

**Regeneration and Housing
Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Place Marketing -
Development of the
Doncaster brand**



March 2016

Foreword by the Chair of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Between September 2015 and March 2016, the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertook a review into Place Marketing. The purpose of this review was to look at Place Marketing and the Development of the Doncaster brand and in particular, what could be done to improve the Doncaster's brand regionally and internationally as well as how we could improve our own internal understanding.

This report presents the findings of this recent scrutiny review which includes evidence based recommendations made by the Panel.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the review including Cabinet Members, Councillors, Local Authority officers and representatives from partners and external organisations who gave up their time to support the work of this group.

We look forward to receiving the response to our findings and recommendations.



Councillor Craig Sahman
Chair of Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following recommendations were made by the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel following a review looking at Place Marketing - Development of the Doncaster brand that took place between September 2015 and March 2016. The reasons for the recommendations are detailed at the end in the report within Conclusions and Recommendations on Pages 19 to 23.

The Panel's recommendations are therefore that consideration is given to the following: -

- 1. That a clear plan is produced which will address the recommendations below. The plan will need to set out Officers responsible for taking the work forward, timescales and where appropriate performance measures.**

The plan will need to be available for consideration and agreement with the appropriate Panel at an early meeting of the 2016/17 Overview and Scrutiny workplan. Progress made against the recommendations will be reviewed in approximately 6 months after its agreement.

- 2. That the findings and recommendations from the review are taken forward where appropriate and used for future place marketing work.**
- 3. That a 'pitch pack' is developed and tailored for Members and local property companies (estate agents, consultants, developers etc.) accordingly that aims to promote Doncaster.**
- 4. That the wider use of Familiarisation Tours is broadened incorporating the use of advocates to support and take groups out.**
- 5. For a Borough tourism calendar to be circulated with the annual Council Tax leaflet.**
- 6. That a universal Doncaster ticket is developed to be used for attractions across the Borough.**
- 7. That there is an investigation as to whether the Borough would be better focusing on one key event e.g. cycling festival or Jet Ski event or a number of small quality events to promote the area.**
- 8. That there is encouragement of increased promotion of the Borough generally by the Council and business partners.**
- 9. That a tourism strategy is developed identifying growth and subsequently supporting evidence.**
- 10. To identify opportunities and ways for the Council to engage more with local property companies (estate agents, consultants, developers etc.) to create more effective relationships through increased connectivity and communication, for example, through the established housing forum.**

- 11. To identify how the Council and partners can further promote the A1/A19 area of the Borough and its offer to attract inward investment to these areas.**
- 12. To look at how Doncaster can be further promoted and exploited outside of its own boundaries both nationally and internationally.**
- 13. That the Panel supports appropriate regeneration and improvement of the Town Centre to become a more attractive place for retail to invest in and people from within and outside the Borough to visit.**
- 14. That steps are undertaken to consider how Doncaster's financial sector can be further strengthened.**
- 15. That the Education Commission is made aware of the work being undertaken by Doncaster Chamber Skills Academy, with a view to advocating this to across secondary schools ensuring that there is a minimum standard of job readiness amongst pupils.**
- 16. That the Council look at identifying with Doncaster College and Doncaster Chamber, an affordable finance provider to offer loans to individuals seeking to achieve Level 1 to 3 Courses who are in need of financial assistance.**
- 17. That the Council look at how it could incorporate within contracts commissioned through Adult Social Care, a proviso that providers assess the educational attainment of individuals they engage with and signpost effectively to suitable avenues dependent on their needs**
- 18. That consideration is given to the viability (under the general powers of competency) to establish a function in-house within the Council that will create further apprenticeships specifically for private companies at a chargeable fee.**

FOCUS OF THE REVIEW

1. The remit of the review was to look at Place Marketing and the Development of the Doncaster brand and in particular how we could improve our internal understanding.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

2. The Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed that the review should be undertaken through a series of informal meetings and that where appropriate those meetings should involve an external perspective (please refer to Section 6 – Contributors).

MEMBERSHIP

3. The Members of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel include the following: -
 - Councillor Craig Sahman (Chair)
 - Councillor Kevin Rodgers(Vice Chair)
 - Councillor John Healy
 - Councillor Sue Knowles
 - Councillor Eva Hughes
 - Councillor Ted Kitchen
 - Councillor Alan Smith
 - Councillor Clive Stone
 - Councillor Jonathan Wood

 - Invitees: Paul Smillie, Unite Representative

TIMESCALE

4. It was agreed by the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel that the review would be undertaken during a series of meetings between September 2015 and March 2016 and that the final report would be sent to the Executive in April 2016.

