meeting and answer the core questions of the Panel.
- Other towns and cities, such as Leeds, have a signage policy whereby all signs are produced in the same style
- The Panel was informed about the heritage at Rugby such as the birthplace of Rugby Football. Rugby School is also a key tourist attraction. Events that were put on in respect of the Rugby World Cup were noted. The town also puts on festivals and other events.
- Northampton has obvious assets such as the museums, Delapre Abbey, Althorpe House, the Saints and the shoe industry.
- Getting businesses together to liaise and share ideas would be an easy and useful solution.
- It was noted that the leaflets at Northampton train station do not contain information about Northamptonshire. This is similar in a hotel in the borough. It was suggested that the Borough Council could aid tourist attractions as part of package.
- The Scrutiny Panel considered the list of events and heritage provided by the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

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The Panel supported the Ghost Hunt and felt this could be widened to a Heritage Walk or Trail.

It was requested that the Panel is given a tour of the Leathercraft Museum.

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement and Officers were thanked for providing information to the Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED: That the information informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

6. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Scrutiny Panel considered a report detailing relevant legislation, the contents of which were noted.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

7. RELEVANT PUBLISHED PAPERS

The Scrutiny Panel considered a report detailing relevant published papers, the contents of which were noted.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

8. SITE VISITS

The Scrutiny Panel discussed places to visit to inform its Review. It suggested visits to:

- Hull
- Rugby
- Market Harborough
- Stratford
- Leicester
- Hay on Wye

The Chair advised that it would be more convenient for the site visits to take place in 2018. He would provide a series of dates. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to research with the British Retail Consortium which are comparable towns to Northampton for potential site visits.

AGREED: That a series of dates for the site visits be circulated to the Scrutiny Panel.