

NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE** held on Wednesday, 22 November 2017 in the Civic Suite, Castle House at 6.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor D.J. Lloyd (Chairman)
Councillor K. Girling (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: R.V. Blaney (ex-officio), Mrs R. Crowe, P.C. Duncan,
N. Mitchell, P. Peacock (Opposition Spokesperson),
A.C. Roberts, T. Wendels and Mrs Y. Woodhead.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D.R. Payne

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.G. Cope and Mrs G.E. Dawn.

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 ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

NOTED: that an audio recording was to be made of the meeting by the Council.

20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. COUNCIL'S DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

The Committee considered the report presented by the Assistant Business Manager – Financial Strategy & Performance in relation to the progress, to-date, on the budget for 2018/19.

The report set out the overall strategy of how the budget was to be developed and the timetable for this. The report provided information as to the current financial environment for local government. Information was also provided in relation to business rates and the move towards 100% of their retention with paragraph 5 of the report referring to income generation from fees and charges. The budget strategy was referred to in paragraph 6 and included reference to the base budget; staff costs; employer's superannuation; provision for inflation; and again, fees and charges. Details of the draft revenue budget proposals were set out in paragraph 7.

The Assistant Business Manager responded to a number of queries raised by Members of the Committee in relation to the information provided.

In relation to the budget announcement earlier that day, a Member of the Committee queried whether it was possible to offer assistance to SMEs to access Business Rate Relief. The Business Manager – Economic Growth advised that she would liaise with the Business Manager – Revenues & Benefits on this matter.

A Member of the Committee queried the increase in budget in relation to A10109 – Heritage, Culture & Visitors stating that there was also reference to exhibitions and displays in capital expenditure. The Member added that he was aware that there was an expectation at the Civil War Centre that approximately £200,000 of the capital expenditure would be spent on exhibitions in the coming year. In response, the Assistant Business Manager advised that the capital budget was set aside for larger scale exhibitions. The Chairman of the Committee added that the capital expenditure was to reconfigure the museum to enable permanent exhibitions within the Civil War Centre on the ground floor with temporary exhibitions being held on the first floor.

The Leader of the Council sought clarification of the costs in relation to the budget allocated for the set-up of the proposed development company.

In relation to paragraph 8.2 of the report, Members agreed that any increase for car parking should be made in increments of 50 pence and not the nearest 5 pence as referred to.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) a review of fees and charges in accordance with the Corporate Charging Policy be undertaken, but that any increase in relation to car parking be in increments of 50 pence;
- (b) the current draft Committee budget be incorporated into the overall service budget to be reported to the Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting to be held on 30 November 2017; and
- (c) the Business Manager – Financial Services continues to formulate budget proposals for formal consideration at the Economic Development Committee meeting to be held on 17 January 2018 for recommendation to Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting to be held on 22 February 2018.

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman changed the order of business and Agenda Items 6 and 7 were to be taken at the end of the agenda.

22. TOUR OF BRITAIN – ADDITIONAL BUDGET REQUEST

The Committee received a presentation from the Community Projects Manager in relation to the impact of the Tour of Britain within Nottinghamshire and considered a report in relation to a request for additional budget provision to cover the costs incurred by the Council in hosting the Stage 4 finish of the 2017 event. The report also sought to secure, in principle, agreement that the Council would support the Tour of Britain 2018 which would again take place in the county.

Members welcomed the feedback on the impact of the tour contained in the presentation noting that the figures of spend per group would have been more useful if they had been per head. Members also stated that the way in which the road closures were communicated to the public had had the effect of deterring some people from visiting their town centres or villages. It was suggested that should the Council and its partners host a stage of the tour in subsequent years, the way in which the road closures were communicated be given careful consideration.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) Policy & Finance Committee be recommended to approve the additional budget required, in the sum of £9,970, to cover the costs associated with hosting the Stage 4 Finish of the Tour of Britain 2017; and
- (b) in principle, the Council would work in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council and support the Tour of Britain 2018 which would again take place in the county.