MEETINGS

5. The Panel undertook the following meetings as part of the review: -

	Date	Meeting
1.	4 th August 2015	Scoping of Place Marketing/Overview of Housing Action Plan
2.	14 th September 2015	Current Position
3.	1 st December 2015	Evidence Gathering – ‘Work’

4.	18 th December 2015	Evidence Gathering – Play
5.	3 rd February 2016	Evidence Gathering – Learn/Skills
6.	9 th February 2016	Evidence Gathering – Rest
7.	18 th February 2016	Familiarisation Tour of the Borough
8.	9 th March 2016	Recommendations Meeting

CONTRIBUTORS

6. During the review, the following individuals have kindly provided their time and expertise to enable Members to receive a broad range of information: -

DMBC:

Cabinet Members

- Councillor Joe Blackham - Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Transportation
- Councillor Bill Mordue - Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture
- Councillor Nuala Fennelly - Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
- Councillor Jane Nightingale - Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:

- Scott Cardwell - Assistant Director of Development
- Adam Goldsmith - Head of Service of Local Investment Planning
- Neil Firth - Head of Service Transport and Accessibility
- Tony Corby - Marketing Manager of Business Doncaster
- Steph Cunningham - Head of Communications
- Richard Young – Business Development of Tourism and Visitor Economy
- Colin Joy – Tourism and Visitor Economy Manager
- Chris Dungworth - Investment Manager
- Andy Maddox – Business Development Officer
- Andy Pattinson - Policy and Partnerships Officer

External:

- Daniel Fell - Chief Executive Officer at Doncaster Chamber
- Vic Holbrey - Director of Operations at Doncaster Chamber
- Tina Slater – Doncaster Chamber for Doncaster Skills Academy
- Jason Barnsdale – MRICS Director (Barnsdales Chartered Surveyors and Property Consultants)
- Chris Lamb – Northern College
- George Trow – Doncaster College
- Sheila Smith - Workers Education Association (WEA)

BACKGROUND

7. Whilst there are many positive developments and assets to the borough of Doncaster, there is still a need to build on our strengths and unique identity to attract both businesses and visitors to the town and to make it a better place to live for our residents. It is our goal to make Doncaster the best town in the North.
8. Doncaster borough has a lot to offer to business, residents and visitors. However there is an identified need to provide stakeholders with the right information to drive forward growth of the town. Moreover, there is a need to harness and develop our civic pride within the town to change perceptions, this is the responsibility of all and begins with work in our school system.
9. To address, the above the engagement of a company to help shape the 'place marketing' of Doncaster and put in to place activities that will deliver to a set of measurable goals has been agreed. With this in mind, it is the intention that the recommendations and findings from the review will be fed into the work taken forward.

EVIDENCE GATHERED – WHAT MEMBERS LEARNT

Work

10. Daniel Fell, Chief Executive Officer at Doncaster Chamber represented the Doncaster Chamber to provide his contribution from an external view. The purpose of the meeting was for the Panel to undertake a discussion about what Doncaster had to offer in terms of work.
11. The following areas were raised as part of the Panel's discussion: -
 - Connectivity – which has been enhanced by the development of White Rose Way and FARRRS (Finningley and Rossington Regeneration Route Scheme) link road.
 - Doncaster Airport – Members were updated about the development of a rail link to the Airport which was still being considered for the future although it was added that a sound business case would be required. An explanation was provided that the criteria of ensuring a business case would be based on factors such as guaranteeing enough patronage, growth around the area and also the stability of new flights (such as those now operated by Flybe). Members were informed that there would need to be a GRIP (Guide Rail Investment Process) stage 1 approval which required substantial funding and that a tram system would need to be installed. It was commented that Network Rail should start to consider how their investment would deliver.
 - Members were informed of the growth taking places around the airport such as two new potential international investors, the first spec office being built and industrial units being looked at, all of which were on the back of FARRRS being built as opposed to passenger related growth.
 - International Presence – Members were informed that an advocacy scheme was being undertaken which would help promote Doncaster overseas.
 - Doncaster Waterfront – Members recalled the previous Spatial Strategy, which was developed 'pre-recession' when Yorkshire Forward was on board although now considered out-of-date in line with market changes. It was explained that the Council was still looking at developing a mixed regeneration site but were focusing more on the student cluster around that area, for example, developing student accommodation.
 - Doncaster Station Forecourt – Members were informed of the proposals for changes to the Doncaster Station Forecourt and that a range of options would be considered by Cabinet early 2016. Regarding the proposed development, Members were told that it would be carried out through a programme of incremental changes over the next few years, rather than all at once.

