

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, 19 January 2022 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor R Blaney, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs R Crowe,
Councillor N Mison, Councillor M Skinner, Councillor T Smith,
Councillor P Peacock and Councillor S Haynes (substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Goff

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brailsford (Committee Member) and Councillor R White (Committee Member)

45 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.

46 DECLARATION OF INTENTION TO RECORD MEETING

The Chairman advised that the meeting was being recorded by the Council and was also being livestreamed and broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House.

47 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2021

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman advised that further to his verbal report at the last meeting, which had been in relation to the grant funding received from central Government for various development projects within the district, the focus for the forthcoming year was the delivery of those projects. Reports would be presented to Members under the new governance arrangements advising of the progress made.

49 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Economic Development Committee for 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2022.

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

50 OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to update Members on the progress made towards the Open Space Assessment & Strategy. The report included responses to the consultation and sought approval for its endorsement as part of the wider Development Plan evidence base to support the Council’s decision making.

The report provided Members with a background to the development of the document together with an overview of its findings. Details of the consultation responses and the proposals therefrom were detailed in Paragraph 4 and Appendix A of the report.

In considering the report Members agreed that it provided an insight into the open space available in the district and the standard of that provision. It was noted that open space provided by some management companies lacked accountability for its upkeep and noted that the strategy did not take account of sports provision.

Members referred to the network of public footpaths within the district and commented how they linked to open space both within and beyond the district’s boundaries. It was agreed that the public’s awareness of available open space needed to be increased and that it was essential that they be maintained to a high standard.

In reference to the aforementioned sports provision, a Member commented that he would also wish to see the Playing Pitch Strategy as the documents were linked. He sought confirmation that pitches and open spaces were not double-counted and that open spaces behind closed gates were not included. The Director – Planning & Growth advised that in order to ensure the area was included in the correct strategy they were often sub-divided. He confirmed that the Playing Pitch Strategy would likely be refreshed in 2022.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the results of the consultation and Officer responses were noted; and
- (b) the Open Space Strategy be endorsed as part of the wider Development Plan evidence base to support decision-making and inform future open space management and investment.

51 NEWARK TOWN FUND UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to update Members on the Newark Town Fund Programme, including business case advancement and the next steps in delivery of priority projects.

The report provided Members with details as to the current status of each of the projects and at what stage the development of their business case was at, a summary of which was provided in the table at paragraph 2.7.

In considering the report Members referred to the reallocation of funds from the Newark Police Station and whether they would be lost, should the Government reject the revised profiling request and renegotiation. The Director – Planning & Growth advised that a request had been made for the remaining monies to be diverted to other Towns Fund projects detailed within the Heads of Terms, although this was not guaranteed until the DLHC had considered the matter. Members noted the response and referred to the increasing costs associated with construction and that the monies could rightly be used to offset those increases.

In relation to the YMCA Community & Activity Village, it was noted that it was now in the delivery phase. Two of the relevant Ward Members who sat on the Economic Development Committee indicated they would wish to the scheme and continue to promote it. The Director advised that the facility would be an asset for the local area, the region and even nationally and that it would be promoted to make the public aware of its existence and the facilities available. He noted that the practical completion should be achieved in the spring of 2022.

In referring to the aforementioned rise in construction costs the Director noted the projected increase in costs of approximately £400k by the time delivery commenced in late 2023 of the Castle Gatehouse Scheme. He advised that monies from the Heritage Lottery Funds would be utilised initially at the start of the works and then monies from the Newark Towns Fund latterly, providing time for a decision to be made on the reallocation of funds.

Referring to the Southern Link Road (SLR) a Member queried as to the current timeline for the development. The Director advised that there would be an open procurement process to be undertaken, following which it was likely that 2 contracts would be let. These would be for the development at the A1 and A46 ends of the SLR. The developments would have differing timetables but contractors should be on site at the end of 2022/beginning of 2023 with a completion date of 12/18 months from then.

