

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20th March, 2013

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss Baker.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

4. STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP - WAVE 2 CITY DEAL

The Committee received a briefing note regarding the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – Wave 2 City Deal.

The LEP had been in existence for around two and a half years and it had been agreed that the Committee would be informed from time to time of matters of business that were of interest, and the City Deal was one of these.

Within North Staffordshire, there was no recognition of a core city, whereas cities such as Birmingham and Manchester had worked with the Government on City Deals. In November 2012 there had been a second wave of City Deals. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP had engaged in dialogue regarding this and had got through the initial hurdles. The second wave of City Deals was expected to be completed in November 2013, and although the briefing note was for information, Members may wish to have further update reports regarding the matter.

5. HIGH SPEED 2 PHASE 2

The Committee received a briefing note on High Speed Phase 2. The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development stated that the issue was starting to gather momentum. The recent announcement did not mark the commencement of the formal consultation process, but began the process of engagement with stakeholders allowing any significant issues to be identified before the formal consultation process. A working group had been established by the Council and Members with affected wards had received the latest information. It was important

for the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be engaged in the process and to determine on which areas the Committee would focus.

A Member stated that the working group had not yet appointed a Chair. High Speed Phase 2 was becoming a bigger issue than in the previous 12 months. There had been a number of issues arising from the working group meeting. He stated that it would be beneficial to increase the membership of the working group to a total membership of 5 or 7. It was agreed that the membership should be increased, with the new membership details reported back to the Scrutiny Committee.

There was a discussion about the level of noise from HS2 on the wider area. Trains travelling a 225 MPH could create a sound of up to 87 decibels. A Member stated that they were concerned about the lack of Central Government consultation thus far on HS2, particularly at a local level.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development reported that a separate consultation was currently ongoing concerning the Exceptional Hardship Scheme for HS2 Phase 2. The Council had to respond by the 29 April. If the scheme was eventually implemented, communities that were affected would be able to protect their interests. The consultation provided an opportunity to identify criteria and to consider whether it needed to be widened. It would be possible for the working group to consider all of these issues. A Member stated that there was a local group considering the legality of the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Committee receives a report confirming the new Membership of the HS2 Phase Working Group.

6. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development presented a report on the Community Infrastructure Levy. The work taking place would provide a greater degree of certainty for anticipated development expected in the next few years and the likely infrastructure requirements. Over the last few months work had taken place on the Joint Viability Study. It had been determined that there would be three categories, residential, retail and commercial.

A Member stated that the Community Infrastructure Levy was a very complicated area. It was important that the levy was comparable to Stoke-on-Trent City Council and other neighbouring Councils to ensure that the Council was not disadvantaged with regard to development opportunities. The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development commented that the Council had used specialist consultants to advise on the changes and reassured Members that the issues highlighted by the Committee had been raised by Senior Officers and Cabinet Members. There remained scope to levy Section 106 obligations.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. UPDATE ON THE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP AND EMERGING BUSINESS PLAN

The Chair reported that the Town Centres Manager had been invited but had been unable to attend the meeting. He would however attend a future meeting in June with the intent of looking at the Business Plan. The Head of Housing stated that the Town Centre Partnership's had identified a number of priorities including the night

time economy and business and enterprise. A Business Plan had been considered by the board in the previous week. A website was scheduled to be launched in the third week of April. A more in depth discussion could be had at the scrutiny meeting in June. The Business Plan had been approved in principle by the Board.

A Member stated that the work taking place by the Town Centre Partnership sounded good in principle and whilst it made a good start it would be important to evaluate their work over the next 12-18 months. There was a general agreement that the Partnership was doing an excellent job. The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development said that the Town Centres Manager was preparing some key performance indicators for the Partnership.

The Chairman suggested that a meeting of the Committee with the Town Centres Manager should be arranged. Some suggested dates should be obtained and then circulated to the Committee.

8. TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVES FOR VACANT SHOPS

The Committee received a briefing note on Town Centre Initiatives for Vacant Shops.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development reported that the Chair and Vice Chair had met Officers on the 12th September. He stated that the wider commercial portfolio was performing better than previously anticipated.

A Member asked about privately owned empty shops and the private sector's approach to reoccupying these shops. In response, the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development referred to the draft Business Plan for the Town Centre Partnership. The report clearly demonstrated that Newcastle Under-Lyme Borough Council was playing an active role. It was however true that when big shops were empty, adverse comments would be received.

A Member stated that the growing demand for brands meant a decline in traditional shops because of the rise of the supermarkets.

9. TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING

The Engineering Manager stated that a Task and Finish Group on Town Centre Car Parking had been established in November. The group had met on a number of occasions and had considered a range of options. There was a discussion about the options considered.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Committee endorses the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

10. NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM AND MARKET REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

A summary was given of the main tasks of the Newcastle Town Centre Public Realm and Market Refurbishment Project.

RESOLVED: That the current project plan be noted.

11. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE (NHA) - HOMELESSNESS, HOUSING OPTIONS AND HOUSING REGISTER CONTRACT RETENDERING EXERCISE

The Committee received a report on the Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA). Cllr George Cairns declared an interest as he was on the board of Aspire Housing.

The Head of Housing reported that a retendering process for the Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) service was taking place to ensure that the service was available beyond April 2014, as the contract with Aspire Housing was due to expire on the 31st March 2014. A working group for the retendering process had been established. The working group was proposing to develop an in house bid.

RESOLVED: That the Committee accepts the proposal of the NHA Contract Retendering Working Group to develop an in house bid, as an option to be considered as a tender submission for comparison purposes and to ensure the best service is delivered, whilst achieving good value for money aims.

12. WORK PLAN

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

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR IAN MATTHEWS
Chair