- Reputation of Doncaster Council – In respect of Doncaster Council, Members were informed that the Council was perceived as having a good reputation with strong links continually being forged with the private sector and being more responsive to market needs. It was added that a balanced approach had been demonstrated in terms of permissions on greenbelt and countryside. It was noted that there were challenging times ahead and that with austerity measures these would worsen. It was observed that partnership working was key and that the Council needed to keep the momentum going whilst broadening out in this area. It was shared that being a ‘leader’ was culturally a new concept to Doncaster.
- Comparison to Other Local Authorities – It was recognised that Leeds had been particularly successful because of its mixed economy and willingness to change with the market. It was noted that the Bank of England had their second office in the heart of Leeds Business Quarter which when established had led to other financial institutions relocating there.
- Doncaster’s Economy – It was viewed that Doncaster had a broad economy that had proven to be fairly resilient. Comparisons were made to Doncaster’s economic plan developed 5 years ago which did not feature such sectors as manufacturing, engineering and rail. It was added that Doncaster’s own economy was comparatively weak in terms of its finance sector and that Doncaster needed to find its own ‘catalyst’ to drive that sector forward.
- Members were informed that Doncaster’s challenges during the recession were partially due to the type of jobs it had to offer. It was explained that through the Sheffield City Region there was a commitment to 12,000 jobs across all sectors including digital, finance, etc.
- Members were informed that one of the challenges that Doncaster faced were that many of our buildings were already occupied with little available for new or expanding businesses.
- Doncaster Town Centre – A Member raised concern about the town centre which it was felt might lack appeal to other retail establishments looking to locate. Comparisons were made with some European cities that were more vibrant. There was a brief discussion about the decline of retail and Members were informed that the issue of void shops was being addressed. It was also added that the issue of routes through from the Doncaster Station Forecourt going through the Town Centre would be picked up through the Masterplan. It was recognised that there would be a move away from the more traditional ‘building blocks’ of what once made a town centre.
- It was noted that the biggest regeneration projects at the moment were being delivered out in the communities and not the Town Centre.

12. Members were informed that perceptions about Doncaster from the business community had improved and become much more positive in recent years. It was explained that Doncaster was now viewed as a 'deliverer', taking decisions that had resulted in positive outcomes, for example, ensuring that bids were in at an early stage and utilising different pots of money to deliver on projects. It was outlined that there had been a powerful shift during the last couple of years, that lessons had been learnt and now there was evidence of greater buoyancy. Some of the soft indicators demonstrating this (as well as statistical evidence included a growth in international trade, increased corporate interest at St Leger races and the large turnout figures at the annual Doncaster Business Awards event.
13. It was commented that although a regeneration programme was needed that it should not be overly prescriptive. Members were told how a more reactive and flexible approach to the market was needed.

Play

14. Leisure was something that maybe the Borough as a whole did not push enough, particularly when it has two stand out elements, the Racecourse and Wildlife Park. This discussion needed to focus on how we, as a borough, could better promote what Doncaster has. How could we (the Council, communities and partners) market and better package Doncaster.
15. The following areas were raised as part of the Panel's discussion: -
 - Visitor figures (provided by Visit England) – It was reported that Doncaster's visitor numbers for day trips outperform many areas across the country but needed to be converted to overnight stays. It was noted that when tourism figures had been checked, there was no real difference to three years ago. It was commented that with 14 visitor attractions across Doncaster feeding into the figures, it was difficult for example, to know how many attractions were actually visited in one trip. It was recognised that with the Borough having so many attractions that were not concentrated in the town centre, like York, a strategy was required to improve visitor numbers.

The main visitor attractions in Doncaster included:

- Wildlife centre
- Racecourse
- Dome
- Cusworth Hall
- Conisbrough Castle
- Brodsworth Hall
- Fishing Lakes
- Retail – Market, Frenchgate, Lakeside
- Vulcan Experience
- Museum
- Stadium – Doncaster Rovers
- Bawtry Paintball
- Jet ski competitions

