

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - CULTURE AND TOURISM

Thursday, 18 January 2018

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

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Martin Sutherland Royal and Derngate Theatres
Witnesses Colin Spears. Local Historian

Officers Nick Gordon, Cultural Services Manager
Derrick Simpson, Town Centre Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Mrs Spears
Mr Appleyard

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brian Sargeant.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

David Grindley, Highways Asset and Traffic Manager, NCC, was welcomed to the meeting. The Chair advised that the Panel was keen to hear about brown signage in respect of culture and heritage.

David Grindley advised that the install of brown signage is dependent upon the facility that is wanting to be signed. It is the responsibility of the applicant to pay for the signage. There is set criteria contained in both a local document and a document from the Highways Agency with set criteria for brown signage. However certain organisations such as the National Trust and English Heritage, are exempt and have automatic brown signs put up. Criteria is around visitor number and attractions and leisure facilities.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comments and heard:

- The venue/facility has to be of national significance for a brown sign. Delapre Abbey has brown signs.
- The organisation has to pay for the signs but they are insured by NCC
- There is different criteria to put a brown sign on a trunk road. Visitor figures have to be over 250,000 per year.
- Signs (not brown) are put up for churches and other religious venues if they are hard to find
- The Chair suggested a potential recommendation of the final report that a sign is put on a main A road into the town that says what the town has to offer. The sign could say “Don’t drive through, stop and visit” David Grindley confirmed that Northampton is signed off the motorway

David Grindley was thanked for this attendance and providing information to inform the Review.

(B) LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY - NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council, advised the Scrutiny Panel of the Heritage Group that he is changed. He confirmed that the purpose of this Group is different to that of the Scrutiny Panel – they complement each other. Scrutiny is looking at the promotion side, the Heritage Group is doing a stock take. The Heritage Group has had two meetings with another to be scheduled soon. The Scrutiny Panel will be advised of the date and will be welcome to attend. The Heritage Group comprises lots of historians from around the town; all with varied background. The Heritage Group has assisted the Hotel Forum to promote itself. The historians are looking to put together a guide that includes key dates, key locations and key facts and is also looking to drive out particular themes, for example, interpretation boards. There are emerging themes:

- Crime and punishment
- Open buildings
- Churches
- Royal theme

A draft of a map and a tour guide is also being investigated

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety, addressed the Scrutiny Panel. She confirmed that an event has been scheduled for 29 January 2018, 3:30pm to 5:30pm, in the Great Hall to showcase the new concept drawings of the Museum. It is aimed that the Museum will open in the autumn 2019.

A Group has been commissioned to do some work, ie a survey. Samples from respondents will form a Focus Group that will meeting end of January/beginning of February to provide their input.

The Leather Museum is part open in the Grosvenor Centre.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- It was confirmed that the Officer responsible for the outreach programme could investigate a unit in the Grosvenor Centre for the display of Museum artifacts
- The Chair referred to “Post Its” in other towns noting that some open up as eateries too.

Councillors Nunn and King were thanked for their informative addresses.

(C) DIRECTOR, NORTHAMPTON TOURISM ASSOCIATION

A response was not received from the Director, Northampton Tourism Association.

(D) LOCAL HISTORIANS

The Scrutiny Panel noted two very comprehensive responses from two local historians.

Colin Spears, local historian, addressed the Scrutiny Panel on his submission, highlighting the key points.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Regarding the Institute of Tourist Guiding (ITG) qualification known as the Green Badge which provides a Qualification for Guides in a Borough or for specific Heritage sites, Mr Spears suggested training could start September 19 with trained guides ready to go by May 2020. It is expected a mixed audience would be interested in being a Green Badge Guide. The ITG provides insurance for events
- The Scrutiny Panel suggested Councillors could be useful guides. It was suggested that a potential recommendation of the final report could include a short history course on Northampton for Councillors. The induction process would be best place for this to be included.
- Ghosts walks and similar are highly popular
- The possibility of a motor museum was referred to

Mr Spears was thanked for his informative address.

(E) DIRECTOR, ALVA

The Co-Optee advised that he had yet to liaise with the Director, ALVA.

6. HEAD OF HISTORY (HERITAGE), NORTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

The Chair advised that due to diary commitments it had proved difficult to arrange a meeting with the Head of History (Heritage), Northampton University.

7. WRITTEN EVIDENCE

(A) DIRECTOR, CANAL RIVER TRUST

A response from the Director, Canal River Trust was not received.

(B) LOCAL TRAVEL AGENTS

A response from local Travel Agents was not received.

(C) FREEMAN OF THE BOROUGH

The Chair advised that Mr Ager, Freeman of the Borough, had tendered his apologies and had asked to attend the next meeting.

It was agreed that Mr Ager, Freeman of the Borough, would be invited to attend the next meeting.

(D) FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

The Chair advised that a survey went live in the autumn 2017 and details were also forwarded to a number of Resident Groups and Forums. The key points, relevant to the scope of the Review, made by the 95 respondents to the survey were reported.

It was agreed that the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Review.

The Chair advised that Michael Ellis, MP, had the role of Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport), it would therefore be good to send him a copy of the Scrutiny Panel's final report.

The Scrutiny Panel then firmed up its arrangements for its site visit on Monday 22 January 2018.