

Scrutiny Committee

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| Venue: | Committee Room |
| Date: | 26 March 2013 |
| Present: | Councillors R Price (Chair), I Chilvers, M Dyson, M Hobson, C Pearson, D Mackay, D Peart and R Sweeting. |
| Apologies for Absence: | Councillor W Nichols |
| Also Present: | Nigel Adams – MP, Selby and Ainsty and Howard Ferguson, Parliamentary Assistant. |
| Officers Present: | Rose Norris – Executive Director and Palbinder Mann - Democratic Services Officer. |
| Press: | None |

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- i) **That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2013 be APPROVED and that they are signed by the Chair.**

45. CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair informed the Committee that the last Scrutiny Committee had been cancelled due to a lack of attendance and the workshop from that meeting would be rearranged.

46. CALL IN

No items had been called in.

47. NIGEL ADAMS MP

Mr Adams provided an overview of his work in his role as an MP for the Selby and Ainsty constituency. The following update was provided:

- Apart from day to day constituency work, other areas of work included the health service, flooding, energy and economic growth. He stressed that the economy was very much his priority, along with getting people back to work.
- The area was fortunate to have 11-12% of the country's electricity generators through the two stations in the area. Power stations are under pressure to make the shift towards more environmentally friendly fuels and Drax station was about to convert one of its units to biomass fuel. Discussions on this issue had taken place with both Eggborough and Drax power stations. In the recent budget, Drax Power Station has been selected as one of the stations to generate power in a low carbon way and this would lead to the creation of new jobs.
- Unemployment in the region had fallen, there has been a drop of 25% since the last election. Mr Adams praised employers in the region who had taken on 1000 apprentices.
- Mr Adams informed the Committee that he had organised jobs fairs and had received positive feedback from these. The job centre had also been helpful.
- The Committee were informed that occupancy rates for commercial premises were high and were outperforming York, which again was a good sign for the local economy.

Councillors were presented with an opportunity to ask questions of Mr Adams. The following questions and discussion took place:

- A query was raised whether the funding for Drax was 100% guaranteed. Mr Adams stated that carbon capture had been around for years, however the Government had allocated £1 billion towards further work. It was also explained that as the power generated would be linked into the network, National Grid were also involved.
- A query was raised regarding improving gateways in Selby and whether there could be a renaissance type scheme in Selby. Mr Adams stated that he wished to see an attractive entry points into Selby. The Committee were informed that Drax had been interested in supplying some funding for improvements and that conversations had taken place with Groundwork but nothing had been heard since. Councillor Peart advised the Committee that the Council's new Improvements to Gateways Project Team would be meeting on 2 April 2013 to take this forward. Mr Adams also explained that Selby had been ranked as one of the worst for applying for lottery grants as the amount of applications from the district were lower than anywhere else.

- Mr Adams explained that money had been allocated from the Government to improve broadband services in the area and tackle the “not spots”. The Committee were informed that areas around Selby District could now be delivered with superfast broadband.
- A query was raised regarding pipelines going through agricultural land for energy improvements. Mr Adams stated that it was difficult to produce the network without pipes and he did not see an issue with this as a consultation would be required and National Grid had experience of delivering this.
- In response to a query concerning the British production of coal, Mr Adams stated that there was a reliance on foreign markets; however he needed to ensure that stations like Drax got all the support they could get.
- In response to the question listed on the agenda concerning welfare reform and social housing, Mr Adams stated that he had not received much correspondence from constituents regarding this issue. He stated that it was a controversial move however there was currently a large housing benefit bill. Mr Adams also informed the Committee that pensioners would not be affected and there would be a relief fund for people who needed the extra room. It was stated that it was unclear at this stage how the changes would impact on those on the housing waiting list.
- In response to the question listed on the agenda concerning the Health Care reforms and the Selby War Memorial Hospital, Mr Adams informed the Committee that there was no impending closure of the hospital and he had undertaken regular discussions with the hospital authorities on this issue. Mr Adams explained that services may be delivered differently in the future and meetings had been planned with the Clinical Commissioning Group to discuss this.

Mr Adams explained that North Yorkshire had a funding deficit as a result of the funding formula not taking rural circumstances into account. It was explained that other areas such as Barnsley, Hull and Leeds got 25% more per head than this area. Mr Adams explained that the funding formula would not be changing this year however he had been lobbying the Secretary of State to change the formula.

- In response to the question listed on the agenda concerning the recent death of a child from asthma and overlong ambulance response times, Mr Adams stated that in future ambulance services would be commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Mr Adams expressed his condolences and stated that the CCG was under no illusions that services needed to be delivered efficiently.

- In response to the question listed on the agenda concerning HS2, Mr Adams stated that he was currently opposed to the route and had received around 80 letters of objection on the issue. The Committee were informed that an Action Group had been created. Mr Adams explained that he was supporting the HS2 project as it would bring economical benefits however as the local MP he wanted to ensure minimum impact and ensure any homeowners affected would be properly compensated.

The Committee raised concern that some homeowners would lose a considerable amount of money as a result of the project and a number of them would go into negative equity. Mr Adams stated that he wanted to ensure that everyone who would be losing their homes would be properly compensated. It also needed to be ensured that the consultation was carried out properly and was adhered to as this would be a stressful time for people. The Committee were informed that there was still a considerable way to go in the process and there would be a consultation on the route later on in the year.

It was queried whether it was premature to notify people at this stage as they may experience difficulties if they were currently in the process of selling their property. Mr Adams explained that there was a compensation scheme for people who would suffer hardship and this could be applied for.

The Chair thanked Mr Adams for his attendance.

48. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

Concern was raised at the waiting times at Access Selby and it was agreed that this item would be listed at an earlier meeting on the work programme.

Concern was also raised at the level of street cleaning, especially in the Tadcaster area. It was agreed that street cleaning would be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

- i) **That the Committee receive and approve the work programme for 2013/14 with the above amendments**

The meeting closed at 6:22pm