

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Economic Development Committee** held in the Broadcast from Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Wednesday, 9 September 2020 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 Mrs M Dobson, Councillor N Mison, Councillor N Mitchell, Councillor M Skinner, Councillor R White and Councillor M Brock (Substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs L Dales

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brailsford (Committee Member) and Councillor P Harris (Committee Member)

REMOTE MEETING LEGISLATION

The meeting was held remotely, in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police & Crime Panel Meetings) (England & Wales) Regulations 2020.

55 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.

56 DECLARATION OF INTENTION TO RECORD MEETING

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

57 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2020

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2020 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Economic Development Committee since January and since lockdown had ended and the first one held virtually, adding that a great deal had happened since then. This was not just related to Covid but work normally overseen by the Economic Development Committee which had carried on.

In relation to Covid-19 the Chairman stated that the response from both Members and Officers of the Council had been exceptional and had resulted in positive feedback from the business community. The Humanitarian Action Response Team (HART) had been established and had responded to over 750 requests for support from residents within the District. He noted that Newark & Sherwood (N&S) were in the top 10% of Councils paying out Business Support Grants with monies being allocated quickly to those in need. A sum of £26,630,000 had been paid to a total of 2,270 businesses. N&S had also worked with Rushcliffe BC in designing a supplementary grant scheme for businesses who had fell through the initial grant safety net with £1,160,666.67 paid out to 113 businesses. The Council had worked with both communities to help those the most in need and vulnerable and had also assisted parish councils to re-open the high streets.

In addition to the above the Chairman updated the Committee on the progression of the Newark Towns Fund and Town Investment Plan. He advised that proposals had been submitted on 31 July with the response from Government awaited as to whether they would support up to £25m of grant investment.

The Chairman reported that work had progressed with the Sherwood Forest Corner by all Members working together, without party politics, to engage with communities. Harworth Estates were to looking to enhance cycling in and around the former Thoresby Colliery with a Places to Ride submission being made to British Cycling. The Chairman also referred to the free 2 hours car parking made early on in the pandemic and that N&S had kept this in place longer than any other Nottinghamshire authority.

In looking to the future, the Chairman commented that the Agenda before Committee that day contained a number of important updates and decisions. These included the Local Development Framework, Planning White Paper and the impact of Covid on the authority, financially, and the likely unemployment and associated challenges at the end of the furlough scheme. He also referred to the future November Agenda which would contained important strategies for consideration e.g. Economic Growth, Tourism, Open Space and the Newark Town Investment Plan.

59 ORDER OF BUSINESS

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman changed the order of business. Agenda Item 15 was taken after Item 5. The agenda resumed its stated order thereafter.

60 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVENUE AND CAPITAL FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2021 AS AT 31 JULY 2020

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Resources which sought to provide Members with a comparison of the revised budgets for the period ending 31 March 2021 with the projected outturn forecast for the 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 24 September 2020 which detailed the forecasted financial position to 31 March 2021 of the Council as at 31 July 2020.

It was reported that the current position for the Council was unfavourable with a variance of circa £0.574m-£0.774m. It was noted that this was prior to any return funding from the Nottinghamshire Business Rates Pool. It was also reported that the forecast outturn position for this Committee was again an unfavourable variance of £0.727m, with the main reasons for the variance details in Appendix A to the Policy & Finance report. Members were asked to note that the position remained an indication of the anticipated outturn position and that Officers continued to work throughout the year to revise their forecasts with further accurate assessments being reported to Committee closer to the end of the financial year.

In considering the report the Chairman noted that despite the unfavourable variance of the Economic Development Committee it was not solely their responsibility to resolve it. He also noted that if the Council had taken a loss making decision, even if it was for the benefit of their constituents, they would not receive all funds back from the Government.

A Member thanked the Director for the information and commented that he hoped that the public were reassured by the Council's financial plans. He referred to the report due to be presented to the November committee and that it would be necessary to give appropriate consideration to the large income generating items for the following years budget.

In response to whether regular updates would be presented to Committee, the Chairman confirmed that each Committee would be monitoring their own budgets, noting the peaks and troughs in income and that Christmas would be a vital time for potential income generation. The Director advised that it was hoped that more detail as to the funding settlement from Government would be known by November. He noted the uncertainties surrounding business, specifically grant relief for the leisure and retail industry and whether this would continue into 2021. He added further that it would be a challenging position but that it would be possible to fall back on reserves.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

61 FORWARD PLAN - AUGUST 2020 TO JULY 2021

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Economic Development Committee from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

The Director – Planning & Growth advised that in addition to those items already listed for presentation to the November 2020 Committee there would be reports on:

Customer Insight:

- National Civil War Centre; and
- The Palace Theatre

62 BT REMOVAL OF TELEPHONE KIOSK CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Planning Policy & Infrastructure which sought to update Members on the removal of the telephony service to the telephone kiosk near Friary Villas on Sleaford Road, Newark and the Council’s proposed response.

