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2 December 2024

Dear Councillor,

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Tuesday 10 December 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 23 October, 2024 (enclosed).

4. Local Transport Plan

Nicola Swinnerton and Annabel Chell from Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Team will be in attendance to provide a presentation.

Sushi Birdi, Development and Policy Manager will also be in attendance for this item.

5. Quarter 2 2024-25 performance update

To receive the Quarter 2 2024-25 PDP Progress Report - Economic Prosperity (Item 5.1 - 5.6).

6. Update on the Scrutiny Reviews - Town Centre Regeneration Review and Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership Review

Verbal updates will be provided

7. Cannock Town Centre Regeneration (LUF) Update

To receive an update and/or presentation from the Head of Economic Development and Planning

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

To receive an update from the Head of Economic Development and Planning

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
Held on Wednesday 23 October 2024 at 6:00pm
in the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock**

Part 1

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also in Attendance: Councillor M. Freeman (Regeneration & High Streets Portfolio Leader)

7. Apologies

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor P. Haden.

Councillor F. Prestwood advised he would need to leave the meeting by 7pm.

8. 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.

9. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2024 be approved.

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

The Head of Economic Development and Planning provided delivered an update presentation on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) / Thriving Communities project which covered:

- UKSPF Overview
- Supporting Local Businesses
- People & Skills
- Communities & Place
- UKSPF Spend - forecast of committed spend
- Thriving Communities Project

Members then raised the following comments/questions in respect of the presentation:

1. *In respect of the underspend by Birmingham City Council (BCC) on their funding allocation under the UKSPF, had this been impacted by their wider financial issues?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised this had not helped matters, with officers from the BCC Economic Development team supporting the project leaving their posts. At the start, there had been a strong partnership arrangement in place and assurances given that BCC's wider issues would not affect project delivery. Short-term project support was now being looked at to try and get the full funding allocation spent.

2. *During the Covid-19 pandemic, this Council had contacted businesses in the District about support available, so it was suggested they be contacted again about this project, and promotion done via newsletters, e-shots, online messaging, door knocking etc to get the message out.*

Could the Committee also be provided with details of the project?

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised he would ask officers to pull this information together accordingly for circulation.

3. *Could the unspent funding be vired to other projects or carried over into the following financial year?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that funding could be diverted to other projects but there would not be much time to do so as the funding was due to finish in March 2025 and there was currently no indication from the Government that underspends could be carried over.

4. *Were there any restrictions on how the BCC funding could be spent?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the monies could not be used for day-to-day spending or on overheads but could be used for things like technology development and job growth. It could only be spent by non-retail small/medium sized companies (SMEs) with less than 250 employees.

Start-up SMEs could receive grants of £1,000 to £7,500, and existing SMEs could receive £1,000 to £100,000. One-off apprenticeship grants of £2,000 were also available. The eligibility criteria for the project would be circulated to the Committee for reference.

5. *Had there been much take-up of the apprenticeship grant?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised this was not the case and so there was a need to push this given it was also available for existing businesses to take on apprentices.

6. *Bridgtown Parish Council had raised an issue regarding the limit being reached on a credit card, thereby preventing them from moving forward with their plans.*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised this Council had a corporate credit card that could be used to purchase lower value items, but most items would need to be bought using purchase orders and invoices. This issue would however be checked with officers separately.

7. *Bridgtown Parish Council had also raised an issue of communications difficulties between the Clerk, Chair and the Economic Development team, particularly around being unable to open emails sent from this Council.*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised he would seek clarification on this issue from officers.

8. *One of the regular complaints received about Cannock town centre was that it looked untidy and unkempt, particularly a lack of weeding etc. Could some of the funding therefore be used to improve the cleanliness of the town centre?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that cleaning of the town centre was undertaken by the Street Cleansing team as part of their core role. Funding could be used toward environmental improvements but because of resource issues this project would not necessarily be the answer to all the problems referred to.