- Proposed PGA Golf Course Rossington
 - Motor park at junction 4
 - Woodworth lakes – Junction 4
- St Leger – This had been revamped although there was still potential to take such improvements further, with the need to encourage people to attend race meetings, stay in Doncaster overnight and visit other venues the following day.
 - Joint Ticketing – It was suggested that a joint ticket could be developed to extend peoples stay with individual events and attractions endorsing each other. For example, it could be used at the Races then the Wildlife Park.
 - Joint Advertising – It was proposed that businesses/attractions needed to promote each other’s venues on their websites, something which had also been acknowledged by the sector itself.
 - Doncaster Rovers - Members discussed the opportunity for football fans to bring their spouse and family into the town during the football season, with strong advertising across attractions. It was seen that this may increase the appetite for an overnight stay, particularly if the visiting football club was from some distance away.
 - Hotels – It was advised that although there had been a few proposals for hotels although nothing had recently been built. It was noted that good rates in hotels were required to get a good return on investment; this was due to building costs in Doncaster being as high as anywhere else in the country. It was also added that the number of beds provided can also dictate the size of possible future events that could be held in the town and surrounding areas.
 - Hotel links – It was questioned whether Doncaster has the desired hotel capacity to meet ambitions and learnt that hotels within Doncaster were fully booked during peak events, for example, during race meetings. It was also questioned how hotels were packaged and linked to visitor websites.
- Tour de Yorkshire - Having the ‘Tour de Yorkshire’ race finishing in Doncaster presented a massive promotion opportunity to impress people to return to the town and surrounding area. Evidence from the Tour de France, although this was a much bigger event, show visitor statistics tend to increase afterwards.

Members expressed the wish to employ “Welcome to Doncaster” advocates, for example at the train station to position Doncaster and show it can facilitate events of this nature;

- Families – Families look for weekends away where they can get the best value for money. It was commented that when a hotel is found, or attraction, they can signpost you direct to other attractions or hotels, to

ensure the best deal and weekend package is found. It was felt that this was something that was required across attractions and hotel websites in Doncaster.

- Business Stays – It was questioned where individuals stay when there was business expansion in the area and around the town. There was a suggestion that cheaper rooms be made available although concern was expressed that quality would be of a lower standard.
- Growth of Monthly Events – There were spikes for tourism when specific events were held in the Borough. It was believed that finding the right event to build on was significant in putting the Borough high on the tourism map. It was commented that growing an event, sporting or otherwise would require a 5 year plan at least. Members questioned the capacity of the town to hold larger events or whether it should focus on a number of small quality events, which would need to be pump primed with a more focused strategic lead.

Events discussed and comments raised;

- Fishing tournaments – would fishermen use facilities in the town centre or surrounding towns/villages?
- Music events - how cost effective were they?
- Trade fair – there were ready made arenas at the Dome and Racecourse.
- Cycle Festival – issues with a regular cycling festival included underwriting the event and finding sponsorship. Riders have taken part from across the country and abroad with crowds of 4,000 to 5,000 attending in the past.
- Tourism support/resources – Sheffield City calls itself the “Outdoor Venue for England” using the peak district on the doorstep, feeding off its natural asset.
- Proposed PGA Golf Course at Rossington – It was suggested that packages for golfers, partners and friends would be essential. There was also a reference to making available a good spa for mini breaks and weekends which could be linked to the Golf club.
- Jet Ski event – this was now recognised as a good venue attracting 5,000 to 10,000 over the event weekend. It was perceived that this was a very insula event with people staying in their own accommodation onsite; however, guests were spending time and money at the Lakeside Shopping Village and local restaurants. It was added that this event was filmed by a drone and made Doncaster look amazing with excellent feedback, attracting people from Europe and worldwide. Reference was also made to the future provision of a beach and launch site, with a building including toilets and changing facilities. It was recognised that this would obviously provide a better facility and attract more people to the event and site.
- Tourism calendar – could be circulated with Council Tax bills.
- Heritage

16. To conclude, it was stressed that the Borough needed to build on what it already had, using one major attraction to promote other attractions and events across the Borough.

Learn/Skills

17. Members were informed that work was being undertaken linking schools with businesses and opportunities. There were a number of organisations represented who explained how they contributed to educating and encouraging 16 to 19 and 19 + to secure a job, whilst addressing the barriers for individuals and businesses in the area.

Doncaster College:

- NEETs (Not in Education Employment and Training) – When discussing NEETs, it was highlighted that some may already have a degree but were not able to find appropriate employment. It was viewed that as a Borough, we need to focus on those that do not hold many qualifications to ensure that they are engaging in positive activities;
- College undertakes work with employers such as Amazon to recruit on site ensuring that the employers, individuals and skills are brought together;
- Many young people undertake A-levels and degrees but do not choose to return to Doncaster to graduate positions;
- Reduction to the adult skills budget, a 27.5% cut which cannot be withstood;
- The majority of colleges were providing skilled trades to an HND level ensuring that young people were receiving good high quality apprenticeships;
- Apprenticeship wage – Calculated that at £3.30 per hour meaning the young person has to work for 2 hours a day just to cover an average daily bus journey. It was commented that Doncaster's Apprentices go on to the £6.20 wage;
- Attainment is measured at 16 – Concerns were raised that if a Level 2 education had not been achieved by this age then level 3 wouldn't be reached at 19. It was added that if young people did not reach their qualification goals then colleges and schools were constantly working a deficit model. It was imperative that young people, at secondary school, were educated to ensure they were in a position to gain an apprenticeship;

- 19 to 24 year olds - 24% claiming Job Seekers Allowance with history showing that they could remain in that position for many years with no prospects or aspiration.