The report provided Members with details of the Council’s approach to the removal of telephony services and that should a Town or Parish Council wish to adopt and repurpose a kiosk, the District Council would support them. This support also extended to when a Town or Parish Council objected to the removal of the service and were able to provide a valid basis for their objection.

It was reported that BT had posted a notice on 11 July that they were intended to remove the service and that any comments should be directed to the Council by 22 August 2020. No comments had been received at the time of the meeting. The Council’s proposed response was detailed in paragraph 3.0 of the report and was one of objection to the removal. The reasons cited for the objection was that the service had a relatively high level of dependence due to the nature of tenures in the ward and also the ongoing pandemic and economic consequences thereof. Therefore, Council Officers believed that it was not the right time to remove the service provision.

In considering the report Members agreed that due the reasons listed above it was vital that the telephony service not be withdrawn.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) the proposed response as detail in the report be approved.

63 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Planning Policy & Infrastructure which sought to update Members on progress towards delivery of the Plan Review in relation to the Allocations and Development Management Policies and associate evidence base documents. The report also sought approval to update the Plan Review Timetable and approval of the adoption of an Annex to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to reflect current restrictions on consultation and publicity due to the pandemic.

The report set out that due to flooding at the end of 2019 and the Covid-19 Pandemic the Local Development Scheme adopted in November 2019 was no longer achievable. Paragraph 3.0 of the report set out the current progress of documents being prepared to support the Plan Review: Open Space Strategy; Housing Needs Assessment; and Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and Pitch Delivery Strategy.

Appendix A to the report set out for Members the proposed annex to the SCI which made clear that during the pandemic the Council would not be engaging in the usual way in relation to consultation and publicity.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the progress towards meeting the timetable of the adopted Local Development Scheme be noted;
- (b) the amendment to the Local Development Scheme to reflect the proposed approach set out in Section 4 and 5 of the report be approved;
- (c) it be noted that the amended Local Development Scheme came into force on 10 September 2020; and
- (d) the Statement of Community Involvement Annex attached as Appendix A be adopted as a statement of current consultation practice during the pandemic.

64 RESIDENTIAL PARKING STANDARDS AND DESIGN GUIDE SPD

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Planning Policy & Infrastructure in relation to a Draft Residential Parking Standards & Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which had been produced to help provide a framework for determining the level of parking provision (both cycling and cars) within new residential developments and to assist in securing good design of residential parking. The report also sought approval to undertake an 8 week period of consultation on the document with Members, local residents, developers, Town & Parish Council and other interested stakeholders.

The report provided Members with details as to the anticipated levels of growth within the district and that it was vital that a residential parking standards or design criteria were adopted to secure well designed development and that new developments within the district were supported by car parking guidance that responded to modern vehicle dimensions, current and future car ownership levels, advances in technology and best practice in the design and layout of parking. Paragraph 3.0 of the report set out the aims of the SPD, a draft of which was attached as Appendix A to the report.

In considering the report Members agreed that the proposals were to be welcomed, noting that Members, developers and the public would all have the opportunity to comment. Comments were made in relation to the number of car parking spaces made available for 3 bedroomed properties and the ability to provide this, with Members querying whether this would have an impact on the viability of a development. Comment was also made in relation to the provision of electric charging points. The Chairman noted that the data used to inform the draft SPD had been from the collection of data from the 2011 Census which was of some concern. The Business Manager advised that the data from the census had been projected forwarded.

In response to the above comments the Business Manager advised that provision would be different from area to area but that every effort was being made not to have too many different categories. He noted the comments in relation to viability,

stating that this was always an issue but not necessarily so if the development was of a good design. In relation to electric charging points, he commented that this could be a demand led provision from householders but that this could soon become a necessity.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the contents of the SPD and accompanying Topic Paper evidence base be noted; and
- (b) the Draft Residential Parking and Design SPD be approved for an 8 week public consultation week commencing 14 September 2020.

65 FOREST CORNER MASTERPLAN CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Tourism which sought to provide Members with an update on the Forest Corner Masterplan including the feedback received through the recent public/stakeholder consultation exercise.

The report set out the background to the development of the Forest Corner Masterplan and the work undertaken to date. Paragraph 2.2 of the report set out that a programme of engagement had been undertaken with the various landowners/managers at Forest Corner and the surrounding area to understand their concerns and aspirations for the site and how all parties could work together to create a vision for its longer-term development with paragraph 2.3 of the report set out the consultees. Details of the online consultation page were reported and how this was promoted. Appendix A to the report set out the full consultation responses.

