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15 October 2024

Dear Councillor,

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Wednesday 23 October 2024
Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

To: Councillors:

Todd, D. (Chair)
Hill, J.O. (Vice-Chair)
Bishop, L. Lyons, O.
Bullock, L. Mawle, D.
Haden, P. Prestwood, F.
Hill, J. Thornley, S.
Lyons, N.

Agenda

Part 1

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

- (i) To declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2024 (enclosed).

4. Update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Thriving Communities project

Update from the Head of Economic Development and Planning

5. Update on the Town Centre Regeneration Scrutiny Review

Verbal update from Councillor S. Thornley, Chair of the Review Group

(This will include an update on the current position with the Levelling Up Fund from the Head of Economic Development and Planning)

6. Review of Work Programme 2024/25

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
Held on Wednesday 17 July 2024 at 6:00pm
in the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock**

Part 1

Present:

Councillors:

Todd, D. (Chair)	
Bullock, L.	Lyons, O.
Fisher, P. (substitute)	Mawle, D.
Haden, P.	Prestwood, F.
Hill, J.	Thornley, S.
Lyons, N.	

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been submitted by Councillors J.O. Hill (Vice-Chair) and L. Bishop.

Councillor P. Fisher was in attendance as substitute for Councillor J.O. Hill.

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests were made and no party whip declarations were received.

3. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024 be approved.

4. Introduction to the Role of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Economic Development and Planning that covered: support for the committee; background; purpose of scrutiny and effective scrutiny; committee's role and remit; work programming and examples of work scrutiny; and undertaking a review.

The Head of Regulatory Services explained that there had been significant changes in Building Control recently and it may be useful for the Committee to receive a presentation to outline these changes. Members may wish to consider this further when determining the work programme later in the agenda.

A Member queried whether the number of meetings would be adequate to cover the work of the Committee. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that

Scrutiny Committees met four times a year. Members would agree the work programme later in the agenda and this could be reviewed/revised regularly. The Committee would also select review topics and set up Task & Finish Groups to undertake these reviews.

A Member suggested that the Committee may wish to review delegated powers in relation to the planning function; how they were determined and whether the process could be improved. The Member was the Chair of the Planning Control Committee, and he considered that some decisions taken under delegated powers may have benefitted with some Member involvement.

It was noted that the topics for review would be discussed further when the work programme was determined later in the agenda.

5. End of Year Performance Report 2023/24

Consideration was given to the end of year performance information for the Economic Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan (Item 5.1-5.9) *(presented by the Head of Economic Development and Planning)*.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the report presented the end of year performance for 2023/24, with 20 projects scheduled to be delivered in total. 15 actions had been completed and 5 had slipped behind schedule.

He then took the Committee through the projects and actions in the PDP referring to the following projects:

- **Levelling Up Fund** - the scheme had moved forwards since the report had been prepared and the planning application for the demolition works had been submitted. A tender process to appoint a demolition contractor would be undertaken with a contractor being appointed in August/September and demolition works commencing in October.

Members noted that the CPO had been withdrawn as the Council had agreed Head of Terms to purchase the freehold interest in commercial properties in Cannock town centre to facilitate the delivery of phase 2 of the scheme. This was subject to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) approving the Project Adjustment Request and time extension. As the Council had secured agreement from owners of the commercial properties the CPO was no longer required. Although there were still risks involved it was considered that there was a greater risk in continuing with the CPO process due to the significant costs involved and the need for a costly public inquiry to be held.

It was clarified that the revised scheme (subject to MHCLG approval) would require the Council to appoint a developer to deliver re-development opportunities for Cannock town centre.

- **Rugeley Power Station** - the sale of the site was yet to conclude but the site had been fully remediated and was ready for development. The "All-Through School" planning application was with Lichfield District Council and, if consent was granted, this would be a very positive outcome. In response to a question from a Member about infrastructure, it was confirmed that the outline planning consent had included a variety of infrastructure contributions, but not the provision of a doctor's surgery/medical centre as the CCG had not requested this be provided onsite. The

member had some concerns in this regard and the Head of Economic Development and Planning agreed to speak with the Member separately and provide more detail.

