

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee - 16/03/23

In the absence of the Newcastle-under-Lyme BID representative the item was deferred to the next meeting.

Members expressed their disappointment and as it was the second time this happened despite invitations having been sent it was requested that any issues be resolved and that the report be circulated ahead of the meeting.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND AND TOWN DEALS UPDATE

The Executive Director for Growth and Development presented an update report on progress made on two key projects within the Future High Street Fund and Town Deal Programmes: the new Castle Multi Storey Car Park on Ryecroft and the redevelopment of York Place Shopping Centre.

Both have planning permissions and are due to be on site later in the year. They are independent projects but linked into a series of interventions which will drive significant regenerative benefits for the town with more to follow. The Executive Director went through costs involved, other anticipated sources of funding and financial risks.

York Place's tenants are being successfully moved to the High Street in readiness for the works.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth expressed his support for the two projects – the current structures being outdated, not fit for modern times.

Questions were asked and responses were provided as follows:

- Did we know if any of the current occupants were intending to move back into York Place once the works would be completed? – At least one company had confirmed their intention to indeed move back.
- Would there be any reserved space in the car park for the staff of the Hotel and Aspire Housing? – There would be parking permits, along with the possibility to pay for single uses of the car park. Free parking wouldn't be allowed.
- Had any contingency money be planned to allow for potential changes to the works? – In the unlikely case that changes would be required contingency moneys had been included in the budget.
- Was the adequate communication in place with residents? – Indeed communication was part of the process.
- The car park being essential to attract people to York Place, were there any parking provisions for people not connected to it? – There would be a percentage given over to permits and another for paying customers; there would also be different uses at different times of the day.
- Have we got any timescales for developers to implement the new York Place and how are the car park maintenance costs going to be funded? – It will take

a year to start to rebuild York Place and the car park maintenance costs will be covered as part of the Council's capital programme.

- Can we be re-assured that procurement standards will be respected and that the focus will be on quality design for the selection of a development partner for York Place? – There will be a robust procurement process in place and feedback from residents will be sought.
- Can we have more information about timing, scheduling and making sure the contractors stay in business? – The demolition of York Place will be during the winter and the plan is to start to build in the spring and summer next year. It will be about a year and a half to build the new York Place. About the companies who will be undertaking the works these will have a national presence and guarantees of a good cash flow.
- Will the site be guarded during the works and will contractors be prevented to use or remove anything from the centre town? – Contractors won't be allowed to cross the road which is the County's property and therefore won't get anywhere near the other side of it.

Resolved: That members note the potential benefits of the proposals, the progress made and risks associated with delivery a major regeneration programme for Newcastle town centre.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. **BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

The Strategic Planning Portfolio holder introduced the report on progress made with the Borough Local Plan and upcoming anticipated steps.

Issues were raised and responses were provided as follows:

- It was requested that the timetable be respected.
- Could the plan be shared with members before going public and could they be briefed on consultations? – The Council is following the standards set with previous consultations and there would be a member briefing prior to publication of the local plan, itself scheduled one week before the consultation.
- What could residents expect from the consultations? – There would be several avenues of communications including events, focus groups, workshops, leaflets and a consultation portal. Comments would be accepted in various forms.

Resolved: That members note the progress update provided on the Borough Local Plan.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. **HOUSING PROVISION WORKING GROUP SET UP**

The Chair provided a verbal update on the Housing Task & Finish Working Group launching meeting held on the 8th March.

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The working group is to look at social housing provisions in the borough and is composed of five members of which Cllr Hutchison (Chair), Cllr Bettley-Smith and Cllr Moffat (both Vice-Chairs), Cllr Grocott and Cllr Holland who all have different experiences and backgrounds.

The housing provisions are to be taken from the point of view of the housing providers, of which officers have been asked to provide a detailed list including both the quantity and type of property allocated such as flats, 2-3 bedroom houses, ground floor sheltered accommodations etc.

Once the information has been submitted, each provider will be asked to come to the working group and do a presentation. The use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) scoring is being considered to assess for example how many issues reported to the housing providers were dealt with and how long it took as well as categories those issues belonged to – e.g. doors, joinery, plumbing etc. Data can then get scrutinized by the working group in each of these maintenance areas.

Other KPIs may look at when residents log a fault with the association: are they kept up to date, what happens at the initial contact and after the fault is fixed are they given a satisfaction survey to fill including questions such as were they happy with the time taken to resolve the issue, was the member of staff professional at all time, did they leave the area clean, tidy and ready to use and finally was the problem resolved.

KPI Scoring would be a great tool for monitoring success. Cllr Bettley-Smith having experience in both statistics and housing let could help other members of the working group to analyse the data at future meetings.

Officers have been asked to provide the initial report by April 4th in readiness for the next meeting of the working group scheduled for the 12th April.

Cllr Bettley-Smith commented that an evidence based methodology would be required and that social housing providers would need to be considered in relation to the maintenance of the properties when developing the work programme. Two things may become conflated: casework and the point of view of occupiers on one side and the need to develop a robust database against which the benchmark for example compares with other authorities.

Once the current position is established, the working group will be able to review the arrangements, in particular the maintenance and management of the let housing stock especially social housing.

The work programme can then be constructed, the overall objective being to seek improvement. The benchmark will need to give a representative sample of the whole. As some occupiers would not want to participate a proper methodology needs to be developed.

Cllr Bettley-Smith ended up by sharing the expectation that the working group reports would not come later than September.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was discussed.

Cllr Gorton suggested to invite representatives from First Bus and D&G Travel to the September meeting. Many Newcastle residents rely on bus services to travel to and from their places of work as well as for shopping and leisure purposes. Hearing of their operational plans could be of interest for scrutiny.

Cllr Grocott asked that for the HS2 update at the June meeting not to be too lengthy and for clarification to be provided about a recent statement suggesting that the Sports Centre was in a survival mode.

The Chair confirmed that suggestions would be forwarded to officers.

Resolved: That the work programme be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent business.

Cllr David Hutchison

Vice Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.25 pm