

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2022

A MEETING of the REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the , DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2022 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Majid Khan

Councillors Iris Beech, Steve Cox, Sue Farmer, Sophie Liu, John Mounsey and Gary Stapleton

**In attendance**

**Officers:**

- Chris Dungworth – Head of Service (Business Doncaster – Economy & Enterprise)
- Claire Cardwell - Employment and Enterprise Manager (Business Doncaster – Economy & Enterprise)
- Scott Cardwell – Assistant Director of Development, Economy & Environment

**External:**

- Karen Hall - Customer Service Operations Manager | Department for Work and Pensions

		<u>ACTION</u>
16	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	There were no apologies made.	
17	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items where the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.	
18	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
19	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2021</u>	

	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meetings held on the held on the 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2021 were agreed as a true record with the addition of ‘one footfall camera in the market area’.	
20	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
21	<u>EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME OPPORTUNITIES FOLLOWING COVID EASING</u>	
	<p>The Panel received a report outlining Employment Programme Opportunities following Covid easing. The Chair thanked officers for their work during the pandemic.</p> <p>There was a brief overview of the current position, impacts of the pandemic and measures in place. This was followed by a discussion and the following areas were highlighted;</p> <p><b>Youth Unemployment</b> – It was believed that Youth Employment in Doncaster was higher than the national average. The Customer Service Operations Manager from the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) offered to provide confirmation of this outside of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Employment</b> – It was noted that research work being undertaken by Sheffield indicated a disconnect between youth unemployment and the availability of jobs. The care sector was used as an example, where people were not looking to work in those type of roles and therefore that sector was struggling to recruit. It was commented that there was a great deal of work taking place within the care sector to make those jobs more attractive. It was added that there were training packages available and a centre of excellence looking at that whole area and that demand in that sector would only continue to grow.</p> <p>It was continued that there was not the supply of highly skilled people to meet the demand of higher skilled jobs on offer in the higher tier (although supply was meeting demand within the middle tier). Reference was made to the work also being undertaken through the Council’s investment strategies. The Panel was also informed that during the pandemic a number of people left positions within the hospitality sector and now that sector was also struggling to fill vacancies.</p> <p><b>Engagement with Local Businesses</b> – It was explained that in terms of engaging with local businesses coming into Doncaster, the Investment Team would provide the Business Doncaster offer that included premises, supply chain and skills. It was explained that this would include providing a wraparound team to support that business and consider their employment needs and skills requirements.</p>	

Members heard about the local business incentive scheme, where money was made available subject to certain requirements such as the applicant being a resident of Doncaster and unemployed.

Reference was made to the value of Employment Academies, for example, the academy at Unity Development Junction 5 M18. It was explained that the purpose of employment academies was to maximise impact with the local labour force, which had already proved successful. It was commented that the challenge was encouraging people to become engaged in the process.

It was commented that this model had also been used when companies downsized. An example was shared, where all staff of a company that were being made redundant were supported into new jobs.

**Localities Model** – It was noted there would be an overarching challenge in connecting and influencing local settlements with employment opportunities. It was added that a further challenge was presented through the Passenger Transport Network. Members heard that the authority would look to work closely with bus operators through the bus partnership, although they had not control.

It was explained that the communication and messages of available jobs would be undertaken through the programmes already in place. Members heard that the Business Doncaster Team was well linked within the locality and with communities groups, and this was available in addition to services such as Launchpad, which was delivered out in communities.

It was reported that more youth unemployment engagement could be undertaken through the Youth Hub.

Concern was raised by a Member of the Panel, that part of a ward was being left out of consultation where the locality areas crossed borders. It was recognised that establishing locality areas required geographical boundaries. Members were assured that the work of the advanced team and DWP would not be separated off in the same manner, as they look at the whole community. It was explained that the work of Business Doncaster feeds into the Localities model alongside discussions and with the multi-agency teams involved.

Concern was raised about provision of affordable housing for people to access local job opportunities. It was recognised that there were concerns in place achieving a balance between jobs and housing growth at the airport. It was advised that this was being managed through the local plan by not just applying a policy that stipulated a housing allocation on its own but linking it to a jobs threshold. It was explained that this was an innovative way of ensuring that the airport was not developed only for housing. In terms of affordable housing, it

was acknowledged that although it was a buoyant house building economy in Doncaster, the margins were tighter than elsewhere in the country. It was commented that housing around the airport was considered to be located in a prosperous part of Doncaster with good schools therefore provided an indication that those house values were at the higher end of the Borough.