23. NEWARK CASTLE RAILING – ADVERTISING

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Parks & Amenities which sought approval for the introduction of a new policy regulating the siting of advertisements on the railings surrounding Newark Castle & Gardens.

The report set out that the railings had been used to advertise local events through the attachment of banners and signs to the railings. It was reported that there had, to date, not been a policy covering the use of the railings but that a process had been implemented and followed by the Parks & Amenities Business Unit. The proposed policy was reported in paragraph 3 of the report together with the reasons for the proposal.

In considering the report, Members' welcomed the proposals but agreed that it should go further and that no attachments to the railings should be permitted at all. It was suggested that there were sufficient locations within the town for advertisements for events to be placed. It was noted that should the suggested 'no banners policy' be agreed, responsibility for the removal of unauthorised advertisements would fall to the Council. The Business Manager advised that its implementation could result in limiting the Council's ability to promote its own events being held at Newark Castle.

AGREED (with 8 votes for and 1 against) that:

- (a) the use of the railings surrounding Newark Castle for advertising purposes be prohibited; and
- (b) three noticeboards be erected adjacent to the Newark Castle railings. Such noticeboards to be utilised to advertise and promote events within Newark with priority being given to events being held at Newark Castle. Two of the noticeboards were to be erected at the main entrances and one at the Gilstrap building.

24. OLLERTON & BOUGHTON NEIGHBOURHOOD STUDY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Strategic Housing which provided Members with an update on the work being undertaken to complete the Ollerton & Boughton Neighbourhood Study.

The report provided Members with an overview of a neighbourhood study and the delivery method; governance; and responsibility thereof. The report detailed the scope of the Ollerton & Boughton study and provided details of the consultant appointed to carry it out.

In considering the report Members were in agreement that all parties concerned were to be congratulated for the work undertaken to date. It was noted that the consultants had visited the housing estates to engage directly with residents. Members also noted that the absence of facilities was a theme that ran through the responses, and queried why this was given that the Dukeries Leisure Centre was in close proximity. In response, a Member of the Committee advised that cost prohibited some residents from using the Dukeries Leisure Centre but it was not just in relation to sports facilities. The lack of facilities was also in relation to doctors' surgeries and shopping facilities. There had also been a loss of a community centre in the area. The concern was that lack of facilities was not addressed prior to new housing being built.

AGREED (unanimously) that the findings from Work Package 1 (People) and the options being presented from Work Package 2 (Place), so to inform the drafting of the final Ollerton & Boughton Neighbourhood Study report, be noted and supported.

25. NEWARK CASTLE GATEHOUSE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Parks & Amenities which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Gatehouse project. The report set out the background to the project, the future proposals and the timetable for the project's completion.

In response to the financial commitments of the Council to the project, the Business Manager confirmed that the Council had provided funding of £25,000 for Phase One, the total cost of which had been £121,000, £84,000 of which had been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The Council's proposed funding for Phase Two was in the region of £225,000, the total cost of which would be £1.2M with the HLF contribution being approximately £810,000. The Business Manager stated that the project would provide a new source of income and thereby lower the future costs to the Council for Newark Castle. He confirmed that a Business Plan was being developed and would be presented to Members prior to them finalising the Council's contribution for Phase Two.

In relation to the approximate annual income the project would yield the Business Manager advised that during Phase One this had been calculated using a number of revenue generation scenarios. An approximate net amount had been in the region of between £10,000 to £40,000, this being the worst and best case scenarios. He also confirmed that this would be ring-fenced for use at Newark Castle.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress that had been made towards the implementation of the development phase of the Newark Castle Gatehouse Transformation Project be noted.

26. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Planning Policy in relation to the progress of the various elements of the Local Development Framework (LDF), including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), contained within the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The Business Manager advised he had been notified that the Amended Core Strategy was due to be examined at the end of January 2018 but that this had caused a slippage in the planned timetable. He confirmed that once details had been finalised he would inform Members thereof. He also confirmed that the CIL Review was due to be presented to full Council on 12 December for adoption with a planned implementation date of January 2018.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

27. URGENCY ITEM – ADDITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAR PARK CONCESSIONS IN NEWARK

NOTED The decision that free parking be provided in Newark for an additional Sunday on 26 November 2017.

28. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Development in relation to the revised objectives and high level work plan for the Economic Development Strategy following the workshop held with Members and the Committee meeting held on 13 September 2017.

The background to the report set out the vision and objectives for the strategy adopted in 2014. The proposals for the revised strategy were listed in paragraph 3 of the report and contained 12 objectives.

In relation to Objective 1: Schools & Businesses, a Member of the Committee commented that whilst it was appropriate to engage with primary school pupils he considered it would be beneficial to meet with pupils in secondary schools who were about to make their option choices. For Objective 2: Up Skilling for 18 – 24 Year Age Group Residents he queried whether it could be amended to include retraining. For Objective 3: Support for Businesses he queried how the Council assisted in helping the local economy. He stated that the amount of absent landlords and empty buildings resulted in them becoming dilapidated and queried whether it was possible to raise the business rates of the premises in an attempt to encourage them to put the building back into use.

In response the Business Manager advised that there was engagement with both primary and secondary school pupils but that schools which required more support were targeted. She added that it was considered beneficial to engage with pupils in Years 5 and 6 as it was an opportune time to inspire them for their future years in education. It was also reported that a careers expo was held for students and businesses alike to attend.

In relation to adding training to Objective 2, the Chairman suggested and this be added to Objective 3 as Objective 2 was specifically targeted at the 18 – 24 age group.

In relation to Objective 3 the Business Manager advised that a policy had been introduced 4 years previously to promote local procurement by the Council. The figures for the effect this had had were available. In relation to absent landlords the Business Manager advised that she would liaise with the Business Manager – Revenues and Benefits to see what more could be done to help to alleviate the situation with empty buildings. Members asked that an update report on local procurement be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

In relation to Objective 5 the Business Manager advised that she would continue to work towards improving developing business productivity.

In response to whether account had been taken as to the change in shopping habits, especially the younger generation, the Business Manager advised that in relation to Objective 9 the retail sector looked at the broad spectrum of what people wanted and was not solely in relation to a physical shop.

The Chairman queried the latest position was in relation to funding for projects and whether there was a need to bid for additional funding. The Business Manager advised that most projects would be deliverable within the existing and proposed budgets but that should additional funds be required a report would be brought to Committee for approval. The Chairman requested that, if possible, any additional funding request be made prior to the finalisation of the budgets for 2018/2019.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the vision, objectives and high level work plan for the Economic Growth team from November 2017 to April 2019, subject to the above amendments, be supported; and
- (b) any request for additional budget provision be brought to Committee as appropriate.

29. GROWTH INVESTMENT FUND REVIEW

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth which provided recommendations following a workshop held on 12 October 2017 comprising members of the Policy Monitoring Group and the Growth Investment Fund Loan Panel to review the loan fund and identify future direction.

Members of the Committee, who had attended the workshop, stated that it had been interesting and informative. They suggested that workshops continue to be held to allow Members to have an input into the direction of the loan fund. A Member queried the latest position was in relation to Pathfinders. The Business Manager advised that the continued economic uncertainty made it worthwhile to retain the Pathfinders aspect of the fund. It was only offered to early stage businesses and was of benefit if they could not get financial assistance elsewhere.

Members agreed that the fund needed to adapt to what was required and that they supported an annual review in order that it remained appropriate and targeted.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the loan fund continues to operate over the coming years, with an annual review to ensure that it remained appropriate. The fund to be about job creation, job protection and helping/advising businesses;
- (b) the Economic Growth Team, with input from the Loan Fund Panel, review interest rates and fees to be charged for early stage start-up businesses;
- (c) the Economic Growth Team, with input from the Loan Fund Panel, review the processes for the loan fund in order to ensure the effectiveness of the operation of the fund;
- (d) the Committee are advised of the number of applications that result in advice being provided to support the business, but where a loan application is not pursued; and
- (e) a process be defined for decommissioning the loan fund in the event that it is required.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Chairman