

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1st July, 2015

Present:-	Councillor David Stringer – in the Chair
Councillors	Burgess, Hambleton, Holland, Huckfield, Johnson, Loades, Stubbs and Williams
	Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Business and Assets Councillor Mrs Bates (Kidsgrove Town Centre Representative)
Officers	Paul Chatwin (Superfast Broadband) Executive Director, Regeneration and Development Head of Housing and Regeneration Democratic Services Manager (for item 8 only) Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Northcott and Matthews.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

Councillor Sweeney to be added present at the meeting as substitute for Councillor Loades.

4. SUPERFAST STAFFORDSHIRE PROJECT

The Chair welcomed Paul Chatwin, Project Manager for Superfast Staffordshire to the meeting.

It had been twelve months since the project commenced with 270 cabinets completed within the project intervention area. Approximately 50,000 premises had gained access to the fibre network with a further 40,000 to be provided with access by mid-2016.

Approximately 66 cabinets would be upgraded in the Newcastle-under-Lyme district by 2016.

Recently the project received an additional £1.68m from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to extend the current Phase 1 project. After going out to tender the contract was awarded to British Telecom to deliver a further 4,000 premises with an estimated 90,000 to be completed by 2017. The contract would commence when the existing one terminates.

This would see the Newcastle-under-Lyme district 96.6% connected, compared to 95% across the County, leaving 2,000 premises in the district requiring additional funding to be upgraded.

The following questions were raised by Committee and answers provided by Mr Chatwin:-

Q1: Would the shortfall be reduced over the last twelve months?

A1: The final 5% would be at the end of the intervention.

Q2: Would the government claw the £1.68m back if Staffordshire County Council were unable to match fund?

A2: Every endeavour would be undertaken to secure additional funding. There would not be a penalty if government were to receive it back.

Q3: Why had there been an award to install Broadband over two years?

A3: The onus was on the developer to install the infrastructure.

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development informed Committee that there would be a whole section in the forthcoming Local Plan in relation to infrastructure and this could include such matters provided that it would be viable for developers.

Q4: Was there an estimation of how many premises within the rural areas would not benefit?

A4: Approximately 2,000 and these were included in the 5%.

It was asked for clarification on the following acronyms within the report:-

FTTC – Fibre to the contract

FTTP – Fibre to the premises, exchange only.

PCP – Primary connection point.

Resolved:-

That Committee received the report.

5. ASPIRE HOUSING LETTING SYSTEM

Committee were informed that Sue Davies, Customer Services Manager from Aspire Housing will be attending the next meeting on Wednesday 2nd September 2015 to provide an account of how Aspire Housing letting system operates.

Resolved:-

That Sue Davies from Aspire Housing is invited to attend the next meeting on Wednesday 2nd September 2015.

6. KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The Head of Housing and Regeneration Services presented Go Kidsgrove Update July 2015.

The Go Kidsgrove CIC AGM was held on 25th March 2015 where achievements in the past year two topics were discussed.

Christmas

Go Kidsgrove funding would be used to provide a power source to the bed in which the Christmas tree would be located; £1,000 had been allocated. The Council's Engineering Manager had been tasked with arranging this with E-on.

Other areas within Kidsgrove town centre being installed with Christmas lights were Liverpool Road, King Street and The Avenue.

In terms of partnership working Go Kidsgrove and the Town Locality Action Partnership (LAP) were working together.

There had been no meeting since January 2015 between Kidsgrove Town Council and the CIC but hopefully one would be arranged in the near future.

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development Services advised that at the last meeting information was shared of a District Deal with Staffordshire County Council. The next version had been signed and includes reference to the preparation of the master plan for Kidsgrove. This would provide the opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities of the various organisations, along with the activities that they are leading.

Signage

An application for £10,000 had been submitted to Heritage Lottery Funding for an interactive map for the canal noticeboard.

Other Expenditure

Go Kidsgrove had agreed to fund ten lamp column planters and had also secured some private sector sponsorship for a further four to be erected and maintained by the Borough Council. Due to no feedback being received from Staffordshire County Council until May this project had been carried over to next year.

Cash Flow

Confirmation was awaited of the HLF funding.

There were ongoing issues with the supplier of the website. It was agreed that the Board would write to the supplier with a deadline for the functionality to be resolved by.

Colleagues were reminded that Newcastle Borough Council had invested £10,000 to pump-prime the CIC's work. Over the last twelve months there had been projects put forward and these were summarised in a Business Plan for the 2015/2016 financial year.

It was asked why the investment had gone to the CIC Company and not to Kidsgrove Town Council.

A Member advised that it had been a learning lesson. Within the District Deal 2 there would have to be a lot of partnership working to bring appropriate projects forward.

Resolved:-

- (a) To advise the Go Kidsgrove CIC that within the next six months a market strategy should be produced and the website functionally working.

7. NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The BID Business Plan was launched on the 19th May 2015 by Newcastle Town Centre Partnership. The closing date for votes was the 16th July 2015.

