

Special Scrutiny Committee

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 3 February 2012

Present: Councillors I Chilvers, M Dyson, K Ellis, M Hobson, Mrs W Nichols (Chair), and D Peart

Apologies for Absence: Councillors D Mackay, C Pearson and R Price

Also Present: Nigel Adams MP

Officers Present: Jonathan Lund, Deputy Chief Executive and Richard Besley, Democratic Services Officer

Press: 1

33. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Nigel Adams MP – Question and Answer Session

The Chair thanked Nigel Adams MP for attending. Questions had been raised by Councillors and they had been circulated to the MP.

The Chair felt that some of Mr Adams's answers may lead to follow up questions and there may be some additional questions if the MP had no objection and if time was available.

Employment Creation and Investment	
Q	Despite the current economic situation was there anything the MP could do to attract jobs to the Selby district getting people and students into work. Was there money to be tapped into by companies for new ventures?
A	The MP responded that he wanted to attract jobs to the area and that getting people back into work as his top priority despite the fact that Selby had a low unemployment rate and had seen a decrease in job-seekers allowance claimants since 2010. He wanted to support the local authority to help promote the area; to talk to local

	<p>business on job creation and promote the infrastructure already in place. He referred to the Jobs Fair that attracted over 50 companies and 1,100 job seekers and indicated an intention to hold further events with the help of the Job Centre.</p> <p>To help people to start their own business he wanted to stream-line the process of getting business support grant and wanted banks to do more to help new businesses starting up. He welcomed the fact that Selby area had the highest number of new starter companies in the County/region.</p>
	In response to a question about the support available to start up a new business the MP directed the committee to the new 'Business in You Scheme', an initiative created by the Government and the 'Start Up Britain Campaign'. There are grants available but given the current economy there were fewer than in previous years.
	He was asked to acknowledge that not all young people can start new businesses, the Future Jobs Fund had stopped and apprenticeships were being lost whilst jobs losses for women were higher than those for men. The MP responded by pointing out that there were currently 1,000 young people in the area on apprenticeship schemes.
Q	With Siemens wanting to build a wind turbine factory at Hull for offshore wind farms would this ease the pressure for such developments in the Selby area? Also will any of the 2,000 plus jobs to be created go to Selby work?
A	Mr Adams indicated that he would prefer to see subsidies to wind farms aimed at areas where they could generate the most electricity. Selby was not an area prone to extreme weather and he felt that Selby attracted wind farms because there were already wind farms in the area.
Transport	
Q	What benefits would Selby gain from the proposed electrification of the Transpennine railway line which was announced recently?
A	<p>The MP welcomed the decision to electrify the line to York because an electrified service would be greener and cheaper. It would offer increased capacity and a far better and faster service whilst a better rail infrastructure it would also help generate business.</p> <p>He was also hoping to meet with the Rail Minister to look at electrification into Milford Junction to open up the Gascoigne Wood site to industry and commercial development.</p>
	When asked about rail fare increases he explained that as he was a rail user, travelling between his constituency home and Westminster, he felt the increase was too high and understood why tax payers were annoyed.
Funding	
Q	There had been cuts to public funding and the residents of the District had felt this in several ways, reduction in the Police and Fire Service provision, reduction in funding for NYCC, with a considerable percentage being taken from the highways budget, lots of