The Regeneration and High Streets Portfolio Leader advised that she had been working with the Cannock Town Centre Partnership, as the recipients of the local UKSPF monies, and had the main bandstand recently cleaned and repainted, and permission received to plant new flowers ready for Remembrance Sunday. Other parts of the town were being dealt with too, such as the replacement/removal of damaged bollards.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning referred to an environmental neighbourhood project being delivered in Hednesford that included weeding, cleaning drains, cutting back branches etc. Although a small sum of money had been provided to make the improvements, it was acknowledged such things were an ongoing issue. There also had to be a level of expectation management as it was unknown what future funding would be available.

9. *A noticeboard had been requested for outside Heath Hayes Library but told by Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council there was no money available to purchase one.*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised this could be raised separately with the Economic Development team.

10. *Could a body such as the Friends of Cannock Park apply for the grant funding?*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised the original funds were allocated to 'town centre' areas, so a separate conversation would need to be held with the Regeneration and High Streets Portfolio Leader as the local funds were allocated to the Cannock Town Centre Partnership.

11. *If money could be reallocated, could South Staffordshire College be approached as there was extra equipment they could do with purchasing.*

The Head of Economic Development and Planning acknowledged that a lot of positive work had been carried out by the College and they had a good track record of delivery and success, so this could be followed up as necessary.

11. Update on the Town Centre Regeneration Scrutiny Review

Councillor S. Thornley, Chair of the Town Centre Regeneration Scrutiny Review, provided Members with the following update from the meeting of the review Group held on 2 October 2024:

- The scope of the review was now quite wide with regard to lots of changes in consumer patterns, such as online shopping and out town shopping centres which had resulted in less footfall in town centres. It was also noted there was an increase in properties now being used for commercial office space within town centres.
- There was now an increase in demand for leisure facilities, cinema and visits to the theatre. As such, there may be a need to refocus on what vacant shopping centres could be used for.
- Clarification had also been sought that the £20m for the Cannock town centre Levelling Up Fund (LUF) scheme was secure and if work was on target to start in October 2024. The Group was assured that the monies for the scheme were safe, and that works should start before the end of the year. It was also noted that scheme costs had been impacted by an increase in the cost of materials.
- Some questions had been raised about the Prince of Wales theatre and whether refurbishment would be included in the development plan.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning confirmed this aspect was being reviewed because of the potential costs involved.

- Clarification had been sought on whether work related to the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan had now been completed.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that action plan document was now circa ten years old, and the Group had discussed what could be done with Rugeley town centre going forward. A new masterplan would be needed that linked to the redevelopment of the former Power Station site.

- There was a general opinion amongst the Group that there was a need for more community involvement in assessing needs and sharing of the plans (for the Cannock town centre redevelopment) and queried whether there were any plans for further contact with the public as the scheme progressed. The Group agreed that this could improve, and more public information sharing should take place.
- The Group also looked at what other opportunities there may be in the future and asked what other areas were doing as far as their own regeneration was concerned.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that specific areas had not been discussed, rather a general discussion point raised if the Group wanted to look at other areas.

- The Group considered there was a need to assess how effective past interventions had been.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that evaluations did take place, such as for the previous regeneration scheme of Hednesford town centre.

- Serious concerns had been raised about the shortfall in capacity within the Council and the pressures this brought to bare on the staff, with agency and consultancy staff being used to support the town centre scheme.
- Public transport within the constituency left a lot to be desired and there was a need for great improvement, particularly issues of poor quality and inconsistent services.
- Building relationships with the parish and town councils needed to improve as this could provide a very good route for identifying local community need and a greater involvement in the development of local community areas.

