

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7th March, 2012

Present:- Councillor Mark Olszewski – in the Chair
Councillors I Gilmore, A Beech, E Boden, M Holland, D Loades,
D Richards, P Hailstones, S Olszewski and R Studd

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Cairns.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND PLANNING REGARDING THE ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The draft Asset Management Strategy had been reported to the meeting of this Committee held on 5 January and it was resolved that the information be received (minute 3). The Strategy had subsequently been approved by Cabinet on 1 February. However, it is clear from the minutes of the meeting that it was the intention of this Committee that the Strategy should be scrutinised in greater detail at the next meeting of the Committee. Unfortunately, this had not occurred. The decision of Cabinet had not been called in and the Strategy was now in place.

Nevertheless, it was considered worthwhile to consider the Strategy with a view to the ongoing process of the management of Council assets and the ongoing formulations of asset management strategy given that this is an annual document.

It was noted that Members would have the opportunity should they wish to consider individual sites which came forward for decisions on their future use, whether that be for operational services or disposal for community benefits, economic development or a capital revenue. Similarly, they would be able to consider policies which affected asset management such as the Site Allocation Policies Development Plan Document.

The Council has a substantial asset base in part due to the history of industrial remediation in the area. Further the Council has a record of successful market interventions in economic regeneration, in housing and in retail including Parkhouse (the former Holditch Colliery), housing in the Westlands (former farmland), Castle Walks, the Vue Cinema and Keele Golf Centre. The Council can facilitate development which is unattractive to the private sector – such as the starter units at Parkhouse or work in partnership to make development work.

It was confirmed to Members that the Victoria Hall in Kidsgrove was not a Council owned property.

The asset review process was considered whereby a review of assets is carried out to ascertain what is needed for operational purposes and what might be used for other purposes or disposed of.

Members sought a reassurance that the Council was amending its processes from what had been seen in the Newcastle Development Programme. In particular, attention was drawn to the use of the word 'surplus'. There was concern about the language used by the Council which can raise emotions. There was a discussion about public consultation which should be a minimum of 8 weeks and 12 weeks for a final decision on disposal of property.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning advised that the Cabinet supported full consultation on the Hutton guidelines. There is a need to find 7000 houses to ensure that decisions can be made locally and not nationally.

Members submitted that policies need to be clear and consistent, preferring brownfield before greenfield sites.

It was noted that there is a statutory consultation procedure for planning matters which would be followed. Other consultations would follow the Hutton guidelines but would be proportionate to the nature of the site and proposal.

It was noted that the Strategy expressed the desire to work with the third sector and gave examples of where the Council had done that.

It was suggested that where a site was only to be part developed, a clear description setting out the precise sizes of areas to be developed and what would be left might allay fears.

Members were advised that when considering car parks, the Council gives consideration to potential commercial detriment to businesses who rely on those car parks for customer and staff parking.

Resolved:- (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That it be recommended that the views of the NDP scrutiny group on consultation should be taken into account in respect of any new or amended policy.

(c) It was agreed that the Asset Management Strategy be kept in the Work Programme for next year.

4. REPORT TO CABINET ON 18TH JANUARY 2012

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

5. REPORT TO CABINET 1ST FEBRUARY 2012

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

6. MINUTES FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 1ST FEBRUARY 2012

Resolved:- That the minutes be noted.

7. **ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Resolved:- That the Strategy be noted.

8. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

COUNCILLOR MARK OLSZEWSKI
Chair