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NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Economic Development Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Wednesday, 8 September 2021 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor K Girling (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P Rainbow (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor R Blaney, Councillor L Brailsford, Councillor L Brazier,
Councillor Mrs R Crowe, Councillor M Skinner, Councillor S Haynes and
Councillor K Walker (substitute).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs M Dobson (Committee Member), Councillor N Mitchell (Committee Member), Councillor T Smith (Committee Member) and Councillor R White (Committee Member)

18 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

NOTED that no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

19 DECLARATION OF INTENTION TO RECORD MEETING

NOTED that the Council would undertake an audio recording and live streaming of the meeting.

20 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2021

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman advised that the Agenda provided the Committee with all relevant and current information and would therefore not be giving a verbal report.

22 FORWARD PLAN - OCTOBER 2021 TO SEPTEMBER 2021

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Economic Development Committee for 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022.

In considering the Forward Plan Members agreed that the Council should act as an influencer by leading the way in the provision of EV charging points. The Chairman suggested that Councillor Mathew Skinner work with Officers on progressing this matter.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Forward Plan be noted; and

(b) the following items be added to the Forward Plan:

- (i) Ollerton Hall Update (November 2021)
- (ii) EV Charging Points Update (date to be confirmed)

23 NEWARK HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE UPDATE - PRESENTATION ON FOOTFALL SENSORS

The Committee considered the report and presentation by the Business Manager – Economic Growth and Mr. Dan Coombs from Proximity Futures which sought to update Members on the installation of footfall sensors within the town centre which was a project within the Newark High Street Heritage Action Zone.

The report set out the background to the use of footfalls sensors to deliver the project and noted their location in Newark. Also contained within the report was information as to how the information gathered by the sensors could be used to provide quantitative insights for future activities.

In considering the presentation delivered by Mr. Coombs, Members welcomed the number of ways in which the data could be utilised and sought assurances that all the information gathered was anonymous. Mr. Coombs confirmed that the information was anonymous and provided Members with the technicalities of how the data was collected, adding that Proximity Futures was registered with the Information Commissioner.

In response to how the data captured could be used to support the tourist economy, Mr. Coombs advising that this was currently being reviewed with the possible development of apps specific to tourism e.g. for trails through the town.

The Director – Planning & Growth advised Members that the data gathered would be used to help to inform the Council’s decision making process and would enable information on footfall to be passed to traders with a view to assisting their business development. It could also be used as part of considerations as to what events or entertainment would be provided in the locale.

In noting the location of the sensors in the Market Place, a Member queried whether they were sufficiently sensitive to pick up those coming into the market from the direction of the Asda supermarket, adding that the Council would soon be letting business units and footfall numbers would be welcome information for potential occupiers. Mr. Coombs advised that the route into the market referred to was not covered at present but additional sensors could be procured. He also advised that a mobile sensor could be used for events not covered by the existing ones in the Market Place.

In concluding the discussion, the Chairman welcomed the potential value of the data captured in helping to shape the future of the town with the Director confirming that the findings would be shared with local retailers.

24 NORTH CLIFTON SCHOOL - OPTIONS CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide Members with an overview of Nottinghamshire County Council's (NCC) consultation on the options for the future of North Clifton Primary School and the Council's formal response.

It was reported that the consultation was launched on 23 June 2021 to seek the views of interested parties regarding the school's future. The consultation closed on 23 July 2021 and was the first stage of procedural requirements prescribed by the Department of Education's statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers on the opening and closing of maintained schools. Paragraph 3 of the report listed the 5 options identified for consideration. Attached as an appendix to the report was the Council's response which made clear the commitment to working with NCC, the school's governing body and other stakeholders to find a sustainable solution.

In presenting the report the Director advised the Committee that he had been approached by both district ward Members who had stated their support for the school and that they wished to avoid its closure. He added that a recent review of rural housing stock had identified that there was a need for 12 units to be provided in that locale, noting that a meeting was to be held with the parish council on 20 September. He also advised that a planning application for 300 homes was pending in nearby West Lindsay District Council which may impact on pupil numbers. The Director informed Members that the school was not used solely for education but also for community purposes which would be negatively impacted should close. It was reported that both district ward Members had requested that the Council lobby the Education Authority to explore ways in which the school could remain open.

In considering the report and the Director's comments, Members agreed that the Council's response to the consultation had been appropriate.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Council continue to engage with NCC, the school's governing body and other stakeholders to identify a sustainable solution for the future of the school.