The Regeneration & High Streets Portfolio Leader responded to some of the points made as follows:

- When talking about town centre regeneration, this applied to the whole District as don't want Hednesford and Rugeley to be forgotten about.
- Public engagement had been discussed with the head of service on several occasions and assurances given that this would be picked up at each stage of the Cannock town centre regeneration scheme.
- Traders and residents had been met with regularly to spread positivity about the regeneration plans as there was a particular issue with negativity and untruths being posted on social media. The traders were very positive about the plans and wanted to see the scheme progress.
- Work on the scheme had started and there was a lot still to do. Thanks were given to the head of service, the Economic Development team and other services such as Finance and Legal who had provided support despite being very under-resourced.
- Public transport was a Staffordshire County Council (SCC) matter and contact had been received from Councillor Haden on this in her SCC role. It was not clear yet what other Member involvement would be, but it was a District-wide issue.

(Councillor F. Prestwood left the meeting at this point.)

A Member agreed with the points raised by Councillor Thornley, noting that part of the work was around understanding how the Council had reached its current position and how to move forward. It was hoped the grant bidding situation would change in future so the Council would have a better chance of securing funding for projects supported by a wider vision for the town centres. Engagement with residents was considered important, hence why the Group had raised the relationship with parish and town councils and the need for consistent communications messages for Council led projects and regular public engagement. In respect of public transport, SCC was working at the moment to develop Local Transport Plans for each district. Lichfield District Council had a member panel in place to support this work so this may be worth considering for here.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that Councillor Haden had shared information about the Local Transport Plan. It was therefore suggested that representatives from SCC be invited to the December meeting to deliver a presentation on this, with the CCDC Development & Policy Manager also in attendance to provide the Local Plan perspective and how the plans would link together and support regeneration work. The Committee was happy to support this proposal.

A Member raised it was vital that phase 2 of the Cannock town centre regeneration scheme was delivered, noting the scheme was one of the Cabinet's three priority themes. Concern had been raised elsewhere about funding availability as it would be a disaster for the area and the Council's reputation with residents if it did not go ahead.

The same Member then referenced the proposal from the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to take over the running of buses in the WMCA area and queried whether the Council was being consulted as part of this work given that one of the bus routes affected operated in Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire District.

In response, a Member advised they were a non-voting member of the MWCA Transport Scrutiny Committee, but could still attend the meetings and gather information. The Mayor was going to be putting forward his plans to the Committee with a question-and-answer session due to take place soon. The clear messages coming through so far were that the Mayor wanted to improve the transport situation as some previously agreed projects did not have the necessary funding allocations.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning then provided the following update on the LUF scheme, noting that a more detailed update would be provided at the December meeting:

- Planning consent had been agreed by the Planning Control Committee on 16 October 2024 for:
 - Demolition of units 1 and 2 on Market Hall Street,
 - Partial demolition of Unit 3 on Market Hall Street and removal of the glazed canopy roof.
 - Demolition of the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP).
 - Erection of a temporary compound.
- A demolition contractor had been appointed and activity would start on site in the coming weeks.
- A press release had been issued on 21 October outlining the above.
- Work was being done with SCC and their contractor, Amey, on the required Highways works, with site investigations works due to take place soon.
- Phase 2 would come forward at a later date and the Council was in continual dialogue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) about the funding stream. Indicators were that areas with projects already underway would retain their funding.
- The update in December would include information about the proposed communications / public engagement plans.

In response to a query from a Member as to whether the Committee could be provided with details of the projects funded in each parish under the Thriving Communities project, the Head of Economic Development and Planning advised he would ask relevant officers to pull this information together and circulate it accordingly.

It was noted that the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership Review Group had not met yet, with a first meeting date to be arranged. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that an officer from the Economic Development team would be supporting the work of this review group.

12. Review of the Work Programme 2024/25

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the following items would be considered at the December 2024 and March 2025 meetings of the Committee:

- **10 December 2024**
 - Quarter 2 2024-25 performance update
 - Task & Finish Groups updates
 - Levelling Up Fund scheme presentation
 - Local Transport Plan

- **19 March 2025**
 - Quarter 3 2024-25 performance update
 - Task & Finish Groups updates
 - Former Rugeley Power Station site update

A Member requested that a further update on the UKSPF be provided at the December meeting.

