

ECONOMY AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 19th June, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Andrew Parker (Chair)		
Councillors:	Burnett-Faulkner Casey-Hulme Dean	Edginton-Plunkett Gorton Grocott	J Tagg J Waring
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Berrisford and Bettley-Smith		
Substitutes:	Councillor Mark Holland Deputy Mayor. Councillor Joan Whieldon		
Officers:	Craig Jordan Simon McEneny	Service Director - Planning Deputy Chief Executive	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Andrew Fear Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Portfolio Holder - Strategic Planning Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were shared as listed above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Cllr Gorton pointed out a typo in the spelling of his name recurring throughout the document.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the misspell of Cllr Gorton's name being corrected.

[Watch the meeting here](#)

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

The Service Director for Planning presented the report on the progress of developing a new Borough Local Plan.

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The Council submitted the Local Plan for examination on 20th December 2024 and Inspector Anne Jordan had been appointed on behalf of the Secretary of State to carry out an examination of the plan. Evidence provided by the Council and representations put forward by local people and interested parties were being considered via a series of public hearing sessions. These sessions commenced in May and had concluded today – the date of this Committee meeting.

The hearing sessions had considered a number of matters including whether the Local Plan was legally compliant, issues around the spatial strategy being promoted, green belt housing and employment requirements as well as climate change. An interim report would be produced by the inspector in due course identifying any necessary changes to the plan to ensure a sound document could be adopted. Any proposed changes would have to be publicised and consulted upon and the results used to inform the inspector's final report.

The Chair enquired about whether there were any indications that the proceedings were in the Council's favour.

The Service Director for Planning responded that the inspector seemed to want to work with the Council to address the issues that came through the consultation phase of the draft plan and which had emerged at the hearing sessions but we would need to wait to see what was contained in the interim findings and then the final report.

The Chair asked if a better idea of the outcomes of the proceedings could be expected for the next meeting of the Committee in September.

The Service Director for Planning advised that it would depend on the work of the inspector who was involved in other examinations elsewhere. The Council was required to undertake some additional work for the inspector and this was on-going. In the event more work was required from the Council or a new series of hearings were proposed this would delay matters.

The Service Director for Planning opined that he was hopeful an interim report would be published allowing for an update at the next Scrutiny meeting in September.

Cllr Grocott wondered if there were any measures in place to mitigate the effects of any requests from the inspector and speed up the adoption of the Local Plan.

The Service Director for Planning responded that it would depend on the issues raised if any and that so far, the inspector seemed willing to see things progressing quickly to the next set of questions.

Cllr Whieldon asked if it was correct to say that the inspector could ask questions and make recommendations but could not mandate any changes.

The Service Director for Planning advised that the inspector could request changes and that it would be in everyone's interest to incorporate these into the Plan, as this would ensure the Plan was sound. On the receipt of the inspector's final report the Council would then decide whether to adopt the amended Plan.

Cllr Whieldon wondered if this meant that changes may be requested as recommendations in her report, which the Council would need to comply with.

The Service Director for Planning confirmed that was the case.

Cllr Whieldon asked what would happen if the Council didn't want to implement the changes.

The Service Director for Planning responded that there would be a danger that the Plan would be found unsound and could not be adopted. It would also be unusual for a Council not to respect the views of an inspector.

Cllr Gorton commented being reassured to hear that the inspector appeared to want to work with the Council and that it would be great to get an update at the September meeting about when the Plan would be likely to be adopted.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. TOWN DEAL AND FUTURE HIGH STREET FUNDS UPDATE

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the update report on the projects financed through the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds, now coming to a completion.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed members of the progress made in relation to Kidsgrove Station. The Town Deal Board had agreed on works outside of the area where remediation may be required as a result of surveying the ground. Options would be presented to the Board towards the end of July.

Regarding the Shared Service Hub, stakeholders had decided that individual schemes would address the original town investment plan which had now ceased to exist. A change request had been submitted to the Government.

The Chair shared his disappointment at the situation with regard to Kidsgrove Train Station, meanwhile expressing his appreciation for the work of officers.

Cllr Casey-Hulme asked if the push button automatic closure systems for Castle car park had been received and when they would be likely to be installed.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that they had been ordered and would be installed on the ground floor so that disabled users could access the car park. Electrical works needed to be undertaken by the main contractor which officers were trying to get done as soon as possible.

The Deputy Leader shared his enthusiasm about the new car park which brought a tremendous improvement to the Midway.

The Deputy Chief Executive said there was one remaining risk as part of the Town Deal regarding Knutton Village Hall – a CIC (Community Interest Company) was required to run the facility before the works could get started failing which the hall would not be built. As no-one had come forward there was at the moment no progress to report.

Cllr Whieldon commented on the Deputy Leader's statement that she had visited works completed by Capital and Centric in Stoke-on-Trent. The quality and conservationist efforts put into the structure had retained her attention.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair presented the work programme for upcoming meetings.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

8. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Councillor Andrew Parker
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.32 pm