25 REAPPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO WORKING PARTIES/TASK & FINISH GROUPS

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services which requested that Members consider the reconvening of the Local Development Framework Task Group for the forthcoming year and the associated membership thereof.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Local Development Framework Task Group be reconvened with the number of representatives from the named committees remaining unchanged; and

- (b) the representatives from the Economic Development Committee be named as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillors Keith Girling and Penny Rainbow respectively.

26 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVENUE AND CAPITAL FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2022 AS AT 31 JULY 2021

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which provided Members with a comparison of Revised Budgets for the period ending 31 March 2022 with the Projected Outturn forecast for the same period. The figures were based on four months’ performance information on the Council’s revenue and capital budgets, including: general fund revenue and capital programme.

Attached to the covering report was the report being presented to the Policy & Finance Committee on 23 September 2021 which detailed the forecasted financial position to 31 March 2022 of the Council as at 31 July 2021.

It was reported that the current position for the Council was a favourable variance of £0.148m, noting that the figure was prior to any return funding from the Nottinghamshire Business Rates Pool, for which S151 Officers across the country were working to review. The forecast outturn position for the Committee was favourable with a variance of £0.323m, with main reasons for that being detailed in Appendix A to the Policy & Finance report.

In considering the report a Member referred to the income generated from the lorry and car parks which was ahead of budget, adding that there was increasing evidence that the economy was recovering strongly. The Business Manager acknowledged the comments and confirmed that the report to the November 2021 meeting would provide the first 6 months figures, together with the forecast to the end of March 2022 and a comparison to the figures reported for Members’ consideration today.

In noting the nationally reported shortage of lorry drivers and the increase in working from home a Member queried whether there was any anticipated impact on the use of car parks and the lorry park. The Director – Planning & Growth advised that the use of the lorry park was being monitored and that in addition to a shortage of drivers, the recent changes to the working time directive may also have an impact. He added that the Council were working with Newark College about the shortage of drivers and that the use of car parks was being monitored to ascertain whether increases to home working had had an impact.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

27 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan.

The report set out the background to the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency and the proposals for future works to achieve the carbon net neutral target date of 2035. The following proposals were listed with supporting information: electric vehicle charge points; electric vehicle transition; data validation; solar pv feasibility; shovel ready projects; tree planting; residential cycle and car parking standards and design guide; carbon footprint; taxi licensing; and climate emergency project meetings.

In noting the proposal on tree planting, a Member queried whether any further planting initiatives with schools were planned. The Director stated that it was his understanding that this would continue in the future. Members noted and agreed that the Council's record in relation to the planting of trees was to be commended.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the project update be noted; and
- (b) future reports provided additional progress updates on the Council's carbon reduction journey be provided as required.

28 VISITOR ECONOMY RECOVERY PLANS FOR 2021/2022

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide Members with an update on activity to support the recovery of the district's visitor economy in 2021/22.

The report set out that during 2018 and 2019 the district's visitor economy had enjoyed sustained annual growth but that the pandemic in 2020 had resulted in the most challenging year on record for the UK's tourism and hospitality sectors. The local picture was reflected in a fall of 56.3% for the district and a fall of 54.4% in Newark. The report noted the continued challenges facing the industry and outlined the proposals in paragraph 3 on how the Council could support the sector to recover, these being noted as: relationship building with sector partners/stakeholders; destination development; destination marketing; and visitor insight, knowledge and research.

In considering the report a Member praised the work undertaken by Officers prior to the pandemic which had resulted in the reported sustained growth in 2018/19. She queried whether the Council were working with the County Council on this to aid the sector's recovery. The Director advised that there was an ongoing dialogue with the County Council. The Chairman also stated that the County were no longer just promoting their own visitor attractions but were now looking at attractions across the county as a whole.

In referring to Tourism Action Groups, a Member stated that twinning was seldom mentioned. She added that those involved in twinning associations had potential to bring foreign visitors into the town, adding that the twinned town in Poland had a section dedicated to Newark & Sherwood within their Tourist Information Centre.

A Member made reference to the work undertaken with stakeholders, adding that the proposal by LNER to close their ticket office at Northgate Station at 13:00 hours each day would be detrimental to the area and the sector. He suggested that delegated authority be given to the Director, Chairman and Vice-Chairman to address this issue. The Director encouraged all Members of the Committee to lobby LNER and other service providers to make no changes to their operations which would have a detrimental effect on the district, specifically the tourist and hospitality sector.

AGREED (unanimously) that activity to date in supporting the recovery of the district's visitor's economy in 2021 and beyond be noted.

Councillor R.V. Blaney left the meeting at 19:20 hours.

29 ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth which sought to provide Members on progress of the interventions and actions identified in the delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy 2021/2026 together with identification of changes, including new actions for the next 12 months in the delivery of Economic Growth for the district.

