

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 June 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Renton (Chair), Bartch, Boddy, Crudass, Durham, Harker, Mrs D Jones, McEwan and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillors L Hughes and Paley.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Clarke, Dulston (Stronger Communities Portfolio), Johnson and Mrs. H. Scott.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Williams (Chief Executive), Neil Bowerbank (Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer).

ER1 CHAIR - MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

RESOLVED - That Councillor Renton be appointed Chair of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

ER2 VICE-CHAIR - MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

RESOLVED - That Councillor Bartch be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

ER3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

ER4 TIMES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22, be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates, as agreed on the calendar of meetings by Cabinet at Minute C97/Feb/2021.

ER5 CORPORATE REBRANDING

A report (previously circulated) was submitted following the receipt of a ‘call-in’ from Cabinet held on 1 June 2021 (Minute C10(2)/Jun/21) in relation to its decision in respect of the Corporate Rebranding. The ‘call-in’ was taken in accordance with the Council’s Constitution and had been submitted by three Members of this Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair invited those Members who had signed the documentation and who had requested that the decision be ‘called-in’ to outline their reasons for that decision and, in doing so, the Members raised questions and sought clarification to understand the full costs of rebrand, both preparatory work and implementation of Stage 1 and 2 of the rebrand; to understand the likely duration and costs of Stage 3; and to be given details of the intended colour palette.

In doing so, the Members who had signed the call-in document enquired as to the projected costs, the rationale and evidence-base for change, the work impact, the return on investment and the financial consequences, particularly in relation to larger costs, such as prominent signage.

The Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities responded to the points raised by highlighting that the rebranding was one of many projects that aimed to reshape and redevelop the Council to enable it to reconnect with residents; stated that the vast majority of rebranding work would be undertaken on an incremental basis in line with the natural life cycle of replacing assets as ongoing business (Stage 3); and that replacing the façade to the Town Hall had been prioritised to enhance and upgrade the appearance of the building in keeping with recent redevelopments (DL1, etc.) and the forthcoming Market Hall redevelopment. The Cabinet Member asserted that the colour teal had been used in keeping with the established 'Love Darlo' brand.

The Members who had signed the call-in document stated that the actual costs themselves were not transparent, and restated that any work undertaken, whether incrementally as part of the natural replacement of assets over time, or as more immediate Officer time, had a cost associated to it.

The Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities reiterated that the sole additional costs in terms of Stages 1 and 2 were the £20,000 identified in the Cabinet report, set aside for the refresh of the façade of the Town Hall, together with £930 incurred for some design and printing costs. The Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities acknowledged that Officer time had been utilised, however highlighted that this was in line with costs already incurred for the Communications and Marketing Team as part of ongoing business, the cost of which was outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan, stating that it was the role of the Communications and Marketing Team to promote the Council, and Darlington, and that this is what they were doing, albeit with a different brand.

Discussion ensued on whether rebranding was the best use of resource to resolve the perceived disconnect, the financial cost associated with replacing longer term or highly visible assets, such as the branding on the Darlington Hippodrome, the Council's fleet of vehicles, etc. (Stage 3), and whether there had been any consideration in terms of earlier replacement for a more effective impact, and to avoid the confusion of two brands running simultaneously.

Members entered into discussion on the intended colour palette and the use of the Coat of Arms, including the colours of the established Coat of Arms, the symbolism behind it and the history of the Coat of Arms.

RESOLVED – That, having considered and heard all the information presented to and at this meeting, this Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the decision of Cabinet at Minute C10(2)/Jun/21, and that no further action in relation to the call-in is required.