

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

18th September, 2006, Town Hall

Present: Councillors: Hopgood (in the Chair), Colledge, Cowper, Graham, McDonnell, Pape and Stoddart

Also Present: Councillors: Kinghorn, Marsden and Smith

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simmons.

2. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th July, 2006 were

3. Scrutiny Of Tourism

The Head of Cultural Services and Tourism and Conference Manager attended the meeting. They gave background information on tourism and explained how its profile has been raised over the past twenty years. The Head of Cultural Services explained how cultural services is broken into 4 divisions: 1. Gala; 2 Heritage & Culture; 3 Arts and 4 Tourism, but that tourism touches on every division. The tourist information centres, visitor development and marketing and promotion make up the tourism section.

Over recent years tourism has come to the fore and with technology it is possible to book a visit and accommodation on line, therefore the boundaries are global. Instant bookings and fast technology makes competition very tough, therefore communication to visitor is very important. The information given is not parochial to Durham City, information is given on other attractions within the County with the aim to encourage visitors to stay longer within the area. Members suggested that promotion of the City should only be carried out at district level. However, the Head of Cultural Services advised Members that Durham City was 'the jewel in the crown'.

Promotion of events would have an effect of making people come into the City for the event rather than the Castle and Cathedral. Making Durham as welcoming and as positive as possible.

Members suggested whether the city should have a tour bus (as in other cities) going to various attractions picking up and dropping off visitors. The Head of Cultural Services advised that Durham was unique and should not be compared with other cities. Also, that the park and ride system which the County Council operates had been carefully planned so that attractions could be visited en route.

Members asked about methods used to publicise tourism in the district as in other areas leaflets could be found in bars, cafes and other retail outlets at a village level.

The Head of Cultural Services explained that the Tourism Section was in the process of reorganisation and hoped that new posts would be identified and filled, which would promote events such as Durham Regatta, The Literature Festival, Miner's Gala.

Durham Area Tourism Partnership, One North East and other partners work together to undertake marketing and promotion of the North East Area as a whole rather than all district council's trying to produce marketing strategies on a show string budget.

Members mentioned the success of the recent Continental Market and suggested that the success of Lincoln Christmas Markets could be an idea for Durham City. The Tourism and Conference Manager informed Members that care was needed with such events not to over sell. 50 Coach companies come year after year and the Tourism Section keeps in touch with these companies rather than doing a mass advertisement and being inundated with coaches and having nowhere for them to park. However, the Tourism and Conference Manager did comment that there is a sharing of best practice amongst similar Cities. Durham City is part of a Heritage City Group with Bath, Oxford, Cambridge amongst others.

Members mentioned that there was an opportunity to provide high levels of accommodation and restaurants to the families of Durham University students. The Tourism & Conference Manager advised Members that at the beginning and the end of the University's terms there is no available accommodation in the City and suggested that the panel may wish to invite the University's Conference Officer to come along to a panel meeting.

The Chair thanked the Head of Cultural Services and the Tourism and Conference Manager for their attendance and asked if they would be available for future meetings.

The Chair advised the Panel that Melanie Sensicle, from Durham Area Tourism Partnership had been invited to attend the October meeting.

4. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

The Meeting Terminated at 6.40 pm