

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19th December, 2012

Present:- Councillor Ian Matthews – in the Chair
Councillors Mrs Astle, Miss Baker, Cairns, Fear, Holland, Lawton,
Olszewski and Wilkes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Studd, Cllr Mrs Peers and Cllr M Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

4. TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPMENT

A report was submitted to provide an update and clarify the status of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP) including the appointment of the Town Centres Manager (TCM).

Officers confirmed that the paperwork had now been submitted regarding the TCP and that the Partnership would have a legal identity once this was returned at which stage the Town Centre Manager would be officially appointed.

Members discussed the theme groups referred to on page 6 of the agenda. It was hoped that these groups would enable the burden on the partnership to be better shared and to allow more partnership working.

It was agreed that regular updates be brought back to the Committee along with a calendar of movements and a timetable.

Resolved: (a) That regular updates be provided to the Committee
(b) That a timetable and calendar of movements be provided to the Committee.

5. TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVES FOR VACANT SHOPS - THE POP-UP EMPORIUM INITIATIVE

A briefing note was submitted to provide an update on the work that the Assets section had done in respect of pop up shops subsequent to the meeting of this Committee in September. Members agreed that it was good to see vacant shops and premises being used.

The Pop Up initiative was currently supported by approximately 30 independent businesses working together to enable them to afford the commercial rents. It was hoped that the use of pop up shops would help to bring a different sort of shopper to the town centre. The Town Centre Partnership would also be looking at ways to bring more independent traders into the town through initiatives such as website campaigns, vouchers and the use of smart phones. In order to measure the success of these initiatives the Town Centre Partnership would be developing a set of key performance Indicators.

Members queried the status of empty shops that were not owned by the Council. Officers confirmed that these were also being looked at by other organisations such as Newcastle College which was currently working with a vacant premise on the Iron Market. Local Landlords would also be represented on the TCP.

Resolved: That the update and briefing note be received.

6. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/2014

A report was submitted which outlined the key options for housing investment in the forthcoming year and sought Scrutiny Committee views on the proposed housing programme.

The Council considered the Housing Capital Programme every year to ensure that its housing investment priorities were up to date. With limited funding available from national funding streams it was appropriate for the Council to continue using the New Homes Bonus for housing purposes.

Members drew Officers attention to section 9.1 of the report and requested clarification as to what 'many' meant in relation to the number of vulnerable people living in unsatisfactory and potentially unsafe homes. Officers agreed that a figure would be provided regarding this.

Concern was raised regarding the fact that the Accredited Landlord Scheme funding was proposed to be cut from £5000 in 2012/13 to £0 in 2013/14 as it was thought that there were considerable problem regarding Landlords especially in the Kidsgrove area.

Some Members considered that more money needed to be set aside for social housing. Officers stated that social housing was included under affordable housing for which the allocated funding had been increased from £0 to £70,000 and that recommendations could be made at this stage to reallocate funding if the Committee wanted to submit suggestions to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting in January.

Resolved: That the report be received.

7. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

A supplementary note was submitted to update the Committee on the implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Guidance 2012, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on Friday 14 December 2012, on the Community Infrastructure Levy viability work undertaken to date.

The new guidance would lead to changes in the draft CIL rents in the original report, it was still unclear as to other implications that the changes could have and no revised timetable had yet been devised.

Officers provided the Committee with a brief overview of the CIL and confirmed that any charging schedule would need to be in place before April 2014. Members agreed that an updated report be provided to the Committee following consultation on the draft charging scheme in April 2013.

Resolved: That the update be received and that a report be submitted to this Committee in April 2013 following consultation on the draft charging scheme.

8. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, because it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Asset Management Strategy 2012-2015

A report was submitted requesting the Committee's views on the Council's Asset Management Strategy before its submission to Cabinet in January.

Concern was raised by some Members as to why the report had been restricted from public access. Officers confirmed that the report would be released into the public domain when it was considered by Cabinet in January.

The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Strategy were key documents evidencing the Council's approach to its Use of Resources. This Strategy provided a clear framework for understanding the value and condition of property owned by the Council so that, in turn, investment decisions could be taken to optimise the use of the said land/property to meet the needs of the Borough's residents, businesses and visitors. This Strategy along with the Council's Capital Strategy sought to demonstrate alignment with, and delivery of, the Council's ambitions as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Officers highlighted the crucial differences in the Council as Land Lord and the Council as Planning Authority and requested that the Committee consider the Economic elements of the report in its capacity of landlord and its obligation to prepare a Local Plan and a 5 year housing supply. It was also highlighted that should the Council fail in this obligation that any decisions made could be overturned by the Planning Inspector.

The Committee requested a full breakdown of the 1.1 million generated from the commercial portfolio (including markets). Officers agreed that this would be provided.

Members also requested clarification that where areas of land were identified there would be full public consultation. This was confirmed by Officers.

Resolved: That the comments from this Committee be fed back to the Cabinet at its meeting in January.

10. WORK PLAN

Resolved: That the work plan be agreed as it stood.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR IAN MATTHEWS
Chair