In response to a query from another Member as to whether the £2,000 apprenticeship funding referenced in the UKSPF allocation was a measly figure, the Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the average figure was slightly above this amount but officers could look at the grant levels available to see if a higher figure could be offered. The main issue seemed to be around promotion of the grant funding, so there was a need to look at a communications plan for the project and assess available capacity to make sure the project was successful.

In response to a query from the same Member as to when shared services would make a difference to staffing levels and capacity in the organisation, the Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that it would not be at the moment as both services were still operating as two separate teams. The transformation work needed to bring the teams together would take time to complete.





The meeting finished at 7:22 p.m.

Chair

Priority Delivery Plan for 2024-25

Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

Quarter					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
1&2	2		2		4
3					7
4					2
TOTAL	2		2		4 to Q2

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2


LUF project - progress made with phase 1 in terms of acquisitions.
 Local Development Scheme updated and Local Plan on target for submission.
 Cabinet approval to introduce BNG monitoring fees.



Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

Delay in introducing S106 monitoring fees and commencing review of S106 policy and procedures.





Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol	
Delivery of major economic growth regeneration projects	Cannock Town Centre Regeneration - Phase One (Levelling up Fund)							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire commercial interests to facilitate the development of the Northern Gateway 		X			Surrender of lease linked to Units 1 to 3 Cannock Shopping Centre was completed in July 2024.	★	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure planning consents for demolition for phase 1 and Northern Gateway (reserve matters) 			X				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence demolition works to facilitate phase one of Town Centre regeneration scheme 			X				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence highway works as part of the Northern Gateway scheme 				X			
	Cannock Town Centre Regeneration - Phase Two (Levelling up Fund)							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on whether to proceed with phase two of scheme, subject to approval of the Project Adjustment Request from MHCLG 			X				

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to above, conclude negotiations to acquire commercial interests to create regeneration opportunity for the town centre 			X			
	UK Shared Prosperity Fund						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and deliver the UKSPF projects in year 3 of the Council's approved Investment Plan, working towards full allocation of spend by 31 March 2025 and delivery of outputs - CCDC and SBC 				X		
Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Local Plan to Examination Complete Local Plan Evidence Base <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air Quality Viability Update Heritage Impacts Assessments 			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Local Development Scheme 		X			Approved at Cabinet 26 September and Full Council 9th October	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Planning Obligations - Review of Policy and Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging schedules for Section 106 and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring fees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cabinet approval 		X			<p>BNG monitoring fees approved at Cabinet.</p> <p>Draft S106 charging schedule produced; currently finalising report with input from Finance.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation 			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning obligations Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish group and terms of reference ○ Agree governance and schedule of meetings 		X			<p>Report to return to Leadership Team; awaiting comments from Finance.</p> <p>Governance and meeting schedule to follow once report signed off.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business case for Exacom system 			X			

KPIs for Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Symbol	Description	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
	Performance exceeds target	5			
	Performance on target				
	Performance < 5% below target				
	Performance > 5% below target	2			
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable				
	TOTAL	7			

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
Planning									
Major Planning Applications determined within time	100%	60%	None determined	100%				★	
Non-major Planning Applications determined within time	94.8%	70%	95%	97.7%				★	
Major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	N/a	< 10%	0%	0%				★	
Non-major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	N/a	< 10%	0%	0%				★	
Building Control									
Applications registered and acknowledged within 3 days of valid receipt	98%	95%	93%	89%				✘	Staff shortages have slightly delayed the processing of applications.
Full plans applications with initial full assessment within 15 days of valid receipt	90%	80%	64%	88%				★	
Customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service	85%	90%	100%	80%				✘	There were very few returns this quarter with one negative response.