18. Northern College - Is a residential college for adult learners from across northern England from 19 upwards and focused on individuals who were in long unemployment aged in their 40s and 50s. The college works with communities to develop individual's skills as this is being relied upon more often in society;

In addition to education the college addresses drugs and alcohol related addiction through working with a number of agencies in Doncaster. It was stated that as the college offered residential courses, it enabled people to escape the 'chaos' of their daily life. Comments were made that aspiration, confidence and self-esteem was viewed as major factors that impacted adversely on people's lives. It was noted that the Northern College prepared people to apply to Doncaster College to move forward with their aspirations;

Outreach Tutors engaged with communities and other organisation to consider how to get the 30% of working age adults (including 16 to 17 year olds) who do not have qualifications into employment.

19. Workers Education Association (WEA) - WEA was founded in 1903 with limited resources of only two field staff members working across Doncaster;

- The WEA complimented what was happening across Doncaster addressing issues such as basic reading and writing;
- 'Why vote' was a successful course delivered across the Borough which had resulted in a play being developed by local women and a meeting with MP's in London;
- The WEA assisted deaf students with literacy and maths helping them to progress. It was highlighted that the cost of interpreters when students move on to further courses was £90 per half day;
- A Field Worker's role was to meet with people who had never worked or was finding it difficult to secure employment. They would encourage them to address their problems and barriers in their lives and signpost to the right area, to provide opportunities;
- Different venues were identified and used by WEA, for example the Museum for maths classes, a place where users could take their families to see free exhibitions, encouraging positive activities and engagement;

20. Skills Entry Level – The Cabinet Member gave an overview that some people, were only educated to Entry Level 1 which was equivalent to Key Stage 2,

therefore, some adults were educated to the equivalent of what would be the same for 7 to 11 year olds. It was acknowledged that some people only had the basic skills to help them through their lives;

21. Securing a course – It was noted that it was very difficult to be accepted onto a course without English and Maths being obtained. Secondary education needed to ensure children and young people were leaving school with good qualifications and education. The college pinpointed young people who did not have qualifications in Maths and English and put courses in place;
22. GCSE's/Vocational Qualifications – It was questioned whether the same resources were concentrated on young people not achieving 5 grades A-C and not just those that were at 'A'*. Concern was expressed that young people who were not academic were missed and not gaining practical skilled qualifications. Members were worried that children and young people were not reaching levels of expectation. It was advised that some young people were not comfortable within the school environment and needed to be signposted to the right course. It was felt that the importance of grades at both GCSE and 'A' levels needed to be outlined early in a young person's education.
23. In terms of vocational qualifications, it was reported that 60% of students went to university but it was felt that there were not enough young people undertaking old style vocational qualifications, e.g. plumbing, which ultimately lead to very well paid positions and an increase in Doncaster Gross Value Added (GVA) to our local economy. It was felt that there needed to be a more improved positive opinion for such qualifications.
24. Aspiration – Many examples were given of young people from Doncaster whose aspirations to be successful had diminished. It was acknowledged that one of the Borough's biggest issues was to raise their pride for the borough and turn around young people's strong wish to leave. It was noted that many young people stay at school or go to college to undertake 'A' levels simply because of their parent's expectations but not all continue to university;
25. The view from business representatives was that Yorkshire based enterprises were more likely to build a business to a substantial size to be sold once the owner had reach retirement. It was of the opinion that the move to expand businesses beyond the £1 million mark was not a common goal to many local entrepreneurs.
26. Working/Living in Doncaster – It was stressed that it did not feel important to young people to return to Doncaster once qualified. There was concern that schools and parents should emphasise to young people the opportunities that were available in Doncaster. It was added that businesses had to seek applicants for jobs from outside Doncaster, due to the lack of skills in some areas and individuals not being job ready;
27. Well-trained teaching staff – It was raised that well-trained teaching staff would seek to teach 'A' levels, however, if the opportunity disappeared then teachers would move away from the area. It was acknowledged that good schools will ensure good teacher retention;

