

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17th March, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Gary White (Chair)		
Councillors:	Helena Maxfield David Grocott	Andrew Fear John Tagg	Barry Panter Marion Reddish
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Mark Olszewski, Amelia Rout and Jennifer Cooper		
Substitutes:	Councillor Ian Wilkes		
Officers:	Simon McEneny Denise French Georgina Evans Darren Green	Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth Democratic Services Team Leader Head of People and Organisational Development Streetscene Business Manager	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	
	Alex Taylor	BID Manager	

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

10. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair noted a request from the previous meeting that Members be consulted on the form of the buildings that would be erected on the key sites in Newcastle under Lyme and asked that this be included as part of the update at item 7 on the agenda on Future High Streets Fund and Town Deals. It was noted that the demolition of the Civic Offices had now commenced earlier than previously updated.

11. UPDATE FROM CABINET

There was nothing to update other than Streetscene which was covered as a separate report on the agenda.

12. NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The Committee received a presentation from Alex Taylor, Manager of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District (BID).

Alex had been in post for 10 months. She presented the BID's Business Plan which contained 3 objectives:

- Objective 1 - Support business growth and investment with a great business offer. A number of initiatives to support this objective had been introduced including free WiFi in the town centre; footfall monitoring; free car parking, Business Boost Awards and business support initiatives such as 'Face to Face Fridays' whereby Alex would walk through town to meet various businesses.
- Objective 2 - Create a welcoming and attractive town, ensuring a safe experience. This objective was supported in a number of ways including events, support for the Artisan Markets, sponsorship of Britain in Bloom, ambassadorial patrols and a new initiative that was to be introduced on 25 March – Safety of Women and Girls at Night (SWAN) which would include a staffed hub on Friday and Saturday nights where information would be provided, goody bags including water and snacks and 4 spots where women could wait for a taxi in a well-lit location, covered by CCTV.
- Objective 3 - Celebrate and promote Newcastle-under-Lyme as a town for all, preserving the heritage and cultural aspect of the area. A number of banners had been installed across the town, a 'Stay Connected' card had been introduced for businesses giving useful information on other businesses and a reporting tool to quickly report issues to the Police, a CRM system had been introduced (Solomon) to track all engagement and there was a focus on heritage and arts through the Arts Council.

A number of new initiatives were planned for this year including a 'Diverted Giving' scheme in partnership with the council – this was aimed at encouraging the public who wanted to support rough sitters to donate money at 'tap points' rather than direct giving of money or food, rough sitters was one of the biggest complaints from businesses in the town centre. There were also a number of events planned including the Jubilee weekend, Commonwealth Games and Armed Forces Day; Street Food Fridays; Oktoberfest; and the Christmas Lights switch on. It was reported that the Christmas event took up around a third of the total BID budget.

The footfall figures were presented from January 2021 – January 2022, including total visitors, dwell time and busiest time periods. There was also information on parking numbers and vacancy rates. Estate agents were experiencing more interest in vacant properties and a number of new businesses had opened. The main concerns raised with the BID included Anti-Social Behaviour and lack of police in the town centre.

Members raised queries and issues:

- More detail was sought on Oktoberfest and the Committee was informed that the BID was working with an event company to provide an authentic event
- How and where did people access the free WiFi in the town? This was available in outdoor areas in the town centre, not in individual shops and information would be sprayed on the pavement about how to access

- The Town Trails were a positive step and Members asked whether the Perspex signs in the town could be tidied up which Alex agreed to investigate.
- The popularity of the artisan markets was noted. Alex explained that the BID tried to encourage businesses to open on markets days and high street traders were offered free stalls on the market.
- Members noted the concern around the lack of a police presence
- Was there any support that the council could provide? Alex suggested support with messaging and help with writing funding bids.

Resolved: that

- (a) The Police Commander be invited to the next meeting regarding the issues raised at the meeting around police presence in the town centre;
- (b) An update be provided to the next meeting on how the council can support the BID in terms of marketing messages and funding bid writing; and
- (c) The costs of the Christmas event be circulated to the committee by email.

13. STREETSCENE - UPDATE ON POSITION STATEMENT

The Committee considered a report on Streetscene. The report outlined the current position with the service and how it would develop as part of the One Council programme. The new Mobile Multi-Functional Team would undertake some duties such as dealing with low level littering which would enable Streetscene to focus on core cleansing duties. The recently approved Urban Tree Planting Strategy would also involve significant levels of tree planting and a review of grounds maintenance operations.

Members noted how Streetscene operatives were out in the town centre in the early morning ensuring the town was clean and tidy.

Were there any plans to introduce an App to report issues? Darren responded that this was being considered and there was good practice from other councils in the county.

Resolved: that

- (a) the report be received;
- (b) the current position in relation to Streetscene service planning for future demand and the work which is in progress as part of the One Council Programme, be noted; and
- (c) a further update be made to the September meeting of the Committee on the One Council programme in relation to the Streetscene service.

14. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND AND TOWN INVESTMENT PLANS FOR KIDSGROVE AND NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation on the Future High Streets and Town Deals projects.

For the Future High Streets projects for Newcastle-under-Lyme:

- The demolition of the Civic Centre had commenced with completion scheduled for summer 2023
- The Ryecroft development plans included new Head Quarters for Aspire Housing, 50 residential units for the Over 55s, a 450 space car park and a potential mid-market 100 bed hotel

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- York Place had now been purchased and a Design and Build contractor would be appointed at Cabinet on 23 March.

Projects for Kidsgrove Town Deal:

- Sports Centre due for completion in June 2022
- Chatterley Valley earth works would commence in spring 2022 and a company called Lucidien would relocate in 2024
- The station upgrade was due to commence in 2022
- Town centre mixed use development with a shared hub and public realm improvements
- Canal improvements

Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Deal, business cases were currently being developed for each scheme:

- The former Zanzibar nightclub site would be repurposed to provide older people's accommodation, live work units and small industrial units
- The Midway car park would be demolished to make way for 126 new houses plus some extra care housing
- Astley Performing Arts Centre – including workspace and studios and a dedicated and fully equipped site to pitch Big Tops
- Knutton Masterplan – housing, including affordable housing, business accommodation, community facilities, traffic safety improvements
- Demolition of housing in Cross Street, Chesterton and delivery of 125 high quality mixed tenure housing
- Sustainable public transport through investment in bus infrastructure, upgrade to the Newcastle-under-Lyme bus station
- Electric Vehicle charging points at car park locations and taxi ranks
- Improved digital connectivity
- A range of walking and cycling measures.

Members raised queries and issues as follows:

- It was important that any works recognised and reflected the heritage of the town
- Would the pool at Kidsgrove be suitable for national competitions? This would be checked but it was the same size as the previous pool.
- What type of jobs would be available at Chatterley Valley? There would be a broad range of roles, including high skilled roles at Lucidien with the small business park providing roles that would support Lucidien.
- Where would the location be of the new footbridge in Newcastle-under-Lyme? This would be on Barracks Road near Castle House.
- Orme Road was suggested as a good link route between Keele and Hanley but improvements were needed to the road surface for cyclist safety.

Resolved: that the updates be noted.

15. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme. Items proposed for the next meeting on 15 June included HS2, Sustainable Environment Strategy Action Plan, Future High Streets Fund and Town Deals update, Borough Local Plan.

Resolved: that the Work Programme for received and the items for the next meeting be confirmed plus an additional item to invite the Police Commander to attend regarding police presence in Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

17. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

18. **DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

**Councillor Gary White
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.30 pm