

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24th August, 2011

Present:- Councillor Mark Olszewski – in the Chair

Councillors I Gilmore, A Beech, Boden, D Clarke, Holland, Loades,
D Richards, R Slater, I Wilkes, G Cairns, P Hailstones and
Olszewski

1. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS ON ITEMS INCLUDED IN THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd June 2011 were agreed.

3. **COVERING REPORT BRIEFS**

Preparation of a new Economic Development Strategy for the Borough

The Committee considered a draft brief relating to the development of a new Economic Development Strategy for the Borough. The Strategy would be in force from 2011 until 2016 which was thought to be the right amount of time to allow real developments to prosper and real changes seen.

At present the key economic issues facing the Borough were not set in stone and consultation would be carried out with Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and partner organisations as to which areas the Strategy would need to focus on most. It was thought that areas such as business promotion, skills, place and marketing would form the key strands for consideration. It was also thought that in some of these areas the Borough Council would be best placed to take the lead whilst others may be better led by partner organisations.

The short term outcomes regarding the project included developing specific lines of enquiry with specialist groups before the submission of a draft report to Cabinet and this Scrutiny Committee.

A request was made that a full list of the partners involved in the process be provided at the next meeting.

The Committee raised the question of finances regarding any recommendations made in the Strategy. It was stated that any outcomes suggested by the strategy would need to be realistic and credible and that any financial implications would be dealt with and costed on an individual basis.

Members considered the proposed timetable and agreed that an additional meeting of the Committee be arranged following the submission of the draft report to EMT on 22nd September and before its consideration by Informal Cabinet on 28th September. It was also agreed that an update report from officers be presented to each meeting.

The Scrutiny of the Strategy would be undertaken by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's proposals for the designation of an Enterprise Zone in North Staffordshire.

The Committee resolved that following National decisions made regarding Enterprise Zones that this topic be kept for consideration at a later date. It was however emphasised that issues relating to enterprise zones would play a part in the Economic Development Strategy.

Broadband Provision

The issue regarding the slow speed of some broadband connections in the Borough had been brought to the attention of the Chair and other members of the Council by concerned citizens and those with businesses that relied on an internet connection.

The Committee resolved that a small Task and Finish Group be set up to look in detail at the topic. Group Leaders would be approached to elect a Member from their Group with an interest or level of expertise in the subject.

High Speed 2 Ltd

Members were informed that a report regarding HS2 had been submitted to Cabinet on 20th July and that some work had already been undertaken on the topic by Stoke on Trent City Council and the County Council. It was also stated that a decision would be made by Central Government before the end of the calendar year as to whether the project would be going ahead.

The Committee resolved that a small Task and Finish Group be set up to look in detail at the topic. Group Leaders would be approached to elect a Member from their Group with an interest or level of expertise in the subject.

Proposal to jointly commission a viability assessment for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with Stoke on Trent City Council

The CIL regime gave powers to local planning authorities to set a local levy to pay for a wide range of infrastructure when new development took place. Regulations would allow the Council to choose to set a standard charge on most types of new building in its administrative area following an assessment of local infrastructure needs and consultation with the local community. If the levy were to be adopted it would still be possible to seek section 106 contributions if the three statutory tests were met.

There were two requirements that had to be met prior to the setting of a CIL:

- An up to date Core Spatial Strategy
- An infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

The Borough Council met both of these requirements and a report had previously been submitted to Cabinet on 20th July 2011 requesting approval to take the necessary steps to become a charging authority.

It was stated that in setting any charges the Council would have to ensure that it was not leaving itself open to challenge. Should the levy be set at too low a rate it would attract business but could be challenged by neighbouring authorities, similarly should the levy be too high it could prove detrimental to development in the borough.

The Scrutiny brief requested that Members consider whether a joint viability assessment should be undertaken with Stoke on Trent City Council and what the implications to the process of developing a joint CIL would be.

Following discussion it was agreed that in the first instance the matter be dealt with by the full Scrutiny Committee but that should more detailed scrutiny be required then a smaller task and finish group be convened.

RESOLVED:

- a) That an additional meeting of the Committee be arranged to consider the Economic Development Strategy prior to its submission to informal cabinet on 28th September.
- b) That Officers provide an update report on the Economic Development Strategy to each meeting of the Committee
- c) That Scrutiny of the Economic Development Strategy be carried out by the full Committee
- d) That Group Leaders be approached regarding setting up a 3 member task and finish group to investigate the provision of broadband in the Borough
- e) That Group Leaders be approached regarding setting up a 3 member task and finish group to investigate the High Speed 2 proposals.
- f) That a scrutiny project be undertaken by the full Committee in the first instance regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy.

4. FORWARD PLAN - AUGUST TO NOVEMBER, 2011

The Committee received the information in the forward plan but considered that it had sufficient work topics at the current time.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted.

5. TO CONSIDER ANY BUSINESS WHICH IS URGENT WITHIN THE MEANING OF SECTION 100 B (4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

**COUNCILLOR MARK OLSZEWSKI
Chair**