In considering the report Members welcomed the work undertaken and commented that a positive response from the way in which the consultation had been held was the increase in responses from local people.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the findings of the consultation with stakeholders be noted; and
- (b) officers continue to liaise with the various landowners/managers in producing a masterplan for Forest Corner which would be presented to the November meeting of the Economic Development Committee.

66 ADOPTION OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN (PEP)

The Committee considered the report presented by the Planning Enforcement Officer which sought Members approval for the adoption of the Planning Enforcement Plan (PEP). The Planning Enforcement Officer advised that the report had been considered by Planning Committee the day before who had ratified the proposals contained therein.

The report referred to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in which it stated that effective enforcement was important to maintain public confidence in the planning system, that enforcement action was discretionary and any action should be proportional in responding to suspected breaches or planning control. The proposed PEP would provide information on how the Council would respond to suspected breaches of planning control, tackle unauthorised developments and monitor the implementation of planning permissions. The proposals for the adoption of the PEP were contained in paragraph 3 of the report together with specific details in relation to Prioritisation of Investigations; Performance Management; Proactive Enforcement; Reporting to Committee; and Consultations.

In considering the report Members agreed that it provided greater transparency and would increase public confidence in planning enforcement.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Planning Enforcement Plan and summary document be adopted and used as a policy document in the undertaking of the planning enforcement function.

67 PROPOSED PLANNING REFORMS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Planning Policy & Infrastructure which sought to advise Members of the two sets of proposed reforms to the planning system. The report also sought Members approval for appropriate consultation responses for submission.

The report set out the timeline for the proposed consultations and changes therefrom. Attached as Appendix A to the report was the White Paper which proposed a complete remodelling of the planning system with the approach listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report. Appendix B to the report set out the proposed changes to the current planning system which would be put into operation in advance of any changes arising from the White Paper.

Paragraph 5.0 of the report set out the key issues which Officers felt should be highlighted to Members. The proposed detailed response to the White Paper consultation were listed in Appendix C to the report with Appendix D listing the proposed responses to the potential changes to the current planning system.

In considering the detailed report the Chairman proposed and it was seconded that 2 additional recommendations be added as follows:

1. That a report be taken to the October Meeting of Full Council to offer all Members the opportunity of debating the proposed planning reforms arising from the White Paper; and
2. That a letter be written to the Secretary of State on the Council's views on the White Paper.

A Member referred specifically to the issue of housing provision, stating that the Council had granted planning permission for housing but that the developers had not acted upon that and the houses had not been built. He added that the Council's delivery of affordable housing and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) provision

was to be applauded but that the proposed changes to the planning system could be viewed as 'a kick in the teeth' to positive and well performing local authorities and the work they had undertaken.

The same Member commented that he hoped that the consultation would be changed quickly and that the proposals were almost a nationalisation of the planning function. He had hoped that there would be some clarity provided on some issues so that the Council could respond accordingly but this had not been received and the total lack of detail remained. In relation to the delivery of affordable housing provision, he commented that the proposals would likely result in less affordable housing being delivered and that the abolition of local CILs for a nationally set level was naïve. He referred to the 'beautiful development' wording in the consultation, querying what that actually meant and that it was open to huge interpretation. He stated that the published consultations had a total disregard for the work undertaken and had no benefit for the residents of the District. The Member ended by stating that current planning legislation was being ripped up to be potentially replaced by a system that was not fit for purpose.

In relation to viability of a development which included affordable housing, a Member stated that this would likely result in little, if any, provision, adding that any contribution would only be paid to the Council when the development was finalised. He added that it was doubtful that a developer would finish the development so that contribution costs could be avoided.

The Director – Planning & Growth stated that as a professional planner he had serious concerns at the proposed changes. He added that the proposed affordable housing figures had the ability to prevent regenerative development going ahead and potentially the Council would be unable to intervene on important matters for up to a period of 10 years.

Members thanked the Officers for their detailed report with a Member adding that the proposed changes could be seen as a 'developers' charter'. A Member also referred to the lack of reference to Neighbourhood Plans, stating that any decision making was being taken away from them.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the proposed consultation responses attached at Appendices C and D be approved for submission in response to the consultations, subject to any additional comments;
- (b) a report be taken to the October Meeting of Full Council to offer all Members the opportunity of debating the proposed planning reforms arising from the White Paper; and
- (c) a letter be written to the Secretary of State setting out the Council's views on the White Paper.

68 NEWARK BEACON UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Capital Projects Manager which sought to update Members on the progress made at the Newark Beacon.

The report set out the latest position in relation to the Business Plan which had experienced some delays within its five year programme, primarily due to the need to undertake essential works and staffing changes, details of which were listed in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

The Capital Projects Manager referred to the negative impact on income performance on the Newark Beacon as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the measures taken to assist customers through the lockdown and subsequent weeks with details of the financial, occupancy, business support, digital communications and customer satisfaction performance being reported in paragraph 4.0.

