

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Economic Development Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor K Girling (Chairman)

Councillor R Blaney, Councillor Mrs R Crowe, Councillor J Lee, Councillor N Mitchell, Councillor P Peacock, Councillor T Wendels, Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead, Councillor M Cope and Councillor K Walker

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P Duncan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs P Rainbow (Vice-Chairman), Councillor T Roberts (Committee Member) and Councillor F Taylor (Committee Member)

42 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.

43 DECLARATION OF INTENTION TO RECORD MEETING

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

44 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20

The Committee considered the report of 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 2019/2020.

The report set out that the budget and medium term financial plan had been developed to reflect, in financial form, the corporate priorities of the Council. Paragraph 3.0 of the report provided the Committee with the major variances between the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 budgets. These included: Heritage, Culture & Visitors; Private Estates; Vicar Water Park; Sconce & Devon Park; Promotion of Tourism; Growth Technical Support; Development Management; Newark Beacon; Bilsthorpe Workshops; Jubilee Bridge; Boughton Advance Factory; Sherwood Forest Craft Centre; Development Company; Economic Growth; Parking Services Admin; Surface Car Parks Newark; Newark Lorry Park; Other Properties and Workshops Voids; Growth Investment Fund; and Grounds Maintenance. The level of fees and charges were contained within Appendix C to the report.

In considering the report a Member of the Committee commented on a number of budget entries. With specific reference to the Newark Lorry Park, he queried whether when all the works had been completed the new tariff could be introduced during the year and not have to wait until the budget setting for 2020/2021. Members agreed that they would not wish to wait for a 12 month period before the increase tariff was introduced.

In relation to Heritage, Culture & Visitors a Member queried whether it was possible to have a separation of the budget in order that Members could be informed as to the allocation of the monies to each constituent part. It was agreed that this would be provided to Members.

In response to whether the reasons for the increase in budgets noted on the Subjective Summary, specifically: repairs and maintenance; catering; and ICT was due to the changes at the Beacon Centre, the Business Manager confirmed that he would advise Members accordingly.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the final Committee budget, as shown at Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Policy & Finance Committee at their meeting to be held on 21 February 2019 for inclusion in the overall Council budget; and
- (b) the scale of fees and charges, as shown at Appendix C to the report, be recommended to Policy & Finance Committee at their meeting to be held on 21 February 2019 and Council on 7 March 2019.

#### 46 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANS - SOUTHWELL AND SHERWOOD FOREST

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Communities & Environment (formerly Director – Customers) which sought to provide Members with the draft Destination Management Plans for Southwell and Sherwood Forest.

The report set out that national data suggested that the economic impact of the visitor economy is worth around £260m to the District economy per annum. It was noted that the Plan was a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they would take and where appropriate the apportionment of resources. The Plans for Southwell and Sherwood Forest took account of the differences in the levels of maturity of destination management and provided a recommendation for each of the District's three destination brands: Newark; Southwell and Sherwood Forest. The key proposals for the two plans were reported in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

In considering the report Members made a number of comments. They queried whether it was possible to have sight of any specific actions or outcomes arising from the Plans. The Business Manager – Tourism advised that it was intended to send the information out to Members. Members also commented that the Council did not seem to take full advantage of Robin Hood as a tourist attraction. The Business Manager advised that it was hoped that it would be made a key priority in the Plans.

Members stated that the Sherwood Forest Plan presented a good tourist offer on the Sherwood Visitor Centre site but that other areas of interest also needed to be included. In order to do that, Members suggested that work with 'experts' be undertaken. Members agreed that visitors to the Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre needed to be directed to other tourist facilities in Southwell and Newark. Members also agreed with the comments contained within the Plans in relation to accommodation provision.

Members commented that the proposed two year closure of Nottingham Castle should be taken advantage of. It was reported that the train line ran from Lincoln to Nottingham and had been called the Castle Line with the new operators of the line being keen to increase the amount of tourists using the facility. It was noted that the majority of tourists to the Sherwood Forest area were there for recreational and leisure with Southwell and Newark visitors being there for culture and heritage. All Members agreed that there needed to be a cross fertilisation between the three Plans. It was noted that National Trust attractions received visitors from outside the District and the East Midlands region as being a member of the National Trust allowed them to gain entry free of charge. It was suggested that National Trust facilities within the District should be utilised to direct visitors to the Council's own attractions.

Members queried whether it was possible to advertise the District's attractions on trains and in stations. Members were advised that it was possible but there would be a cost implication. Consideration would need to be given as to whether the cost of doing so would be value for money. The Business Manager advised that 80% of visitors travelled by car but encouragement to travel by train could be given and that this was being explored by the new East Coast Mainline operators.

In summary the Chairman advised that the language used to get the tourism message out to visitors was very important. He added that every opportunity must be exploited and that individuals with a vision of how to enhance the tourist offer should be invited to attend the proposed Southwell Tourism Partnership and the Strategic Tourism Management Group for the Sherwood Forest Plan.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Committee approve, in principle, the draft Destination management Plans for Southwell and Sherwood Forest, subject to further discussion and refinement with key stakeholders.

#### 47 VISITOR MARKET RESEARCH PROJECT

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Communities & Environment (formerly the Director – Customers) which sought to provide Members with a summary of the 2018 Visitor Market Research Project. It was reported that the research had been commissioned to improve knowledge of the visitor experience, develop an understanding of who visitors were and what they felt about their experiences. A programme of qualitative market research with an external agency was undertaken between May and September 2018 with the methodology being face to face interviews with visitors at different locations. These included three key events: Pikes & Plunder; Robin Hood Festival; and Gate to Southwell. A smaller online survey of visitors and non-visitors was also undertaken. Paragraph 3.0 of the report provided Members with statistical information and the proposals arising from the

research. The report also sought Members' onward recommendation to the Policy & Finance Committee for additional funding of £15k per year for the Promotion of Tourism from 2019/20 onwards.

In considering the report Members agreed that it provided useful information as to the experience of visitors and would help to inform the further development of the Destination Management Plans. Members also agreed that the effective communication of the Council's offer would be paramount to developing and improving the visitor experience. Members queried how members of the public searched for tourist information within the District. In response the Business Manager – Tourism advised that it was online either organically or paid for. However, the Council did not feature high up the results on a search engine and this warranted further investigation. He added that the improvement of the website would be a priority followed by paid for searches around key activities. A report to Committee in March 2019 would update Members as to progress made. Members stated that there were too many different sites offering tourist attractions and suggested that all parties would be better served if their sites and events were under a single website. In response, the Business Manager agreed adding that partnership working was the key to strategic development.

In relation to printed information, the Business Manager advised that visitors would pick up paper leaflets at any attraction they visited and not from a formal standalone Tourist Information Centre (TIC). It was suggested that every venue was a TIC and that opportunity to increase the amount of information placed within them should be taken.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the findings of the 2018 Visitor Market Research Project be noted;
- (b) the additional funding required in the sum of £15,000 per year be included in the Promotion of Tourism budget from 2019/2010 onwards be recommended to the Policy & Finance Committee;
- (c) given its importance as the most widely used source for information about Newark & Sherwood prior to visit, a report on the development of the district-wide visitor online experience be presented to the March 2019 meeting of the Committee; and
- (d) the recommended actions from the forthcoming Destination Management Plans for Sherwood Forest and Southwell be considered in light of the above findings of the 2018 Visitor Market Research Project.

#### 48 LDF UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Growth & Regeneration which sought to update Members on the progress of the various elements of the Local Development Framework (LDF) contained within the Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable and to propose an approach to deal with the delay to the Inspector's Report.

The report set out that the current LDS was adopted in September 2018 together with the anticipated timetable for the Amended Core Strategy. It was reported that following contact with the Planning Inspector in November 2018 it was apparent that receipt of the report for fact-checking would be significantly delayed due to other work commitments at the Planning Inspectorate, the consequences of which were reported in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4. The proposed approach to further plan Review work was reported with the potential consequences arising from when the Inspector's report was received.

In considering the report Members agreed that once the Inspector's Report was received, a letter of complaint should be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to the unacceptable length of time it had taken. It was also suggested that the letter state that the Council did not wish for the same Inspector to be assigned to any future inspections of planning documentation.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) progress towards meeting the timetable of the adopted Local Development Scheme be noted;
- (b) in the event that the Inspector's Report was received at the end of January/early February the District Council consult on an Issues Report on the Allocations & Development Management element of the Plan Review; and
- (c) delegated authority be given to the Director – Growth & Regeneration to prepare an Issues Report for public consultation with the Local Development Framework Task Group (which includes the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee) and the Opposition Spokesman.

#### 49 FORWARD PLAN (FEBRUARY 2019 TO JANUARY 2020)

AGREED the Forward Plan of the Economic Development Committee from February 2019 to January 2020 and that the following items be added:

- (i) Opportunity to Bid for a High Street Fund.
- (ii) Night Time Economy Strategy (to include Southwell and Ollerton)

#### 50 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

AGREED 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.

51 RUMBLES CAFE UPDATE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Director – Resources/Deputy Chief Executive in relation to the current leases with the Rumbles Catering Project.

(Summary provided in accordance with 100C(2) of the Local Government Act 1972).

Meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Chairman