Recent Events

- The Limelight Festival was very popular, with good media coverage, but was dampened by the weather.
- Newcastle Jazz and Blues. Good feedback was received. The Council funding had been reduced by £3,000.
- The Homecoming. This was replicated on last year's format and included four key events.
- Music and Dance Performance Events. Thanks to a grant from Awards for All there was a procession through the town with music, costumes and artistic creations with a theme dubbed Midsummer Wakes.

Visitor Survey

This was for information. The KPIs would be presented to the next Committee meeting.

Concern was raised of the loss of seating around the market stalls. The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development Services advised that when the market was consolidated the space available for seating was limited.

Resolved:-

That the KPIs are presented at the next meeting.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER REVIEW OF DECISION MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report which was considered by the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the 15th June 2015. The Committee had resolved that each Committee be asked to consider the proposals made by the LGA Peer Review and the draft report to Council in as far as they relate to that particular Committee and to feedback these comments.

The following observations were noted:-

- Information items to be received electronically and not presented to Committee for discussion.
- More notice of proposed developments prior to being submitted to Committee.
- The start times of meetings to be more flexible and to look at consolidating meetings to the day.

Resolved:-

That Committee receive the report.

9. LAND ASSET DISPOSAL

It was resolved at Council on the 15th April 2015 that a cross party scrutiny working group is set up to listen to the concerns of local residents before any green space was sold for development. Members considered a summary report in this matter.

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development advised that the Asset Management Strategy was refreshed annually and presented to this Committee, as well as submitted to Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny. Presently the Green Space Strategy was being updated.

The following questions were presented to Committee:-

1. How do members envisage that any scrutiny working group will interface with the various Cabinet Panels that are being established to address capital programme expenditure and income?
2. How do members envisage that any scrutiny working group will both influence and enable delivery of future Asset Management Strategies (including the identification of future sites for disposal)?
3. What do members consider need to be the key terms of reference?
4. Is it anticipated that this group would review the previously-approved disposals (Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the current Asset Management Strategy)?
5. Do Members consider they have sufficient information in order to balance private interest with the wider public interest?
6. Are members satisfied with the consultation arrangements set out in the current Asset Management Strategy?

The Chair advised the sites for disposal had been called-in three times and he had confidence that the process was correct.

The consultation exercise was taking place over a six week period involving Ward Councillors being notified prior to the start of the process. All owners/occupiers adjacent to the site would then be sent a consultation letter along with the Parish/Town Council, if applicable, and any known Resident Associations.

The Chair presented Members with an alternative option; once the consultation period was over it was proposed to invite stakeholders, Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors, Resident Groups and Officers to a meeting for the findings to be presented.

Members felt this could unfairly raise residents' expectations.

A vote took place for a Cross Party Working Group to be formed:-

3 in favour, 5 against.

A Member wished for it to be minuted that, at Council on the 20th May 2015, the motion was submitted that, in the interests of transparency and open government, a cross party scrutiny working group be set up to listen to the concerns of local residents before any green space was sold for development.

Resolved:-

That the approved consultation process be followed once an area of land was identified as having a potentially alternative use.

10. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE CONTRACT MONITORING QUARTER 4

The Head of Housing and Regeneration presented a second progress review of the Newcastle Housing Advice Service following the first year operations of the contract period.

Quarterly statistical meetings were held, with the performance areas reported at appendix to the report.

It was asked if children, who were in foster care, get to have a Council house, as once they reached the age of eighteen they were moved out of the system.

The Head of Housing and Regeneration advised that through Arch single homeless people do have access to private rented accommodation.

Resolved:-

That Committee receive the report.

11. HIGH SPEED 2

A discussion took place regarding the strategic rail connectivity and the resurrection of the High Speed 2 working group.

Members felt residents, who were environmentally affected, still had a duty of care.

Resolved:-

(a) That the High Speed 2 working group reconvene and be called Strategic Transport.

(b) That the working group investigate the environmental and economic advantages of the High Speed 2.

(c) That the new working group Members to be Councillors Stringer (Chair), Loades and Stubbs.

12. RYECROFT REGENERATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development tabled an update/ briefing on the Ryecroft and Civic Hub projects.

The scheme objective was to achieve a retail-led, mixed use redevelopment scheme on the sites of the former Sainsbury's and Civic Offices. Objectives were presented to Council in a report in November 2013.

Based upon the financial parameters set by the joint clients the scheme had evolved into its present form:-

- 470 student beds
- 60,000 square feet
- 212 parking spaces

Forecast regeneration outcomes:-

- Over 500 construction-related jobs; 350 operational jobs arising from the scheme; £8.6m Gross Valued Added (GVA) benefit to the economy from the operational jobs and £5.1m (GVA) from the construction sector.

Resolved:-

That Committee received the report.

13. **WORK PLAN**

Resolved:-

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

Wednesday 2nd September 2015

- Building Control - Progress made in implementing the Action Plan agreed by the Council in response to the report of the Planning Peer Review Team – Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to be invited.
- Newcastle Town Centre Partnership KPIs.

Wednesday 2nd December 2015

- Kidsgrove Town Centre Market Strategy

14. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

15. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

16. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 2nd September 2015, 7.00pm in Committee Room 1

COUNCILLOR DAVID STRINGER
Chair