In relation to the previous comments regarding the YMCA and the Castle Gatehouse Projects a Member expressed some concerns. He commented that he was not aware of any promotion of the YMCA facility to the wider community and in noting the increase costs associated with construction he queried whether the Castle Gatehouse Project should commence, if there was any possibility that the funds available were insufficient to take it to completion. In response, he was advised that the Sherwood Levelling Up Fund bid would include an element of the YMCA reaching out to the wider community and that following completion of the project, their marketing area would be widened.

A non-Committee Member queried whether there was any intention by the YMCA to offer hostel accommodation as in other areas. He was advised that the organisation were actively looking for suitable accommodation in Newark for young persons provision.

The Director sought to advise Members that the 3 outstanding Business Cases would require to be signed-off by the Policy & Finance Committee on 17 March 2022. The cases would be presented to the Policy & Finance Committee following consultation

with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Economic Development Committee. The Chairman requested that the Opposition Spokesperson also be included in that consultation.

It was noted that Recommendation (b) of the report required amendment to read as follows:

- (b) delegated authority be given to the s151 Officer to approve the 20 Minute Cycle Business Case after independent assurance reviews are completed.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the update provided be noted;
- (b) delegated authority be given to the s151 Officer to approve the 20 Minute Cycle Business Case after independent assurance reviews are completed;
- (c) a recommendation be made to the Policy & Finance Committee that the 32 Stodman Street redevelopment proceeds, subject to the Committees assessment of the Business Case and Delivery options presented; and
- (d) the Director – Planning & Growth, following consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson of the Economic Development Committee, present the outstanding Business Cases for SiSCLog; Castle Gatehouse and the Cultural Heart of Newark Schemes for final approval to the special meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee to be held on 17 March 2022.

52 THE FUTURE FIRST EXPO 2021 - EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy which sought to provide Members with an evaluation of the 2021 Future First EXPO and the proposed approach for 2022 onwards.

The report set out that it had been necessary to reduce the scale of the 2021 event by 50% due to the pandemic but that a total of 8 schools with some 1176 students and 50 businesses had participated. A summary of the programme provided throughout the day was included within the report together with feedback from some of the businesses/organisations in attendance. Members were asked to consider the proposed next steps and how the event could development in future years.

In considering the report Members welcomed the event's success and agreed that it should be built upon for future years.

A Member queried how many older people had been in attendance, referring to those in further education. The Business Manager advised that the focus had been on younger people. He referred to the Kick Start Programme and the Ollerton Job Club and advised that work was ongoing as to how to develop and provide a bespoke

programme for older people. Members agreed that one of the effects of the pandemic had been that people had changed their career paths and that opportunities for them to upskill was required.

Members all agreed that the event had been a success and wished for their thanks to be passed on to the Officers involved.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) the continuation of the Expo for 2022 and 2023 be supported.

53 TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY AND SUPPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy which sought to update Members on the Council’s strategy for supporting the town centres within the District, included ongoing activities and proposals for the forthcoming year.

The report set out the issues experienced by town centres and high streets both before and after the pandemic. It noted that there remained a need for intervention and support from national and local government for businesses, residents and visitors who were crucial in the running of town centres and high streets. The report provided details of the national picture and the various actions and strategies applied by the Council to tackle some of the main challenges experienced due to the pandemic together with the proposals to sustain support to the town centres and high street moving forward.

In response to a query regarding the use of footfall cameras in Newark’s Heritage Action Zone, the Business Manager advised that the information had been affected by the various national lockdowns but the figures were rising. The information on this was passed to third parties to inform their business plans. It was noted that Sundays were proving to be a busy day and that this needed to be widely communicated to retailers in the town.