	local road repairs have been put on hold, and Selby District Council had reduced their staffing budget and changed their way of working. How does the MP feel the District had been affected by all the budget cuts?
A	<p>Everyone was aware of public funding cuts and some were unpopular but savings had to be made.</p> <p>Selby District Council's new way of working had to be congratulated. No service deterioration was noticeable. Quite often the quick solution for organisations in many areas was to go for the lazy option and reduce staff. That was not always the answer, better to look at how it administers and funds the services it provides which was what Selby District Council had done.</p>
Q	The Government says it cannot do anything about bonuses in the state owned Banks (Nick Clegg) as they are based on contracts made with the previous Government, why was it that they can attack public sector (and health service) pensions which underwent root and branch reforms under the last government which stated this reform "would last for a generation"? Are banker's contract's more legally binding than contracts with public (and health) service workers?
A	Mr Adams criticised excessive bonuses, however where bonuses were share bonuses the only way to benefit financially was to increase share value and generate more profit.
	Asked about the risk of doctors leaving the NHS because of proposed changes to pensions, Mr Adams said that he spoke to many doctors and does not see that as a particular risk.
City Status	
Q	The government had recently granted to cities such as Leeds more power for spending money and running buses and other facilities. How can Selby benefit from this or are we to be held back from expanding?
A	In response the MP referred to the New Homes Bonus Scheme.
Police and Crime Commissioner	
Q	Could you give us your views of the new Police and Crime Commissioner position?
A	<p>The MP explained that this would be a new approach to promote transparency and accountability which would allow the Chief Constable to focus on operational policing.</p> <p>He felt that the example of the deputy mayor of London's role showed that the principle worked well.</p> <p>The Commissioner would possibly look at lean funding, channelling funds to police services other than administrative services within the authority which would help move to a more robust system.</p>

EU Position	
Q	Would you please give us an update on the latest situation regarding the EU and latest position affecting this country?
A	The MP explained that the UK was an active member of the European Union outside of the Eurozone. The MP supported the Prime Minister in the line being taken to defend the UK and the Pound.
	Asked about immigration Mr Adams referred to a misconception that the door to the UK is open to all. Generally only those who come with work or prospects would get in or stay and consideration was being given to restricting entry to people on a certain salary scale with specialist expertise/ skills.
Any Other Questions	
Q	Who are the current owners of Burn Airfield as Yorkshire Forward used to own the site and they have been disbanded, does Burn Gliding Club have a secure future?
A	The site is managed by the Homes and Communities Agency. The site is a valuable asset to the area. The MP would like to see development that could accommodate the gliding club.
Q	Royal Yacht Britannia – could we have the MP’s views with regard to this announcement, how would it be paid for as it has been stated that it will not be from tax payers money?
A	If it costs the taxpayer nothing and someone is prepared to privately fund the project it should be supported. The previous Royal Yacht was not solely used by the Crown, it had a role in promoting UK interests and hosted important trade and diplomatic events.
Q	What impact on constituents will the changes have to the welfare payments, in particular for the disabled?
A	The system designed to help the poorest had helped trap them into welfare dependency. These proposals had the greatest level of support of all Government policies to date.

The Chair invited further questions for the MP from the Committee

Q	Tuition Fees. You voted to almost triple the level of fees and deter students from going to University. The economic downturn now makes it harder for parents to support their children through University; can you do anything to help the poorer potential student?
A	Mr Adams indicated that he had not voted to triple fees, he has voted to allow Universities to charge more - up to a ceiling of £9,000, to cover the cost of providing degree education. Not all Universities were charging the maximum and York University had not seen a negative impact on numbers applying for places. He felt that the decision was justified to allow Universities to continue providing excellent education.

	<p>The MP felt that the decision to raise the threshold of earned salary to £21k before students would need to start paying back and lengthening the pay-back period was fair.</p> <p>The MP wished to record that the area was lucky to have Selby College. A beacon for the district. The college provides first class tuition.</p>
Q	Headline article Selby Times (2.2.2012) "Dirty Old Town".
A	<p>The MP agreed that the headline was shocking and that he had been misrepresented.</p> <p>The MP was committed to improvements for the Town and was looking at ways to aid regeneration. He pointed to a meeting he had organised for 10 February with representatives from County Highways and the Chamber of Commerce.</p>
Q	Proposed Boundary Commission changes?
A	The MP explained that the intention was to reduce the number of seats at Westminster to 600. The national cross party view was that proposals for North Yorkshire were inappropriate but he accepted that some politicians took a different view locally.

The Chair thanked all for attending. The meeting closed at 6:50pm.