- **Cannock Railway Station** - no active funding opportunities were available to bid for external funding for the project. Discussions would continue to identify potential funding streams to get the project up and running. It would remain on the West Midlands Combined Authority radar.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** - confirmation was awaited on whether further funding would be available after March 2025 to deliver further projects.
- **Net Zero pathfinder project/Staffordshire Business & Environment Network's (SBEN) Green Solutions grant** - the Head of Regulatory Services advised that she and the Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader would be on the radio tomorrow to promote that £2m of funding was available to businesses. There was support available to help businesses access the funding which could reduce their costs as they moved towards Net Zero. The funding had to be allocated by March 2025.
- **Rugeley Boardwalk** - significant investment was required to replace the Boardwalk and Cabinet had agreed not to proceed with the work. A Member commented that Rugeley Town Council had put forward a proposal and this was being considered by the Corporate Assets Team. Discussions were ongoing.
- **Thriving Communities Project** - Members noted that the UKSPF allocation for this project had been divided equally between seven areas and Parish and Town Councils were being encouraged to focus on spending their funding allocation on their priorities. The money had to be spent by March 2025. A Member asked for further details to be provided on this at a future meeting. The Head of Economic Development and Planning agreed that further details could be provided at a future meeting. He added that the Committee had received a presentation on the UKSPF last year. However, as there were several new Members on the Committee this year he would provide a further presentation to the Committee outlining the projects delivered via the UKSPF allocation. This would therefore be added to the Committee's work programme.
- **Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)** - this was a new body, and Members may wish to receive more detail or invite a representative to a future meeting to provide further information.
- **McArthurGlen Phase 2 planning application** - A Member asked for an update on the current position. It was noted that the parking issue was causing a delay in presenting the planning application to the Planning Control Committee. Discussions between McArthurGlen, Highways officers and Planning officers would continue and, once the issue had been resolved, the planning application would be submitted to the Planning Control Committee.
- **Legacy of Commonwealth Games** - the legacy of the Games had provided an opportunity to improve the accommodation offer in the District and the Forestry Commission were undertaking a feasibility study. A Member sought data in relation to the visitor accommodation study and the Head of Economic Development and Planning agreed to provide this to him.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for Planning and Building Control were then outlined for Members information. It was noted that all the targets were being achieved and performance was excellent.

Arising from consideration of the performance information a Member commented that it would be useful if further detail could be provided in the progress updates of each project in the next report. The Head of Economic Development and Planning agreed to include this in the performance report for the next meeting.

6. Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Economic Development and Planning (Item 6.1 - 6.14).

The Head of Economic Development and Planning provided an overview of the report, outlining the services that fall within the Committee's remit and advising that the key section for Members' consideration was the draft work programme included as appendix 4 which included the following suggested topics:

- Local Plan
- McArthurGlen - economical/social impact
- Levelling Up Fund Cannock Town centre
- Rugeley Power Station re-development
- Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy partnership - impact / return on investment
- Design and Conservation

The Head of Regulatory Services had suggested earlier in the meeting that Members may wish to receive a presentation on Building Control/regulations given the recent significant changes. A Member had also proposed that a review of delegated powers in relation to the planning function be considered.

Several other suggestions for reviews topics were proposed by Members including: -

- Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership - Impact/return on investment/needs within the district that could be fed back to the Partnership
- Council Owned Car Parks
- Building Enforcement
- Town Centre Regeneration - how to help/improve the other town centre areas and identify funding streams/strengthening links with Town and Parish Councils
- Design and Conservation - consider whether the requirements in terms of policies for hedgehogs/newts/bats were being met.

A Member referred again to the scheduled four meetings and asked whether they would be sufficient to properly consider the issues identified for the work programme. The Head of Economic Development and Planning clarified that the number of times the Scrutiny Committees met during the year had been determined at the start of the municipal year. In addition to these four meetings the Committee would determine which review topics they wished to consider this year and set up Task and Finish Groups to

undertake the reviews. These review groups would meet separately to the Committee to undertake their reviews.

The Committee discussed all the suggestions put forward and considered the merits of each topic. In terms of town centre regeneration Members considered it was important for there to be investment across the district as well as the investment currently taking place in Cannock town centre.

It was then agreed that the two Task and Finish reviews for 2024/25 would be:

- the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- Town Centre Regeneration

In addition to these two reviews, a Member suggested that presentations on the Levelling Up Fund and Rugeley Power Station be included on the work programme. The Head of Economic Development and Planning confirmed that a presentation to provide an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) including the Thriving Communities project, would also be added to the work programme.

A Member commented that all Members of the Scrutiny Committee should be involved in the two Task and Finish reviews. The Head of Economic Development and Planning clarified that it would be unrealistic for all Members to sit on both reviews. It was more appropriate for a smaller number of Members to sit on each review group given the constraints on Member time and the commitments Members had to attend other meetings.

Resolved:

- (A) That two Task and Finish Groups be established to review (i) the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership and (ii) Town Centre Regeneration.
- (B) That the membership of the Review of the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership be made up of Councillors L. Bishop, J.O. Hill, N. Lyons, O. Lyons, F. Prestwood, S. Thornley and D. Todd.
- (C) That the membership of the Town Centre Regeneration Review be made up of Councillors L. Bullock, J. Hill, P. Haden, D. Mawle, F. Prestwood, O. Lyons, S. Thornley and D. Todd.
- (D) That an update on the UKSPF/Thriving Communities project be included on the agenda for the September meeting.
- (E) That a presentation of the current position with the Levelling Up Fund be included on the agenda for the September meeting.
- (F) That a presentation of the current position with Rugeley Power Station be included on the agenda for the December meeting.

The meeting finished at 7:40pm.

Chair