A Member raised concerns that the report offered little information in relation to the future development of the high street in Ollerton. He also suggested that help and support was required in the smaller towns and villages within the district. In noting the comments, the Chairman stated that the Sherwood Levelling-Up Fund (LUF) bid would go some-way to addressing those issues with it also being noted that Ollerton and Edwinstowe were central pillars for the Sherwood LUF bid. The Chairman stated that he would be a representative on the Sherwood LUF Board which would focus on the Sherwood area and that a good bid must be submitted to be considered suitable to receive funding.

In referring to the announcement of the preferred route for the A46 and Southern Link Road, Members voiced their frustrations that until this was known, projects within the Newark Town Fund could not be fully progressed, referring specifically to the Gateway Project.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) the activities to date and proposed activities be supported.

54 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - REVENUE AND CAPITAL FORECAST
OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2022 AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2021

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which sought to provide Members with a comparison between the Revised Budgets for the period ending 31 March 2022 with the Projected Outturn Forecast for the period. The figures were based on eight months' performance information on the Council's revenue and capital budgets.

It was reported that as at 30 November 2021 the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position for the Committee was a favourable variance of £0.41m with the main reasons and a summary of the changes being detailed in the appendices to the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

55 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services in relation to the budget and scales of fees and charges for those areas falling under the remit of the Economic Development Committee for 2022/2023.

The report set out the proposals for recommendation to the Policy & Finance Committee on 21 February 2022 in relation to the base budget for 2022/2023 for inclusion in the overall Council budget and the 2022/2023 fees and charges.

In considering the report Members noted the apparent decrease in available budget for tourism. The Director – Planning & Growth advised that this was largely due to a salary decrease. Members agreed that the promotion of tourism in the district required additional investment to increase the footfall of visitors.

In relation to the revenue received from surface car parks, Members noted that this was one third lower than pre-pandemic revenue and queried whether this was too low.

In response to the above comments, the Business Manager advised that this was a proposed budget and amended recommendations could be made to the Policy & Finance Committee for consideration. Members agreed that there was insufficient budget provision for tourism and that the recommendations to the Policy & Finance Committee reflect their comments thereon.

It was noted that following the introduction of the new governance arrangements in May 2022, the individual Portfolio Holders would be responsible for presenting draft budgets, with a narrative as to how they had been developed.

AGREED (by 8 votes for with 2 abstentions) that the following recommendations be made to the Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting on 21 February 2022:

- (a) 2022/2023 base budget in Appendix A for inclusion in the overall Council budget; and
- (b) to Council on 8 March 2022 the 2022/23 fees and charges in Appendix D, subject to the ability to use future positive variances, as deemed appropriate, in accordance with a Promotion of Tourism update to be presented to the March 2022 Economic Development Committee.

56 HIGH STREET DIVERSIFICATION FUND

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy which sought to provide Members with an update on the High Street Diversification Fund for Newark & Sherwood retailers.

The report set out the background to the development and implementation of the Fund and that businesses who had adapted to trading differently through and beyond lockdowns had thrived, noting that this was in the main the digitisation and professionalising their online capabilities. Details of the criteria to qualify for the grant were detailed in paragraph 3 of the report together with statistical information and feedback from independent retailers who had received funding. Information in relation to the support given to the hospitality sector in December 2021 was detailed in paragraph 3.9.

In considering the report, Members welcomed the Fund's success. A Member noted that there were still many individuals and businesses that would benefit from additional support and queried whether the defined trading areas could be widened. The Business Manager advised that any applications from business outside the trading areas had been helped, if possible, and that should additional resource be made available the set trading areas could be widened.

In welcoming the report Members suggested that a report be presented at the next meeting of the Committee with a view to continuing the support in 2023/2024 financial year. The report to contain proposals on how the trading area could be expanded and how Members could assist in the promotion of the scheme.

AGREED (unanimously) that the success of the High Street Diversification Fund be noted.

57 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

58 NEWARK TOWNS FUND EXEMPT APPENDIX A

This document was an exempt Appendix to the above report. No discussion or debate was held in relation to the Appendix.

Meeting closed at 8.26 pm.

Chairman