

ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2nd July, 2014

Present:- Councillor David Stringer – in the Chair

Councillors Baker, Holland, Loades, Matthews, Owen, Mrs Simpson, Wallace and Wilkes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Simon White (Vice Chair) and Councillor William Welsh

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 were agreed as a true record

4. UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/YEAR 3 ACTION PLAN

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development updated Members on a resolution to an item Scrutiny submitted to Cabinet on the 18 June 2014 relating to the Economic Development Strategy/Year 3 Action Plan.

The Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration, Business and Town Centres had thanked the Chair of Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee for the input provided by his Committee and confirmed that this had been taken into account in shaping the Year 3 Action Plan.

RESOLUTION:- That the Economic Development Strategy Year 3 Action Plan be approved and adopted as the basis for the Council's work over the next twelve months to promote the economic development of the Borough and bring new jobs to the area.

5. SUPERFAST BROADBAND

The Chair welcomed Paul Chatwin, Project Manager, from Superfast Broadband to the meeting to provide an update on the Superfast Staffordshire project. Hot Mix radio station from Audley and District were in attendance to record discussions around the report if Members were in agreement. The recording would be submitted to the Council's Communications Team before going live. All Members were in agreement for the recording to take place.

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Paul Chatwin reported that the Superfast Staffordshire project was now in the process of fibre enabling approximately 500 existing cabinets within the project intervention area. Nearly 10,000 premises would have access to the superfast broadband network by the end of September 2014 and a further 80,000 by 2016.

Approximately 66 cabinets would be upgraded in the Newcastle-under-Lyme district by June 2016. The exchange areas that are set to benefit from this project included; Ashley, Audley, Betley, Bobbington, Kidsgrove, Madeley, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Pipegate, Waterhays, Dimsdale and Whitmore.

As these communities come "on line" the Demand Stimulation Team would undertake a series of awareness raising activities that would alert the residents and businesses as to the availability of the service in their area. Residents would also be able to access Superfast Staffordshire website and Twitter to acquire when the installation would take place in their area.

By mid 2016 97% of the premises in Staffordshire would be connected to the superfast fibre network. Approximately 472,000 (95%) of premises would be able to receive speeds in excess of 24 megabits per second. All premises in Staffordshire would be able to receive a minimum of 2 megabits as part of the Universal Service Commitment.

Since the contract had been signed a joint County Council, BT and BDUK project team had been formed, along with the governance structures required to deliver the project in line with BDUK requirements.

The project would be delivered in a series of eight phases (quarters) over the two year fibre deployment period, starting in 2014 and due for completion by 2016. Over 500 individual structures would be upgraded during this period.

Communities would start to benefit from May 2014 and would be able to order superfast broadband services.

Officers of the Superfast Staffordshire project team would lead the promotional and awareness raising activities, to ensure communities and businesses alike are alerted to the provision and benefits of the service. This would involve working with stakeholders, Parish Councils and locally recruited broadband champions to work with communities to ensure those services are fully utilised.

A Member asked for the reason why some areas are not being upgraded. Paul Chatwin advised it could be due to new housing developments and if the take up exceeded the 20% gap, reinvestment would be made to tackle the 5% areas.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development expressed concern over the small proportion of areas in Newcastle-under-Lyme receiving the upgrade in the first phase of the programme compared to other areas of Staffordshire. Paul Chatwin confirmed British Telecom decide where installation would be carried out and reported back quarterly to Superfast Staffordshire advising of the next stage of connection. The contract was a fixed price and delivered by British Telecom.

RESOLUTION:- That the Committee receive the report.

6. NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The Head of Housing and Regeneration gave a review of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Partnership Business Plan and asked for Scrutiny to consider the key objectives of the Business Plan.

The five key objectives were:-

- Develop strategic partnerships
- Improve marketing, communication and promotions
- Improve safety and security
- Improve economic viability and inward investment
- Improve access and the environment

Value for Money

- The Newcastle Business Plan identified the need to use performance indicators to gauge the impact on the partnership's activities on the town centre
- A footfall monitoring camera was installed in June to monitor town centre usage which allowed the partnership to monitor local trend and to compare with regional trends
- Vacancy rate was assessed every six months to show performance of the town businesses
- Trading figures are being requested from pilot town centre businesses and anonymised to show how footfall related to spend. Going forward this performance indicator needed to be mainstreamed

Newcastle Town Centre Partnership had made a positive statement that they wished to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) to help create a sustainable future which responded to the town centre business' needs.