28. Careers Advice and Guidance - Panel Members were advised how the Cabinet Member had undertaken visits to all schools to address how information and guidance on careers was delivered, highlighting the range of provision varied from basic to excellent. It was noted that some teachers had themselves never worked out of education, going from school, through University straight to employment in a school. As a result of this, some teachers found it difficult to support young people to be job ready;
29. Education Commission – Members were informed that the Authority was looking at creating a Doncaster based curriculum which was expected towards the end of the 2016;
30. Apprenticeships - Opinion was that that there was not the demand for apprenticeship routes with employers queuing to take on young people. It was considered that there were too many apprenticeships where young people had been trained for one year then not retained in employment, with the companies seeking a further apprentice. Concern was expressed that this was not an effective route to employment for young people.
31. Discussion highlighted that larger companies did have a stronger employment structure but were faced with the challenge that young people did not possess core skills initially. It was emphasised, however, that companies were more concerned with the right attitude and work ethic rather than academic qualifications, as these could be obtained in adult life.
32. It was noted that it would be difficult for larger companies to set up their own apprenticeship infrastructure and it was much easier for larger training organisations to undertake this. Additionally, it would be very difficult for small to medium enterprises as they were focused on ensuring the day to day business was running;
33. Ageing Workforce – it was stressed by Doncaster College that they were still employing lecturers who had been employed by the country's traditional large companies, for example, British Steel although it was difficult to assess what the demand would be like in future years.
34. Affordability – Was identified as a key barrier to education for adults and older people and it was noted that to undertake a course at the college, 10 years ago you would pay 8%, but this had increased gradually to 25%, 50% and finally 100% of the real cost. It was added that there was some fee eligibility, but those that could not afford a course will not attend. It was explained that there was the option of taking a loan for education, however, older people did not have the same outlook as those leaving school and did not wish to take on debt.

Rest

35. Quality of Local Schools - It was reported that one of the key influences to attracting people to live in a certain area was the quality and standard of the local schools. Based on this, it was recognised that one of the Borough's key

challenges was addressing the skills gap and raising the performance of schools within Doncaster.

36. Location Location Location - Jason Barnsdale, MRICS Director of Barnsdales told the Panel that in respect of the external view, that when moving, potential buyers tended to look at what came with the housing stock such as quality of schools, what was in the local vicinity e.g. restaurants, (particularly big national chains) hotels and parks etc. It was explained that the lifestyle and leisure side were hugely important factors that were taken into consideration when looking at a house. It was further explained that Estate Agents were asked to consider the individuals budget and look at what the area had to offer. It was supported that people were more focused on what was available for their children's education as well as the surrounding area and that 'location, location, location' was indeed key when moving. It was explained that safety was an important factor for those with young families. People moving from the South of England were surprised that there were less leisure facilities in the North of England but it was acknowledged that you would market other aspects such as the countryside.
37. Connectivity - It was recognised that Doncaster has rural areas and good connectivity and that individuals commuted from Doncaster to Leeds because of this, which was acknowledged as a good selling point. It was suggested that there was a need to compare with other best examples to us and look at how those places are attracting people to live there. It was noted that some of our neighbouring authorities such as Sheffield doesn't have a mixed economy like Leeds and York.

Potential Regeneration Opportunities within the Borough

38. The Panel heard about the regeneration opportunities within Doncaster that could unlock growth in more remote areas, the potential schemes within the Sheffield City Region, more proactive work along junction 5, planning permission granted to link 3100 houses and 41 hectares of employment land and finally, planning permissions for a marina at Stainforth. It was stressed that there was a need to make sure opportunities connected into growth and an infrastructure could be created that would help develop an economic pipeline, for example, FARRRS. Members were assured that bids were being applied for (through the infrastructure bid) plus opportunities maybe presented through the devolution fund.
39. Members were informed of a strategy to make more deprived areas within the Borough more attractive. It was recognised that there was a need to make Doncaster more appealing as a whole. It was remarked that there was a movement towards the formation of dormitory towns, with good quality housing near railway lines.
40. Challenges – It was recognised that educating larger developers on local areas being viable was a challenge. It was explained to Members that the cost of a building conversion was no different in Doncaster or Sheffield. It was advised that there was a move of office buildings being converted to resident

accommodation, for example, Consort House in the town centre was being converted to flats, attracting people to the town centre to increase money spent. It was commented that there were a large number of redundant offices which were not fit for purpose. It was considered that if the town centre economy was to get stronger then there may be a ripple effect onto other areas of Doncaster. It was commented that additional Aldi's and Lidl's stores were being built which might help the Borough although it was recognised that balance was needed with the local retailer.