In considering the report a Member suggested that as the way in which businesses have had to change to reflect socially distanced working requirements the Newark Beacon could look to offer a more flexible space and market this accordingly. The Capital Projects Manager advised that all options were being considered and that a tenant had rented an additional space to ensure their employees could work socially distanced.

A Member noted that the Beacon's initial purpose was to provide businesses with a start-up location and that it should be viewed positively that some had left to expand into other premises.

A Member stated that he was pleased to see the Beacon was working well and the efforts made to get through the consequences of the pandemic. He added that one negative issue was that of car parking provision and that he hoped this could be resolved in the future.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report and the achievements made to date be noted; and
- (b) a further progress report be presented to the March 2021 meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Dobson left the meeting at this point.

69 PROGRESS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2021-2026

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth which sought to outline to Members the next steps to develop the N&S Economic Growth Strategy.

The report set out the background to the review of the 2017 Strategy and that following a workshop held with Members in September 2019 the four key priorities were defined as: Inward Investment; Business Growth; Employability, Skills & Schools;

and Infrastructure. The report also set out the process of the submitted bid for the Newark Town Investment Plan. Also included in the report were details of the effects the pandemic and subsequent lock down had taken on the economy both nationally and locally. The proposals, set out in paragraph 3.0 of the report, listed for Members the three key components for consideration in the creation of a new N&S Economic Growth Strategy, these being: work undertaken to date on the economic growth vision for the District; the Newark Place Strategy and Town Investment Plan; and the Newark Economic Recovery and Reopening Economies Strategy.

In considering the report Members agreed that the Economic Impact of Covid-19 & Recovery Strategy Members Workshop that had been held that morning had provided valuable information and that a copy of the presentation slides be circulated.

AGREED (unanimously) that the proposed next steps to developing a Newark & Sherwood Economic Growth Strategy 2021/2026 be noted and supported.

70 NEWARK TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the verbal report presented by the Director – Planning & Growth in relation to the latest position of the Newark Town Investment Plan.

The Director advised that a submission had been forwarded to Government on 31 July and that it was hoped a full report would be ready for the November meeting of the Committee. Newark were one of 13 towns to make a submission and were the only town in the region from Cohort 1 invited to do so.

International Air & Space Training Institute (IASTI)

A team had been commissioned by the Project Board to work on this project. They were working through the development of the proposal with a view to submitting a planning application and agreeing terms of any lease with the District Council. It could be that virtual teaching would be provided to students as soon as September 2021 from a temporary home with a view to converting that to a permanent home as the project moved forward.

Digital Logistics Hub

The District Council and Lincoln University have appointed consultants to carry out the first piece of work on the above with the next step being to test academia, industry and investors as to how it could progress and what any potential gaps might be, the timetable for which was to reach a conclusion by Christmas 2020.

The Director advised that there were other commercial interests but that, at present, they could not be made public, referring to such interest also aligning with the Destination Management Plan. Again, it was hoped that a more public update report would be made in November.

Site of IASTI/Relocation of Cattle Market

A tender exercise had been undertaken for an operator(s) to occupy the current cattle market site on a short term basis with a view to a new facility being established elsewhere, with the Newark Showground being identified as the preferred location. Following a due diligence process none of the submitted bids were able to deliver

that. The site will now be used to enable the alternative uses identified and promoted by the Newark Town Investment Plan aspirations, for which a further update would be provided at the November Committee. Members were informed that this did not rule out the Cattle Market being supported to relocate to an alternative site within the district should a proposal be made in that regard.

Former Marks & Spencer Building/32 Stodman Street, Newark

An update report would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee. A team had been commissioned to further develop this project with discussions to be held about that specific development together with the whole of the town centre curatorship and cultural discussions.

Southern Link Road and A46 Newark Northern By-Pass

Negotiations were ongoing for these infrastructure projects with Highways England and Homes England but at this stage it was not possible to share all discussions publically. It was, however, hoped that this would be possible by the end of the year.

The Chairman thanked the Director and Officers for their ongoing work adding that whilst it was an ambitious plan for the town, it would have an impact throughout the District for its young people.

A Member noted the adverse comments in the press from some Members of Parliament suggesting that Newark was an affluent area and should not be eligible to bid for the funds. He sought to remind Members of the Social Mobility Report issued 3 years previously saying that within the geographic area covered by Newark & Sherwood, the area was 323 out of 324 authority areas in the country in terms of poor social mobility. A press release was issued at that time, citing 3 reasons for that: poor educational performance over decades; low skills and low aspirations; and under-investment in infrastructure. The Member commented that the Towns Fund Bid addressed in whole, or in part, all of the aforementioned reasons and suggested that this be emphasised in the Council's response and approach.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal report be noted.

71 URGENCY ITEMS TAKEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

NOTED the Urgency Items – Minute of Decisions taken during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman