

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18th March, 2015

Present:- Councillor David Stringer – in the Chair

Councillors: Baker, Holland, Matthews, Owen, Wallace, Williams and Sweeney (as substitute for Loades)

Outside Parties: Chair of Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership
Roebuck Centre Manager

Officers: Executive Director Regeneration and Development Services
Regeneration and Economic Development Manager
Planning Policy Manager
Scrutiny Officer

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Loades and Wilkes.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 3rd December 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. **KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP**

The Chair of Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership (KTCP), Community Interest Company (CIC), provided Committee with an update on events occurring within Kidsgrove.

Branding

Following on from a successful application to the Association of Town and City Management for place branding support, KTCP had developed the 'Go Kidsgrove' brand and were using it across all media platforms wherever possible.

Marketing

The website www.gokidsgrove.co.uk was now live but more work was still required.

Go Kidsgrove were notified that the Alsager branch of the Co-operative Bank was closing in December and produced a flyer promoting Kidsgrove as an alternative for banking. Since December, the Kidsgrove branch had seen a significant upturn in transactions.

Events

The town had run several Christmas shopping challenges as well as a Halloween challenge and were linking in with a local historian who was organising walking trails.

The first ever Christmas tree was bought for Kidsgrove from the support of Kidsgrove Rotary Club who sponsored the tree and would also sponsor a growing tree to be planted later this year. Negotiations were also ongoing with other organisations.

The canal project received great media attention. A small application was being prepared for £10k of Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) to provide an interactive map for the canal noticeboard. The application would be submitted in April 2015.

The following questions were asked and responses provided:-

Q1 There was concern on the governance; it had been stated you were going to increase the number of Directors, have you still only got the same six?

A1: It was confirmed that there were still only the six. The difficulty was the commitment from people, time and key skills. There was still a lack of marketing expertise.

Q2: The problem was the website not being very informative. You had received a grant from the Borough Council, had further funds been secured?

A2: They were looking forward to securing more membership within Go Kidsgrove.

Q3: If there was a change in administration or priorities and there would no longer be support financially, would the CIC carry on and would there still be support of Officers from Newcastle Borough Council?

A3: It was confirmed that there were funds that could be accessed as a CIC.

The Executive Director of Regeneration and Development confirmed that the allocation of funding to the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership was to fund the managerial position which would cease at the end of December 2015.

In the case of Kidsgrove the £10,000 was to pump-prime establishment of the partnership to see whether it could be a viable arrangement. It was confirmed that the Officer time was built into the service plan and it was envisaged this would continue to support the town centre to strengthen its economy.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centres, Business and Customer Services advised the achievements KTCP had accomplished within twelve months were very good. They had identified what the future was for Kidsgrove but now need to concentrate on a couple of projects to deliver.

Q4: Would future aspirations go beyond the next twelve months, for example planters?

A4: KTCP were looking at sustainable projects and would be reviewing working documents. Preparations were in place to establish a Chairs meeting.

Q5: Has there been any analysis carried out on the potential tourism the Waterfront Project could generate?

A5: Approximately 25,000 people per annum pass through this stretch of canal on boats. It is not rich in heritage but a proposal had been suggested that targeted promotions could be undertaken, for example when a boat was hired the client would receive vouchers to purchase merchandise from the shops in Kidsgrove Town Centre.

Q6: It had been mentioned that Kidsgrove Town Council (KTC) and KTCP have refused to work together, as a Committee could a resolution be passed to the Portfolio Holder?

There was a need to facilitate the Kidsgrove Town Council CIC and other stakeholders so that the priorities and responsibility areas were set out.

A6: The Executive Director of Regeneration and Development advised the Borough Council was at the final stage in negotiations with a District Deal with Staffordshire County Council and it acknowledged that Kidsgrove required a master plan to highlight key work streams and identified, with great clarity, which organisation was leading.

RECOMMENDED:-

That the Executive Director of Regeneration and Development Services act as a representative on behalf of KTCP at meetings with Staffordshire County Council regarding the District Deal and deliver an output to Committee at its next meeting.

5. NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

An update was provided by the Chair of the Town Centre Partnership. Unfortunately Quarter 4 Chair's report was not available.

Footfall Figures

January saw an increase over the January sales period.

Retail Index Figures

Although still not at an average, businesses reported the Christmas trade had been exceptionally good.

Christmas Lights Switch On

The only negative feedback was that the town had been too busy. Ideas were in place on how to deliver this year's project.

The Council had committed to a three year funding of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership which would come to an end in December 2015; the partnership would then need to become self-financing through a Business Improvement District (BID) or membership scheme. The Council would support the TCP to undertake a ballot for the proposed BID for July 2015. Officer support from the Regeneration and Economic Development Team would continue to be provided to both the TCP's based on one day per week.

Discussions were taking place as to how the BID levy could be set and would be complete April/May time.

The following questions were asked and responses provided:-

Q1: When the TCP had got their Business Plan would efforts be made to see a positive result?

A1: The BID Steering Group would submit the Plan to the Board. If successful the BID company would take over. The TCP would undertake a separate role.

Q2: What would happen if businesses did not wish to partake in the BID?

A2: If the majority were in favour it would go ahead.

Q3: There was a lot of opposition two years ago regarding the formation of the TCP, but that had changed and well done.

A3: A lot of the work was down to the support of the Newcastle Borough Council Officers.

The TCP had been advised to work on an Action Plan and by the end of the next Board meeting an Action Plan would be available to be delivered.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager advised there was an increasingly positive feeling in the town centre, including the introduction of some new businesses offering different products.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centres, Business and Customer Services thanked the Chair of Town Centre Partnership and her team on behalf of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED:-

That Committee receive the update for Quarter 4.

6. NEWCASTLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - YEAR FOUR ACTION PLAN AND YEAR THREE REVIEW

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager presented the Newcastle Economic Development Strategy: Year Three Review and Year Four Action Plan.

In May 2012 the Borough Council approved a five year Economic Development Strategy (2012-2017) in order to focus its efforts for stimulating growth and bringing jobs to the Borough. An annual action plan was provided each year to show what actions were being taken to take this forward. These actions were grouped under the following four headings:-

- Promoting enterprise and supporting local businesses grow
- Improving the skills of the local workforce
- Marketing and development
- Strengthening the vitality and appeal of the town centres

The Committee was opened up for comment on each action.

Promoting enterprise and supporting local business grow

Successfully delivered the Newcastle 'Business Boost' competition, including new sponsors. It was proposed planning for Business Boost 2015 to begin April 2015. The amount of sponsorship would determine whether it would go ahead and in what format. Explore further opportunities for town centre business awards through Business Boost competition 2015. There was a need to identify the right mentor of certain businesses. In taking the initiative forward there needs to be a more robust check and level of support from the mentors.

It was asked for a crib sheet to be distributed to Members to enable the correct information/point of contact to be passed on to businesses to ensure they could access business support/advice.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager advised that any Officer in their team would be able to assist but initially it would be the Business Development Officer. Additionally there was the direct line at North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce.

Work was to continue with the Local Enterprise Partnership and Staffordshire Economic Development Officers Group to secure external investment in the Borough. It was agreed that the Regeneration and Economic Development Manager provide Members with a copy of the European Regional Development Funding Update 2014-2020.

Improving the skills of the local workforce

Work to continue with partners to further develop the employment and skills across the Borough and to explore opportunities for a consortia approach through the Newcastle Employment and Skills group to secure additional funding and resource for the area.

It was proposed to work with Talent Match to identify alternative routes, such as mentoring community buddies and creative routes such as digital media. A full time Newcastle Co-ordinator was appointed January 2015.

It was asked what progress had been made in encouraging employers to provide more work place training?

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager advised that there was an issue of the project not materializing locally with the Education Trust. Presently there was a locality project in place to continue to work with partners to further develop the employment and skills across the Borough and to explore opportunities for a consortia approach through the Newcastle Employment and Skills group to secure additional funding and resource for the area

A Member recommended that this project be actively pursued by Newcastle Borough Council.

Marketing and Development

Continued to work with the Make It inward investment team to attract prospective investors and employers to the area and secure more jobs including the publication

of new 'North Staffordshire Development Sites' brochure specifically aimed to publicise investment opportunities in Stoke and Newcastle.

It was proposed to secure agreement with Henry Davidson Developments for the development of the Ryecroft site which met the expectations of the two Councils with regard to occupier content, scheme design and financial return and, if so, to proceed towards completion of a formal Development Agreement.

It was asked if Newcastle Borough Council could ensure to include public conveniences as part of the development plans.

The Executive Director of Regeneration and Development advised that this would be difficult to secure but pointed out the likely inclusion of restaurants and cafes, which would include such facilities.

It was asked to what extent would the Keele Master Plan include the infrastructure?

A Member advised that the Borough Council needs to ensure, through links with the website, that tourism played an important part.