A BID is based upon a defined area within which rate-paying businesses decide on new improvements to help transform their area and fund them via a levy if the majority of ratepayers in a designated area approved them through a vote. If the majority of those who vote approved the proposal, the levy becomes mandatory on all defined ratepayers and would be treated as a statutory debt. Newcastle Town Centre Partnership aims to have a ballot on the BID in March 2015. After five years the businesses would re-vote on whether they wanted the BID to continue and what they wanted to improve over the next five years.

A discussion took place on the Detailed Theme Action Plans covering the following areas and comments were noted:-

- Town Centre Management
- Business and Enterprise Strategy
- Environment and Infrastructure Strategy
- Outdoor Markets Strategy
- Evening Economy and Safety
- Financing
- Corporate Structure
- Key Performance Indicators (produced quarterly)

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RESOLUTION:- That the Key Performance Indicators listed below are presented to the next Scrutiny meeting on Wednesday 3 September 2014:-

- Footfall monitoring
- Property Vacancy Rate
- Trading figures

7. **KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP**

Councillor Mrs Elsie Bates, representative of the Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership gave an update on the Kidsgrove Town Centre Community Interest Company Business Plan.

Like Newcastle, the Kidsgrove Town Centre Community Interest Company Business Plan was established to be a private sector led initiative. It had been set up as a Community Interest Company, which was incorporated in September 2013. The small Board of Directors comprised representatives from local businesses, the town Council and the Borough Council. The use of sub groups allowed the Board to give voice to a much wider audience, build on people's interests and to draw on expertise in specific areas.

The theme group identified the following priorities towards achieving the vision:-

Priority 1: Marketing the area to raise awareness and increase footfall by developing an events programme and a brand development to give identity of a specific product (in this case Kidsgrove Town Centre)

Priority 2: Develop a website for the town centre. The purchase of the website would be completed by the end of July 2014 and to develop a strong partnership that included all stakeholders in the town centre

Priority 3: To develop the waterfront project

Priority 4: Enhancing the attractiveness and safety of the area, for example floral displays and hanging baskets

Priority 5: Development of a Transport Hub

Priority 6: Explore changes to Market Street traffic flow

The Chair commented that three of the Directors are elected Members and two hold two key positions as Chair and Company Secretary.

A Member suggested establishing a Shadow Board of Directors with the objective of them taking over after six months. Councillor Turner agreed this was a good idea would raise it with the Town Centre Partnership.

RESOLUTION:- That Councillor Mrs Elsie Bates produce a report to the next Scrutiny Committee on Monday 3 September 2014 outlining progress to date, particularly the steps to be taken to strengthen private sector membership and leadership of the company.

8. RYECROFT REGENERATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development gave a position update as follows:-

- Demolition works of the former Sainsbury's store and multi-storey car park had been completed well within the timescale and budget parameters that were agreed;
- The two Councils had shortlisted three prospective development companies as potential preferred partners to take the retail-led regeneration project forward;
- The shortlisted companies were Henry Davidson Developments; St Modwen and a consortium led by Zerum Consult;
- The selection process involved the said companies making presentations to a joint steering group from the two Councils on the 11 June 2014, including the Portfolio Holder's attendance as an observer.

It was anticipated that the two Councils would be in a position to decide upon the outcome of the process by September 2014.

The next stage would involve a Development Agreement this was expected to be completed by the end of the current financial year.

It had been confirmed that all of the three shortlisted developers for the Ryecroft scheme had incorporated the site of the current Civic Offices in their plans.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development advised that there would possibly be a joint meeting with Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny Committee to review the output of the above processes prior to any final decisions being made.

RESOLUTION:- (a) That Members note the information and agree to receive a further report at the earliest opportunity and;

(b) That members agreed in principle to hold a joint meeting with members of the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to review the matter.

9. WORK PLAN

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

Monday 3 September 2014 meeting:-

- Newcastle Housing Advice Service Contract – Progress report on new service
- Housing Allocations Policy Review
- Local Enterprise Partnership Planning Charter
- Town Centre Partnerships:-

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- Quarterly report to be produced on the Key Performance Indicators relating to footfall monitoring, property vacancy rate and trading figures for Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Partnership
- A report to be produced by the Kidsgrove Town Centre Representative, Councillor Mrs Elsie Bates on the position update relating to Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership

Wednesday 18 March 2015 meeting:-

- Newcastle Economic Development Strategy – Year 4 Action Plan and Year Three Review.

10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been received from the public

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 3 September 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 2

COUNCILLOR DAVID STRINGER
Chair