The report set out the background to the development and adoption of the aforementioned Strategy and Economic Recovery Plan. Appendix A to the report was a comprehensive Action Plan which set out what the Council would actively undertake.

In considering the report and the work undertaken to-date a Member stated that the development of an Evening Economy Strategy was vital for the district as a whole.

The Chairman commented that often the public were unaware of the work undertaken by Officers to deliver on the projects as identified in the report. He asked that the thanks of the Committee be passed on to the Economic Growth Team. He referred Members to paragraph 2.4, final bullet point stating that the completion of the former Robin Hood Hotel development and associated opening of the 66 bed Travelodge and availability of 3 no. ground floor commercial units had come in at zero cost to the Council, adding that the Council had in fact made a profit from the development.

AGREED (unanimously) that the updates provided and proposed direction of travel in continuing to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the district's businesses and residents be noted.

30 NEWARK TOWNS FUND UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide Members with an update on the Newark Town Deal and identified Towns Fund Projects.

The report provided information on: the business case development for the YMCA Community & Activity Village and the recruitment of a Town Investment Program Manager. Individual project updates were provided for: Construction College Expansion (Plumbing & Gas Fitting Training Centre); YMCA Community & Activity Village (CAV); Newark Gateway Redevelopment – IASTI; and Newark Cycle Town.

In presenting the report, the Director provided an update in relation to the demolition of the Livestock Market, stating that it should be completed by the end of November and it was expected that the associated planning application would be submitted by *the end of the year*.

In considering the report, the Chairman commented that the projects offered possibilities for young people in the area to receive training for well-paid and meaningful roles.

In referring to the proposed local cycling and walking infrastructure plan a Member queried whether the plan was being developed in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, adding that any discussion must include the safety of users. He also queried whether there had been any feedback on the cycle storage units. The Director advised that he had no documented evidence but anecdotally the units appeared to have addressed some of the issues with bike thefts.

A Member of the Committee queried whether any discussions would be held in relation to public transport links, noting the extremely poor bus service provision between the Ollerton area and Newark. The Chairman acknowledged the comments and agreed that he would wish to see those discussions held. In relation to cycling, he stated that he would wish to see an audit undertaken of the routes the Council would promote, adding that he would like to see cyclists given more priority as road users, suggesting that there be a liaison with Planning Policy in relation to road design.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the updates provided be noted and welcomed;
- (b) Policy & Finance Committee be recommended to add £200,000 to the Capital Programme in relation to the Cycle Town Project of the Town Investment Fund Programme, funded by the Towns Fund; and
- (c) the Newark Cycle Town Project be supported, recommending to Policy & Finance Committee that a full procurement takes place and that the Council's landholding at Castle House adjacent to the Castle Rail Station, be a location for a cycle hire hub.

31 NEWARK BEACON UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to update Members on the progress made at the Newark Beacon, including information on the marketing of the facility.

The report set out that the performance indicators for the Newark Beacon had been updated in line with the Corporate Property Business Unit's refreshed Business Plan and the update to the Council's Community Plan, with the facility being in a positive position for all but one of the indicators at the end of Quarter 1, details of which were reported in the table at paragraph 3.1.

The report also provided Members with information as to staffing changes; essential works undertaken; the effects and response to Covid-19; marketing of the facility; occupancy rates; rental, café and auxiliary incomes for 2021/22; customer satisfaction; and business support.

In considering the report Members welcomed the information and the positivity of the facility moving forward. They particularly welcomed the support given, by the team, to the businesses who used the facility.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report and achievements made to date be noted; and
- (b) further progress reports be presented to Committee biannually.

32 SHERWOOD REGENERATION UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal report by the Director – Planning & Growth in relation to proposals for the regeneration of the Sherwood area of the district.

He advised that the deadline for submissions for Round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund had been at the end of June 2021. A bid had been submitted for the Southern Link Road, a response to which was expected. He stated that a bid for the Sherwood area had been frontloaded as the Council did not wish to wait for a decision on whether funding would be received with officers having reviewed what they felt the challenges would be for the areas regeneration.

The Director stated that invitations would be forwarded imminently to parties who would make up the Sherwood Place Board, including transport providers and private sector employers. He added that further details would be reported to the November meeting of the Committee.

In considering the verbal report, the Chairman advised that there would be very little elected Member representation on the Sherwood Place Board as it was more to do with private investment. He stated that he was pleased to see that the bid had been frontloaded, noting that it may not be successful but showed the ambition of the Council to regenerate the area. There would be a list of projects for the area's regeneration and should the bid be unsuccessful, funding would be sourced elsewhere.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal report be noted.

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman