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*Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 21/09/23*

## **ECONOMY & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 21st September, 2023  
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith (Chair)		
Councillors:	Burnett-Faulkner	Gorton	Holland
	Edginton-Plunkett	Grocott	
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Beeston, Johnson, Moss, Skelding and G White		
Substitutes:	Councillor Dave Jones Councillor John Tagg Councillor Joan Whieldon		
Officers:	Allan Clarke Craig Jordan Simon McEneny	Planning Policy Manager Service Director - Planning Deputy Chief Executive	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	

### **1. APOLOGIES**

The Vice-Chair shared apologies received and took the opportunity to inform members that Cllr Gorton would replace former Cllr Moffat in the subgroup of the Committee.

The Vice-Chair also read out the following statement from the Chair:

*"Members, please excuse my non-attendance this evening which is due to a business commitment.*

*At the last meeting HS2 was scrutinized and we deliberated length regarding the empty properties in Whitmore and Madeley.*

*We challenged HS2 to provide transparency and an action plan to ensure the properties were rented out as much as possible.*

*Following a half day meeting and walking the area and houses contained, the summary of the current situation and plan is:*

- *Whitmore Heath: there are 16 properties already let by HS2 and 20 vacant; of these 8 are either being marketed or will be marketed this side of Christmas, 4 have refurbishment underway and a further 8 are planned.*

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- *Madeley: 6 properties are let and 8 are vacant; of these 4 are held for construction and will be demolished; the other 4 are being refurbished to be let within the next six months.*

*A monthly update will be provided to myself and Cllr Brian as the ward Councillors. The monthly update of course will come from HS2.”*

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June, 2023 be agreed as a true and accurate record, subject to the inclusion of Craig Jordan, Service Director for Planning being marked as in attendance.

### **4. UPDATE FROM CABINET ON ITEMS RAISED BY THE COMMITTEE**

There were no updates from Cabinet required.

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### **5. FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND AND TOWN DEALS UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the report on the appointment of Capital and Centric for two of the key regeneration projects that had been brought to Cabinet and full Council earlier in the week.

Members asked questions and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Edgington-Plunkett asked for re-assurance that the Company, being based in Manchester, was the right one for Newcastle. – The portfolio holder confirmed that they had worked on similar projects and were specialised in re-using old frameworks which would be the case here.
- Cllr Gorton wondered about taking York Place forward and to what extent the original design could be protected. – The portfolio holder confirmed the new structure would be very similar to the previous one which itself didn't look much different from the one that was there 50 years earlier.
- Cllr Panter wished to be reminded of the costs involved. – The portfolio holder said the initial contract had been signed for £256,000.
- Cllr Grocott asked about the land value. – The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed this would be part of the equation when working out whether the cost or the value would be the greater.
- Cllr Holland wished to know more about suggested designs. – The Deputy Chief Executive reiterated that while the building would be different, the design would be in line with what had been previously agreed and shared for planning.

- Cllr Jones wondered about how confident Cabinet members and lead officers felt about Capital and Centric capacity to translate the sort of works carried out at Stoke-on-Trent to Newcastle which was a very different town. – The Deputy Chief Executive provided a list of other small towns where projects had been undertaken by the company also out of the city centre. The contractors were very excited about working with the Council and a good proposal was to be expected. Cllr Jones requested that a copy of the proposal be shared with members.
- Cllr Jones asked how confident members should be that all aspects of the projects and with regard to all sites would be completed and what was the timeframe for each part. – The Deputy Leader confirmed he was fully confident that everything would be completed and the Deputy Chief Executive said the timescales would be provided with the initial plans and costings proposal which should come around Christmas. York Place would probably be first, then Midway with works kicking off around late 2024, early 2025 and then ongoing for 12 to 18 months over 2025 and 2026. The Ryecroft development would start around the end of 2025 or early 2026. These were however only estimates as programmes for those schemes had not been submitted yet. The Vice Chair requested that an update be provided at the December meeting.
- Cllr Grocott asked about the Kidsgrove town deal. – The Deputy Chief Executive said Chatterly Valley was progressing with a new contractor having been appointed to finish grounds work. The station works were still under discussion around the foundation works in the car park. The Sharded Services Hub was being designed and a planning permissions would be submitted shortly. The Sports Centre had been delivered.

**Resolved:** That the update be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 6. **HOUSING TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP REPORT**

The Vice Chair introduced an update on the progress made with the Housing Task & Finish Working Group. A final report was to be expected at the next meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Grocott commented that the meetings had been amicable and relevant information had been supplied by all housing providers contacted.

Cllr Edgington-Plunkett and Cllr Jones wished to thank the Vice Chair and the working group for the comprehensive report provided and the upcoming presentation by Aspire Housing.

**Resolved:** That the update be noted.

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## 7. **BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader introduced the update on the Borough Local Plan. The Service Director for Planning went through the report on the consultation carried out in relation to the first draft of the local plan.

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The Vice Chair referred to the petitions received which were to be considered as part of the responses to the consultation.

Members asked questions and responses were provided as follows:

- Cllr Whieldon asked if proportionality had been taken into account when considering the number of complaints received and that of people who would actually be impacted. – Information was still being collated.
- Cllr Edgington-Plunkett asked that it be confirmed that the consultation feedback form and ways to respond were actually publicised as well as the timing of the events. – These were indeed publicised well in advance and ways to communicate had been made clear.
- Cllr Gorton asked about the decision to hold drop-in events. Was this format kept everywhere and what was the sort of feedback received from residents who attended the event? – Drop-in events allowed people who were not necessarily comfortable in more formal environments to meet with officers and ask questions on one-to-one basis.
- Cllr Gorton asked what information would be provided by officers at the next meeting – This could be discussed under the work programme item.
- Cllr Jones wondered about the consultees' responses. – Comments received could be viewed in different parts of the document with the category of consultees being identified.
- Cllr Grocott asked if there was available data about why some people were not able to access the consultation as well as confirmation that the responses provided would be used and not ignored. – It had been made clear that anyone struggling to use the portal could respond to the consultation by other means such as emails and letters. People had been engaging into the process and there was an inspection system in place to ensure responses were taken into account.

**Resolved:** That the update following consultation on the First Draft of the Borough Local Plan be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

### **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Vice Chair went through the work programme and reminded members that the Final Report of the Housing Task & Finish Working Group would be added as an agenda item to the next meeting of the committee.

A joint meeting would also be held with the Heath, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee when appropriate.

Cllr Gorton was invited to present his query again about what was to be expected from the Local Plan update. – The Deputy Leader responded that reports that had gone through Cabinet would be submitted to the Committee.

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Cllr Grocott asked that a written update be provided by the BID rather than keeping hoping they would come and make a presentation. – The Deputy Leader said he would asked the question, bearing in mind that the BID was an independent organisation.

**Resolved:** That the work programme be accepted with the Housing Task & Finish Working Group Final Report to be added.

[Watch the meeting here](#)

### **9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

### **10. URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no urgent business.

**Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith  
Vice Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.49 pm

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