41. It was questioned what was happening to encourage investment into the communities. Members were informed that lots of work was being undertaken to raise the quality of housing.
42. It was commented that opportunities existed for the Council to work and engage more with local estate agents and property companies which would improve communication and help the Council become more connective. It was recognised that Estate Agents were experts with useful connections who had fostered good relationships with bigger companies in London. It was raised that estate agents did not understand the bigger strategic context of Doncaster and questioned whether local estate agents were equipped with what they needed to make staff aware. It was agreed that having a 'pitch pack' as a marketing tool would prove very useful to give to potential investors.
43. It was questioned what was being done to help smaller developers develop viable sites. It was added that small developers often had a problem obtaining finance from banks whereas larger developers already had a line of finance. Members were informed that the Council had improved how they worked with smaller developers, such as setting up a forum to assist with individuals helped with completing paperwork and general advice, set up advice. It was added that some sites lent themselves better to smaller developers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel's recommendations are therefore that consideration is given to the following: -

- 44. That a clear plan is produced which will address the recommendations below. The plan will need to set out Officers responsible for taking the work forward, timescales and where appropriate performance measures.**

The plan will need to be available for consideration and agreement with the appropriate Panel at an early meeting of the 2016/17 Overview and Scrutiny workplan. Progress made against the recommendations will be reviewed in approximately 6 months after its agreement.

REASON: To ensure that the Panel's accepted recommendations are organised, prioritised and will be taken forward through an agreed action plan. That the action plan will include the timescales and performance measures which progress will be monitored through the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- 45 That the findings and recommendations from the review are taken forward where appropriate and used for future place marketing work.**

- 46. That a 'pitch pack' is developed and tailored for Members and local property companies (estate agents, consultants, developers etc.) accordingly that aims to promote Doncaster.**

REASON: In respect of Members roles, it was seen that they have an essential role and could be advocates in marketing the Borough. It was suggested that Councillors could pitch in an ambassadorial way and it would be useful to establish a local 'pitch' for Councillors.

It was also commented that opportunities existed for the Council to work and engage more with local estate agents and property companies which would improve communication and help the Council become more connective. It was recognised that Estate Agents were experts with useful connections who had fostered good relationships with bigger companies in London. It was raised that estate agents did not understand the bigger strategic context of Doncaster and questioned whether local estate agents were equipped with what they needed to make staff aware. It was agreed that having a 'pitch pack' as a marketing tool would prove very useful to give to potential investors.

- 47. That the wider use of Familiarisation Tours is broadened incorporating the use of advocates to support and take groups out.**

REASON: It was felt that as part of the wider picture of promoting all areas the Borough and the important role of advocates moving forward, that the Familiarisation Tour (which had been reported as being 'excellent' by a Member who had participated on it) could be utilised and expanded in an effective way as a means of achieving this.

- 48. For a Borough tourism calendar to be circulated with the annual Council Tax leaflet.**

REASON: It was felt that it would be useful to promote what was happening in the Borough through other means to compliment the Visit Doncaster website

- 49. That a universal Doncaster ticket is developed to be used for attractions across the Borough.**

REASON: Members suggested that a joint ticket could be developed to extend peoples stay with individual events and attractions endorsing each other. For example, it could be used at the Races then the Wildlife Park. It was seen that this would provide an alternative way to encourage visitors to other attractions across the Borough, which would also provide good value to customers.

- 50. That there is an investigation as to whether the Borough would be better focusing on one key event e.g. cycling festival or Jet Ski event or a number of small quality events to promote the area.**

REASON: This would provide information as to where tourism investment and resources would be most effective and where they should be targeted.

- 51. That there is encouragement of increased promotion of the Borough generally by the Council and business partners.**

REASON: This would help increase promotion across the Borough.

Members also expressed the wish to employ “Welcome to Doncaster” advocates, for example at the train station. when larger events were held to promote the borough in a positive way as soon as people arrive.

- 52. That a tourism strategy is developed identifying growth and subsequently supporting evidence.**

REASON: It was noted that with the Borough having so many attractions that were not concentrated in the town centre, like York, a strategy was required to improve promote the area and in turn increase visitor numbers. There was a discussion whereby Members agreed that we needed to focus on how we, as a borough, could better promote what Doncaster has.

- 53. To identify opportunities and ways for the Council to engage more with local property companies (estate agents, consultants, developers etc.) to create more effective relationships through increased connectivity and communication, for example, through the established housing forum.**

REASON: It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the local authority to develop an ongoing and effective dialogue between stakeholders. It was felt that this could enhance further discussions with local property companies

(including estate agents) and bring them together to find out more about what's happening in the Borough.