**Infrastructure/Transport Levy** – There was a brief outline and examples provided of what the infrastructure and transport levy like in terms of planning applications. Members were informed that consideration was given around modal shift and not just by cars. The Assistant Director of Development commented that money would not be held back if that prevented developments going forward where infrastructure was needed.

Comments were made that money could be used to provide better access to employment. It was explained that from a planning perspective, it was difficult to stipulate such conditions as part of planning obligations although efforts were made to encourage more training opportunities.

A Member of the Panel stressed the importance of ensuring that developers delivered on what they indicated they would. Assurances were provided that sites claimed as not being viable were independently assessed by experts. It was suggested that a previously run planning training scheme around viability could be rerun for Members due to the complexity of the topic.

**Availability of High-Skilled Jobs in Doncaster** – Reference was made to the University Technical College (UTC) being part of a model of change within Doncaster. It was added that there were employers now on board at UTC, providing advice on skills needs and requirements in Doncaster. Members heard that work was being undertaken with employers to ensure that there was future provision in Doncaster.

**Availability of High-Skilled Positions in Doncaster** - Members heard that there had been a downward trend in high level jobs although when investments came to fruition there would be an upturn in those positions. It was reported that there had been a great deal of interest from high-level manufacturing engineering, green-tech and high-tech industries.

**Raising Profile of Care Roles** - Members were reminded of the Centre of Excellence that involved health care providers, led by the college and also including key strategic partners. It was explained that this work considered various training pathways into care roles as well as demand and future jobs within those industries. It was recognised that there were particular challenges in terms of those roles offering low pay. It was explained how private sector industries such as

logistics, had a platform that could compete and drive up the minimum wage. It was noted that care providers did not have that ability to offer higher pay, attractive packages and better support to employees. It was stated that it was more about understanding the pathway in and opportunities to progress to higher-level positions.

It was outlined that there were a broad range of roles within the care industry and efforts were being made to dispel some of the myths around going into those roles. Members were informed about a recent DWP event that involved employers and customers, which had received a very positive turn out. It was added that this work would be continued and there had been positive local stories in health and social care where individuals have progressed to managerial positions.

In terms of job categorisations, it was shared that all jobs were valued including those within the care sector. Reference was made to a platform called 'Burning Glass' and how its system worked using key words and definitions of skill classifications based on jobs posted.

Reassurances were provided that these next steps were achievable and were not just aspirations.

**Key Challenges and Barriers** – It was noted that the Council had a reliance on external funding to deliver employment and enterprise programmes although with certain restrictions. Members heard that some programmes delivered were of a smaller scale when larger scale programmes were required to address such issues sustainably. It was continued that another challenge was the volatile nature of the cohort, which has been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. Members heard how programmes were being refocused to support those looking to change careers. Reference was also made to the impact of health and it was stated that 30% of claimants were unable to be supported as they were categorised as being 'unfit for work' within DWP. It was clarified that the 30% 'unfit for work' also reflected an increase in those effected by mental health issues. It was felt that it would be useful to form a better understanding of what that 30% looked like.

It was considered that further work needed to be undertaken to support the health of unemployed residents. Reference was made to the work undertaken with youth hubs where more issues were being picked up with young people than through the process undertaken with DWP.

It was continued that there was also a significant issue in finding ways to engage with those who did not want to be engaged with. It was viewed that more could be undertaken through the voluntary sector and through ways that were more creative. It was explained that it was also about enabling people to learn or develop new skills, supporting those who were looking to move their career in different directions, particularly when experiencing other demands and financial considerations. Members heard about the importance of ensuring

employers embraced opportunities and engaged with the Council and partners to ensure that it could match their needs with the available workforce. It was explained that it was also about understanding people's needs and future skills requirements to bring them along at the right pace for when opportunities arise.

The DWP reported that they had brought about a number of new initiatives to support customers with different barriers. Members heard that the majority of interventions were being undertaken face-to-face which had resulted in better engagement. It was explained that employment hubs had invited employers into the job centres to connect with unemployed customers, undertake interviews and offer jobs. Reference was made to the discretionary Flexible Support Fund that would help support barriers identified to get people into work. It was noted that there had been a big push recently around the 'Way to Work' programme encouraging jobseekers into work. Reference was made to sector based work programmes supporting people move from one sector to another with little training or upskilling. It was reported that the take-up for such programmes was high with positive results.

