

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30th November, 2016

Time of Commencement: 6.30 pm

Present:- Councillor Allison Gardner – in the Chair

Councillors Bailey, Holland, Matthews, Northcott, Turner (Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer), G Williams and J Williams (Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Property and Business)

Officers Jayne Briscoe - Scrutiny Officer, Elaine Burgess - Markets and Regeneration Officer, Kim Graham - Regeneration and Economic Development Manager and Jo Halliday - Head of Housing, Regeneration and Assets

Apologies Councillor(s) Dymond, Proctor and Snell

Also in Attendance Matt Taylor, BID Manager

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Holland asked if there had been any progress in relation to the report regarding the impact on highways of planning developments across the Borough and the A34 traffic policy developed by Staffordshire County Council. Councillor Holland agreed to follow this matter up with Councillor Loades.

With regard to the Business Helpline report the Regeneration and Economic Development Manager it agreed that rather than data on the skills base of the Newcastle area it would be more achievable to include a district profile in the final report.

3. PRESENTATION ON THE MARKETS WEBSITE

The Markets and Regeneration officer, Elaine Burgess, gave a presentation on the markets website. Members viewed the customer facing content, which was part of

the BID website. The BID website had a link to the Council website which contained information on how to reserve a stall. Continuing the Markets and Regeneration officer explained about the information on Town Centre App, which was available to download.

Responding to questions from members Matt Taylor, manager of the BID team explained how the website was marketed. The BID website also had a high visibility on the google search engine and an active content of news and deals.

Councillor Turner, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer spoke to the Committee in relation to the digital revolution which was evolving within the authority. He explained that, as from 1st January 2017, the authority would no longer handle cash. He suggested that the market traders be incentivised to move to cashless payments, especially as the Town anticipated an increase in the student population and younger people had a tendency not to carry cash. In this respect the Chair referred to the potential costs to the trader of operating a cashless system and the Manager of the BID team stated that the BID would be offering a free training session for traders to learn about low cost cashless payments.

Councillor Turner suggested that there should be the facility online to register, book a stall and that discounts could be offered if the booking was for a 6 month period or longer. This facility should be as user friendly as possible.

Members thanked the Markets and Regeneration Officer for her presentation.

4. DISCUSSION WITH THE BID MANAGER - BOROUGH MARKET

The BID Manager explained that, in respect of the Borough Market, although it was operated by the Council the BID felt that it was a partner and wished to help ensure the success of this important part of the economic and social aspect of the Town. He added that this was the first time the BID had been approached to give a view and he welcomed the opportunity.

The BID team worked to promote the market and its activities, such as Trade for a Tenner which had been promoted via social media.

The Bid team manager reported that the artisan market operator at the Christmas lights switch on was keen to return to the Town and to make it a regular feature.

In response to a question from a member Matt Taylor explained that the BID team carried out outreach work including giveaways and discounts at Keele University to encourage the student population to shop in the town.

Councillor J Williams, as Portfolio holder for Town Centres, Property and Business hoped that the artisan market could be linked to the traditional market and that the traditional market stalls could be reconfigured to give a more vibrant feel.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager suggested that new businesses such as the haberdashery in Barracks Road could have stall signposting customers to their premises and giving an example of their offering within the Barracks,

Agreed - That the Markets and Regeneration Manager and the BID Manager engage in a semi-structured interview to develop ideas and ways to take these forward.

5. BUSINESS HELPLINE - PENULTIMATE REPORT

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager presented this report which examined the use of the business helpline by Newcastle businesses.

In response to the request of the Scrutiny Committee a meeting had been arranged with the Business Helpline Advisor to discuss the current uptake of the service and explore options for improvement.

The performance report showed that 52 Newcastle businesses accessed the Business Helpline which was 5 more than other Staffordshire authorities and less than 2 Staffordshire Authorities. This indicated that improvements could be made and the options to help Newcastle businesses to access the helpline were set out in the report.

It was noted that the suggested initiatives would not result in additional financial cost to the authority but that more officer time would be needed to implement the suggested improvements areas.

During a discussion relating to resources a member pointed out that an economic development officer spent almost a third of the working time available in Kidsgrove. Continuing the Chair asked whether at a point in time Go Kidsgrove would become self-sufficient in terms of officer time? The Head of Housing, Regeneration and Assets suggested that the appropriate time to examine this issue was during the next 12 months alongside the review of development strategy.

Members were supportive of this review of officer time, especially as local councils became more dependent upon business rates.

6. UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR ON SCRUTINY WORK CARRIED OUT TO DATE

At this point in the meeting the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Property and Business, Councillor John Williams presented the Action Plan 2016 for Go Kidsgrove and members reviewed progress against the plan.

The report was received and members were pleased with the positive developments.

Borough Market

The Chair gave an update on the scrutiny work carried out to date on the development of the Borough Market.

It was agreed that:-

- A survey of market traders and shoppers be carried out (Councillor Northcott and G Williams to help facilitate on 12 December)
- A walkabout be carried out to include members and partners (Scrutiny Officer to co-ordinate)
- The BID manager be asked to offer input regarding the most cost effective way for market traders to offer cashless payments to customers.
- That a change management company be invited to a future meeting of this scrutiny committee together with the markets supervisors.

It was agreed that an extra meeting of the scrutiny committee would be held in February, prior to the scheduled 15 March meeting. At the March meeting an interim report on the Borough market would be considered together with an update report on Growth Deal 3 (if this was available). A final report on the Borough Market would be presented to a meeting of the Committee in April for final sign off prior to submission to Cabinet.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

8. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This Committee will meet next in February on a date to be agreed.

COUNCILLOR ALLISON GARDNER
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.05 pm