- 54. To identify how the Council and partners can further promote the A1/A19 area of the Borough and its offer to attract inward investment to these areas.**

REASON: Reference was made to how the North of the Borough could be further promoted. There was also feedback from the Familiarisation Tour of the Borough that although it was an excellent way of promoting the Borough to potential investors it predominantly focused on regeneration projects in the South of the Borough. It was noted that the biggest regeneration projects at the moment were out in the communities not the Town Centre.

- 55. To look at how Doncaster can be further promoted and exploited outside of its own boundaries both nationally and internationally.**

REASON: Members were informed that in respect of promoting Doncaster's international presence that an advocacy scheme was being undertaken. It was outlined that there had been a powerful shift during the last couple of years, that lessons had been learnt and now there was evidence of greater buoyancy. It was reported that some of the soft indicators demonstrating this (as well as statistical evidence) included a growth in international trade, increased corporate interest at St Leger races and the turnout figures at the annual Doncaster Business Awards event.

- 56. That the Panel supports appropriate regeneration and improvement of the Town Centre to become a more attractive place for retail to invest in and people from within and outside the Borough to visit.**

REASON: Concern was raised about the town centre, which some Members felt lacked appeal in attracting other retail establishments that might be looking to relocate. Members were advised of the move to office buildings being converted to resident accommodation, for example, Consort House in the town centre was being converted to flats, attracting people to the town centre to increase money spent.

Comparisons were made with some European cities that were renowned to be vibrant. There was a brief discussion about the decline of retail and Members were informed that the issue of void shops was being addressed. It was also added that the issue of routes through from the Doncaster Station Forecourt going through the town centre would be picked up through the Masterplan. It was recognised that there would be a move away from the more traditional 'building blocks' of what once made a town centre.

- 57. That steps are undertaken to consider how Doncaster's financial sector can be further strengthened.**

REASON: It was viewed that Doncaster has a broad economy that has proven to be fairly resilient. Comparisons were made to Doncaster's economic plan developed 5 years ago which did not feature such sectors as manufacturing,

engineering and rail. It was added that Doncaster's own economy was comparatively weak in terms of its finance sector and that Doncaster needed to find its own 'catalyst' to drive that sector forward.

It was recognised that Leeds had been particularly successful because of its mixed economy and willingness to change with the market. It was noted that the Bank of England had their second office in the heart of Leeds Business Quarter which when established had led to other financial institutions relocating there.

- 58. That the Education Commission is made aware of the work being undertaken by Doncaster Chamber Skills Academy, with a view to advocating this to across secondary schools ensuring that there is a minimum standard of job readiness amongst pupils.**

REASON: Members were informed that the Authority was looking at creating a Doncaster based curriculum which was expected towards the end of the 2016. It was questioned whether the same resources were being put into those that were failing and not just those that were at 'A'*. Concern was expressed that young people who were not academic were missed and not gaining practical skilled qualifications. Members were worried that children and young people were not reaching levels of expectation. It was added that businesses had to seek applicants for jobs from outside Doncaster, due to the lack of skills in some areas and individuals not being job ready.

- 59. That the Council look at identifying with Doncaster College and Doncaster Chamber, an affordable finance provider to offer loans to individuals seeking to achieve Level 1 to 3 Courses who are in need of financial assistance.**

REASON: Concern was raised that individuals were not able access education because of changes to funding streams. It was reported that the numbers of adults accessing education through Doncaster College had declined dramatically as courses offered were no longer funded in the way they were before. It was noted that there was no formal set up to identify where individuals could currently access finance to support them in taking the first step to acquire a better education.

- 60. That the Council look at how it could incorporate within contracts commissioned through Adult Social Care, a proviso that providers assess the educational attainment of individuals they engage with and signpost effectively to suitable avenues dependent on their needs**

REASON: It was commented that through its commissioning programmes of adult social care, the Council and people employed through contracts may come across individuals who are isolated or experiencing loneliness and looking to develop their skills or qualifications. It was therefore suggested that when commissioning contracts (being delivered through council/partners) that providers consider how those individuals could be signposted in accordance with their needs.

- 61. That consideration is given to the viability (under the general powers of competency) to establish a function in-house within the Council that will create further apprenticeships specifically for private companies at a chargeable fee.**

REASON: It was put forward (under the general powers of competency) that the Council using its own in-house expertise and established mechanisms, provides at a chargeable fee, a service that will support private businesses to establish apprenticeships. Concern was raised that businesses were very busy and this might be something that can be helped with by the Council. Members were made aware of the Skills Made Easy programme and that this could be looked at although funding was very tightly ringfenced.

DRAFT

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- Councillor Jane Nightingale - Portfolio Holder for Housing

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