

ECONOMY AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13th March, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Andrew Parker (Chair)		
Councillors:	Berrisford	Edginton-Plunkett	J Waring
	Burnett-Faulkner	Gorton	
	Casey-Hulme	Grocott	
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Bettley-Smith and D Jones		
Substitutes:	Councillor Mark Holland Councillor Philip Reece (In place of Councillor Dave Jones) Deputy Mayor. Councillor Joan Whieldon		
Officers:	Allan Clarke	Planning Policy Manager	
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning	
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive	
	Roger Tait	Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	

1. MINUTE OF SILENCE

A minute of silence was observed for the passing of the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme Cllr Barry Panter.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Holland declared an interest on behalf of members of the Planning Committee in relation to item 6 and planning applications that had not yet been determined. Members who were concerned were asked to be mindful of not letting this interest predetermine the outcomes.

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3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th December 2024 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

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4. NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2040

The Planning Policy Manager presented the report on the emerging Borough Local Plan which had been submitted for examination in December and for which the inspector had requested that the Council works in collaboration with Natural England in relation to air quality. The new National Planning Policy Framework also required that local councils update their local development schemes which were timetables to producing local plans. A report had been taken to Cabinet and it had been agreed that a new plan would be started around November 2025 subject to the outcomes of the examination.

Cllr Reece wished for reassurance that the questions about the natural habitats regulation assessment would be answered sufficiently not to delay the examination.

The Planning Policy Manager said that the Council was in touch with Natural England in regard to the methodology used as well as the statement of common ground requested by the inspector.

Cllr Gordon asked for more details about the public hearing, especially how individuals and organisations would be selected and if officers would have an opportunity to respond to people providing evidence.

Cllr Gordon also wondered about the possible consequences of the Local Government Reorganisation on the assessment of the plan.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that it was unlikely that the reorganisation would have any impact on the plan that was submitted although it may affect future plans.

Regarding the public hearings, these would be chaired by the inspector who would start by asking the Council to respond to a series of issues brought to their attention. Other participants would then have an opportunity to raise questions and be heard, following which the Council would be asked to provide responses either during the session or at a later stage.

In terms of selection for involvement, a program officer was appointed to facilitate the examination and they would typically approach people who had made representations on particular areas and ask them if they wish to speak at the hearings.

Cllr Holland enquired about Natural England's representation and if there was anything the Council could have done in relation to the issues raised then.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that the Council had met with Natural England a number of times since the representation and what had been requested required some time to implement.

Cllr Holland wondered about the likelihood of a statement of common ground being reached in good time in relation to further issues being raised including by other parties.

The Planning Policy Manager responded that the requirement for an agreement to be reached was about two specific issues i.e. air quality and habitats matters and with Natural England only meaning there wouldn't be other parties involved.

About the duty to cooperate with other organisations the Council already had an agreement with the City Council and this matter had been resolved.

Cllr Holland raised there may be some inconsistency in the government policies which were promoting more housing on the one hand and a reduction in air pollution on the other hand.

The Deputy Leader / portfolio holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth shared Cllr Holland's opinion.

Cllr Grocott wondered if sites would have to be changed in relation to natural habitats and gas emissions.

The Planning Policy Manager said that the work was still being finalised and the process would need to run through before any decision was made.

Cllr Whieldon congratulated the team and shared her concerns that decisions made by governmental and / or neighbouring authorities may affect the plan as currently drafted which she felt accurately reflected the people and the borough.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT - PROGRESS REPORT

The Deputy Leader / Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the report on Newcastle-under-Lyme BID (Business Improvement District) and recommended that members attend the upcoming classic car show as an example of events organised by the BID team.

Cllr Holland asked if members would have to agree on the renewal of an agreement with the BID. The Deputy Leader confirmed it.

Resolved: That the progress report on Newcastle-under-Lyme BID and the forthcoming renewal process be received and noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. TOWN DEAL AND FUTURE HIGH STREET FUNDS UPDATE

The Deputy Leader / Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth went through the delivery of projects funded by the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds as detailed in the report.

The Chair welcomed the progress made and expressed his wish for something to be done for the Roebuck Centre as well sometime in the future.

Cllr Edgington-Plunkett thanked everyone for the regular reports provided in particular with regard to the car park and asked about the Performing Arts Centre and music venue.

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The Deputy Leader advised that the plan was to launch an underground entertainment centre in conjunction with the Council and funding available through the Performing Arts Centre.

Cllr Grocott enquired about timescales in relation to projects to be completed by 2027 as well the government extensions discussed for Kidsgrove.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the Government asked if the Council wished to extend the spending to the end of 2027 which was confirmed. Meanwhile the team was working on having the issues regarding the train station and survey works resolved as quickly as possible.

Cllr Reece asked if the apart hotel was still firmly on the agenda given Capital and Centric seemed to have residential development plans where the latter was supposed to be as discussed with the Conservation Advisory Working Party.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there would be an apart hotel and advised that the plans looked similar to those of the residential apartments.

Cllr Gordon asked what an apart hotel was and how it differed from a conventional hotel, whether the Performing Centre had a new permanent location in Astley Place, and if the 53 Ironmarket conversion was open to members of the public or for students only.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that Keele in Town was open to the public, which would be more relevant with the opening of the cafeteria and chairs and tables put outside.

About the Philip Astley Centre, this would stay where it currently was on Merrial Street but the funding would be transferred to Astley Place.

Finally an apart hotel was made of apartments instead of the regular bedrooms and the usual facilities found in a hotel were not included. There would be a doorway with a keypad and access would be like an apartment building.

Cllr Gordon asked if there would be staff based in the building.

The Deputy Chief Executive said there would probably be a duty manager and cleaners coming in but staff like receptionists shouldn't be expected.

Cllr Whieldon praised the work of Capital and Centric and everyone involved in preserving the heritage of the town.

The Deputy Leader commented on the good relationship and shared vision between the Council and the contractors.

The Chair seconded his colleagues, adding that the quick progress made in a short time was also appreciated.

Cllr Whieldon shared her thoughts that demolishing a building and then starting again from scratch doubled the costs and so revitalising an existing structure was likely to be the least expensive way of developing a town centre fit for purpose for this century.

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

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7. WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Gordon enquired about the HS2 update.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that whether HS2 would be able to come and talk to members was still being investigated.

The Chair asked about the Aspire Housing presentation which was scheduled in February and had been postponed.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that no updates had been received.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

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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.

**Councillor Andrew Parker
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.52 pm