**Funding** - It was explained that there were a number of significant outcomes and outputs, that needed to be achieved for funded programmes such as 'Advance'. It was added that there was an underperformance clause for when certain outcomes were not accomplished.

It was noted that DWP funded national programmes such as 'Restart' and 'Way to Work', usually linked to outcomes by results. It was explained that although DWP contracts varied in terms of outcomes, it was also about the customer journey and moving those customers closer into work.

A Member of the Panel enquired about sanctions for those seeking employment. It was clarified that there were still conditions to customers on Universal Credit to look for work. Members were told that although sanctions were in place, customers were reengaging and returning for support to get them closer to employment. The Customer Service Operations Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions offered to get clarification around sanctions placed.

Members were informed that although European Funding was not available, the authority was always looking at what opportunities were out there such as through the Connected Futures Fund.

**Outreach Work** - In terms of outreach, Members were advised that 'Way to Work' were bringing in discussions about outreach work although there was uncertainty about which local areas this would include. The Customer Service Operations Manager of the DWP offered to provide this outside the meeting.

It was continued that DMBC benefitted from greater flexibility and efforts were being made through the Launchpad programme to engage with communities.

**Doncaster Chamber** - In terms of the Doncaster Chamber, it was commented that they were a membership organisation who were continually increasing their membership base. Members heard that work was taking place around a specific offer for retailers, to support people back into employment. In addition, it was reported that the Chamber also undertakes quarterly surveys with their members and work with the Council to help form solutions to address any issues raised.

It was explained that the Doncaster Chamber partnered with the Council by providing a coach through the Youth Hub and were also involved in Kickstart.

**Digital Skills** – Concern was raised around the reliance on digital access and the financial costs in becoming more digital. It was recognised that this was a challenge in accessing the kit and devices that a family or individual might need. Members were informed that the appropriate kit could be borrowed from the development programme or supplied by the Adult Family Community Learning (AFCL) team. It was recognised that connectivity and broadband could also be barriers. Members heard that the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority was looking into a digital skills programme, which Doncaster was also involved with. Reference was made to future issues around accessing adequate data and Members were reminded that some of these issues were South Yorkshire wide.

**Research Project And Findings** – It was explained that there were 2 phases to the research programme, 1. Quantitative phase (to be completed at the end of March 2022) and 2. Qualitative phase that included focus groups with young people to understand barriers in their career journey (to be completed mid-April 2022) with the final report due 28th April 2022. It was explained that the research and findings would feed into projects such as the ‘Connected Futures’ bid and if successful, the funding would accelerate and increase this work to try and engage with those that are more difficult to reach. It was continued that this would assist with upcoming bids for existing and future employment support, drive the engagement methodology and shape the Economic Strategy and Education and Skills 2030 action plan.

**Best Practice** – Members were informed that consideration was given to what other authorities were doing as well as any exemplar projects. It was explained that when looking at the employment advancement service, something similar was considered in Oldham. It was noted that the company behind the ‘all age careers’ platform worked across different areas and have brought forward innovations and

	<p>developments and partners such as DWP also shared projects part when looking to improve services. It was added that Doncaster's own advancement programme had generated interest from others.</p> <p><b>Generational Unemployment</b> – Concern was raised by a Member about generational unemployment and how that cycle can be broken. It was recognised that this was one of the more challenging groups to work with and that more innovative ways were needed to engage with those people and support them onto the employment journey.</p> <p><b>Carcroft Common</b> - There was a brief conversation regarding Carcroft Common site and its potential for opportunities for its surrounding areas. Assurances were provided that this site was being actively marketed to developers and there was confidence that it would come forward in the future. Members were assured that this was a key priority and the Mayor and Cabinet Member for Business was aware of the impact the development of this site would have on the area.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion around the procedure undertaken when an investor demonstrated interest in land in Doncaster and when marketing private land.</p> <p>Members expressed thanks to officers following the recent announcement of Doncaster being awarded first place for Small European Cities Of The Future 2022/23 and its work around the City Status bid.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that the Panel;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the information provided; and</li> <li>2. Recommend that consideration be given to a training session for Members of the Planning Committee (and other Members) around the viability of sites.</li> </ol>	
22	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny work plan. In terms of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions there was nothing to highlight to the panel.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion around the Panel's workplan, how items were included and number of meetings.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that the report be noted and that carbon neutrality be considered for future inclusion on the work plan.</p>	