Strengthening the vitality and appeal of the town centres

Supported the Newcastle TCP and other partners to build on previous successful events programmes such as Lymelight Festival, The Homecoming, Paint the Town Pink and the Christmas lights switch on.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development Services pointed out that, apart from procuring external advice to carry out Keele Options appraisal and master planning study, there had been little direct cost to the Borough Council in delivering a wide programme of activities set out within the Strategy (reflecting the Council's enabling role).

RESOLVED:-

- (a) That a crib sheet be forwarded to Members showing the correct procedures to follow for advice and support in relation to their business.
- (b) That Members are provided with a copy of the European Regional Development Funding Update 2014 – 2020.
- (c) The Newcastle Borough Council continue to work with partners to further develop the employment and skills across the Borough.
- (d) That tourism is encouraged through links with the Borough Council's web site.

7. JOINT LOCAL PLAN

Members were updated on the progress in preparing the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Local Plan (Joint Local Plan).

The Plan was currently in the pre-production phase. This phase involved two stages: Stage 1 involved the assembly of relevant and up to date evidence, critical to driving the strategic direction of the plan strategy and Stage 2 included the adoption of a joint Statement of Community Involvement.

The draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was approved for public consultation purposes by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council on the 15th October and 30th October 2014 respectively. The six weeks consultation period began on the 10th November and ended on the 19th December 2014. The results of the consultation exercise and proposed amendments to the draft SCI would be reported first to the Council's Planning Committee so that their views could be considered by Cabinet in June 2015. The final decision to adopt the final SCI would be made by Council, anticipated to be July 2015.

In respect of the commissioning of supporting evidence the contract for preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) had been awarded to Turley Economics in partnership with demographic consultancy Edge Analytics with a final draft report to be published week commencing 20th April 2015.

A Member commended the progress that had been made but asked if more information could be obtained regarding the timetable?

The Planning Policy Manager advised more information would be available late autumn.

A Member commented that the latest report researched into the Borough's housing and employment concluding April 2015 and asked would there be a presentation to Members and when this information became available for it to be dispatched to Members.

The Executive Director of Regeneration and Development confirmed that the information would be made available at the earliest appropriate opportunity or advance warning would be given to Members when the information would become available.

RESOLVED:-

Information to be dispatched to Members once available, or advance warning to be given when the information would become available.

8. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE CONTRACT PROGRESS

RESOLVED:-

Quarter 4 update report to be provided at the next meeting.

9. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE CONTRACT MONITORING

The Executive Director Regeneration and Development provided an update on Quarter 3 performance statistics.

In Quarter 3 there was a downward trend and since the last meeting Aspire Housing had formed their own letting policy. Future comparative data to be explored to see if there was a continuing trend.

A Member commented that it seemed unfair Aspire Housing were undertaking their own letting system.

The Executive Director Regeneration and Development advised that Aspire Housing were entitled to carry out this approach in relation to properties unaffected by the Council's nomination rights.

It was asked if an Officer from Aspire Housing could attend the next meeting to explain their letting system.

RESOLVED:-

That an Officer from Aspire Housing be invited to the next meeting to provide an account of how their letting system operates.

10. SUPERFAST STAFFORDSHIRE PROJECT

The Chair provided an update on the Superfast Staffordshire Project. Within the next fifteen months all of the cabinets would had been upgraded.

RESOLVED:-

That Paul Chatwin, Project Manager, Superfast Staffordshire to be invited back to the next meeting to provide an update on proceedings.

11. WORK PLAN

RESOLVED:-

That the following items are added to the work plan:-

Aspire Housing – Letting System

An Officer from Aspire Housing to be invited to the next meeting to provide an account of how their letting system operates.

Newcastle Housing Advice Contract Progress

Quarter 4 update to be produced at the next meeting.

Superfast Staffordshire Project

Paul Chatwin, Project Manager to be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on proceedings.

High Speed 2

All Members were in agreement for the High Speed 2 Working Group to continue, as once a decision was made on a preferred route, it would be important to optimise the economic benefits.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

A Member asked for a cross-party scrutiny group to be established to listen to the views of residents regarding green space assets disposal.

A vote took place showing; 4 in favour, 1 against and 6 abstained.

RESOLVED:-

That Cabinet, at its meeting on Wednesday 25th March 2015, make a decision to have a Capital Programme Cabinet Panel or for a cross-party Scrutiny Group to be established.

COUNCILLOR DAVID STRINGER
Chair