

ECONOMY & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 9th December, 2024
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Deputy Mayor - Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith (Chair)

Councillors: Berrisford Grocott J Waring
Edginton-Plunkett Moss
Gorton Panter

Apologies: Councillor(s) Burnett-Faulkner, D Jones and Parker

Substitutes: Councillor John Tagg

Officers: Allan Clarke Planning Policy Manager
Craig Jordan Service Director - Planning
Simon McEneny Deputy Chief Executive

Also in attendance: Councillor Stephen Sweeney Deputy Leader of the Council
and Portfolio Holder - Finance,
Town Centres and Growth

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received as listed above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th September 2024 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. **NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2040**

The Deputy Leader / Portfolio holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the update report on the progress made on developing a new local plan for the borough. The Planning Policy Manager presented the report including figures relating to representations received following the 8 weeks consultation stage. A consultation report would be submitted alongside the plan and other relevant documents of which an update to the duty-to-cooperate statement of compliance.

Members raised questions and responses were provided as follows.

Cllr Grocott enquired about the timescales and guidelines that were to be added to the website as discussed at the previous meeting.

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The Planning Policy Manager responded that the intention was to submit the Plan by the end of the year and to restructure the website to provide more details about the process. An independent Program Officer whose details would be provided around the time of submission had also been appointed to ensure the liaison between the inspector and other interested parties. The Chair commented that the priority was for the plan to be submitted and that updating the website would follow.

Cllr Gorton expressed his appreciation of the Council and its officers for allowing email submissions in addition to the portal and asked how the number of representations received compared to what was expected as well as if responses were critical of any specific policies. The Chair requested that the response focused on a strategic overview.

The Planning Policy Manager said there weren't any particular expectations with regard to the number of responses, many of whom were received. A lot of them were site based but there were also many from statutory consultees pertaining to the wording of policies. Both a summary and a full version of representations received would be provided with the submission for the inspector to consider.

Resolved: That the update on the progress of developing a new Local Plan for the Borough be noted.

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5. TOWN DEAL AND FUTURE HIGH STREET FUNDS UPDATE

The Deputy Leader / Portfolio holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the update report on the various projects funded or part funded through the two Town Deals – Newcastle and Kidsgrove, and the Future High Street Funds for Newcastle Town Centre. Good progress was being made and the work undertaken by Capital and Centric would likely inspire other authorities about the potential behind the regeneration of old structures.

The Deputy Chief Executive supported the Deputy Leader's statement.

Members raised questions and responses were provided as follows.

Cllr Grocott asked if the section 106 money available for Bradwell could be used for the park and if the HS2 funds could go towards the railway station and other development in Kidsgrove.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that the spending of section 106 would be agreed through the planning process. The HS2 funds were promised nationally by the previous government and the new government was yet to communicate on how these would be delivered and if there would be any condition attached to it. The newly elected Kidsgrove MP was to speak with the department of transports on behalf of the Council.

The Service Director for Planning added that the section 106 money was tied to a specific scheme and would be spent on the development and the open space that was there – i.e. the Dingle. The emerging Local Plan would bring more opportunities for the Council to be involved.

Cllr Moss enquired about the proposed village hall in Knutton and the sourcing of tenants or operators including timescales for selection and signing of an agreement.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that Support Staffordshire was currently talking to two groups on how they might be able to take the development forward. They needed to be a registered CIC (Community Interest Company) and it was hoped that an agreement would be finalised in the new year, planning permission having already been received. The organisation would need to sign up for a lease with the Council and there would be a construction contract.

Cllr Panter asked when the new village hall would open.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that once the contract referred to above would be signed the construction itself would be for a relatively short period of time. It was hoped that this would be completed by the end of 2025 or beginning of 2026 however no commitment could be made until signature.

Resolved: That the report on the delivery of the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds projects be noted.

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6. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

The Deputy Leader / Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the report on Planning Enforcement and Performance.

The Service Director for Planning provided an update on the organisational arrangements relating to planning enforcement along with activity that had taken place over the past 12 months.

Members commented on the report and responses were provided as follows.

The Chair suggested that the committee may benefit from figures to be provided in relation to paragraph 2.10 in addition to percentages.

Cllr Panter backed up the suggestion although mindful of not wanting to generate unnecessary work for officers, which the Chair supported.

Cllr Gorton asked if breaches of tree preservation orders fell under planning enforcement and if so whether any increase of such breaches had been noticed in relation to some residents wishes for trees to be taken down.

The Service Director for Planning confirmed that this was a matter of planning enforcement and while no major increase had been noticed this could be investigated further with the landscape service.

The Chair commented that re-assurance should be provided that appropriate action would be taken would such breaches be reported.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

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7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Deputy Chief Executive said that the work programme was to be refreshed for 2025. This would feature again updates on the Local Plan and the Town Deal as well as Town Deal and Future High Street Funds as recurring items. Officers had been informed that the BID team would not be coming and so the BID update would need to be taken off the programme. Information was awaited from the government before HS2 could come again and members were invited to suggest any other items to be scrutinized for the year ahead.

Members made the following suggestions.

Cllr Edington-Plunkett expressed his wish for the new Police Commander to be invited to the committee to answer questions from members as well as for an update to be provided on waste and recycling.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the police would now likely be within the remit of the Health, Environment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, which would be confirmed with relevant officers. The request for a report on waste and recycling was noted and would be taken forward.

Cllr Gorton referred to the Car Parking Strategy recently approved by Cabinet and suggested that an update on how the strategy was working out could be brought to the Committee in 12 months.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed this could be provided.

Cllr Grocott asked about social housing and the housing stock. The Chair advised that a presentation from Aspire Housing to all members was scheduled in the New Year and this would likely to take place in February.

Resolved: That the work programme be discussed.

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8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

**Deputy Mayor - Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.38 pm