

**FOR: COUNCIL MEETING**

**8<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2014**

**AGENDA ITEM 7**

**(BUFF ENCLOSURE)**

**REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT  
(OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

**PRESENT**

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Drinkwater (Vice Chairman), Mrs Eagland (Vice Chairman), Mrs Barnett, Mrs Evans, Fisher, Roberts, Smedley, Mrs Stanhope MBE and Taylor.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillor Pritchard attended the meeting).

**AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was received from Councillor Pullen.

At the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014 the following matters were considered:

**1. CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

- 1.1 The Cabinet Forward Plan had been circulated and was considered in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee and was noted.

**2. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 2.1 The Work Programme was circulated and considered. It was noted that as this was the last meeting of the municipal year, a new work programme would be required. It was noted that items on HS2, the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents would be taken forward onto the forthcoming work programme. It was also noted that future work programmes would include Tourism and Car Parking matters. The Chairman asked the Committee to contact him if they had any suggested items.
- 2.2 It was asked if an issue of contaminated land from a property on Pool Lane, Chasewater could be investigated. In response it was stated that the issue would be looked into but then given the nature of the matter likely passed to Community, Housing and Health (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee as their remit included Environmental Health.
- 2.3 It was asked if it could be investigated if the policies being developed from the Trees and Development SPD Task Group could be used now to help residents.
- 2.4 The work programme was noted.

**3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- 3.1 The Committee received an amended Terms of Reference as they had recently changed to include further items on Tourism and Car Parking including enforcement and highlighted economic growth. It was noted and agreed that although Best Value no longer existed, the principle remained and so paragraph 13.11 should be re phrased to reflect this.
- 3.2 The Terms of Reference was noted and amended as agreed and submitted to Council for approval.

#### **4. REVIEW OF THE LICHFIELD DISTRICT'S 2013 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PROGRAMME AND PREVIEW OF 2014 PROGRAMME**

- 4.1 The Committee received a report on the extent and successes of the Lichfield District 2013 Festivals and Events Programme and outlining the proposed 2014 programme. It was noted that the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee had already considered this item but as Tourism was now part of the remit for this Committee, it and future reports on the same topic needed to be considered by this Committee.
- 4.2 The Committee heard the conclusions from the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee and noted them and agreed that more details on costing would be helpful in the future.
- 4.3 Members felt that it should be tried to get events back into the District for example the Chasewater Transport Show.
- 4.4 Members also felt that the results of the District wide consultation would be of interest, when concluded, to evaluate if residents believed events and tourism was a high priority.
- 4.5 Members requested that paragraph 4.1 of the report on the Economic Impact Assessments should read 'feel the benefit of the events and festivals that take place within the District' and not 'in the city'.
- 4.6 The report was noted.

#### **5. CHARGING FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE ON PLANNING PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 Members received a report on the potential for a charging schedule for pre-application advice on planning proposals. It was reported that as part of the Development Services Review, all potential for generating income were being explored, and that there was an opportunity under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 to help cover the cost of providing pre-application advice.
- 5.2 It was then reported that Council's could not profit from these charges – only recovery of costs. A benchmarking exercise had been carried out with the Planning Advisory Service and it was concluded that the department received on average 450 requests for pre- application advice at a cost of around £68k. This cost includes officer time, but is exclusive of any overheads.
- 5.3 It was then reported that pre-application advice, although non-statutory was invaluable in helping prevent unnecessary delays and meeting application determination targets. It was also reported that both nationally and regionally many other Local Authorities charged for pre-application advice and many more were considering it. It was noted that advice given was without prejudice to the determination of an application.
- 5.4 The charging schedule was then considered by the Committee and it was noted that the amount charged was based on the type of applications with Strategic major Developments being charged the most. It was noted that there would be a charge for advice for householder developments, but it was only £35 which was under the hourly cost.
- 5.5 Members felt the proposals and charging schedule were acceptable and that the charge to householders was value for money compared to the private sector cost. Members asked when the charging for pre-application advice would come into force and it was reported that it would hopefully start at the beginning of the financial year.

- 5.6 Members noted that the scheme would be reviewed in 12 months to evaluate how the scheme was operating.
- 5.7 The following was agreed:
- (1) That the Planning Committee be recommended to approve the introduction of pre-application charges;
  - (2) That the Planning Committee be recommended to approve the schedule of charges set out in Appendix 2; and,
  - (3) That, a report on the operation of pre-application charging and the levels of fees be considered by the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) and the Planning Committee after 12 months of its introduction.

## **6. LICHFIELD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: UPDATE**

- 6.1 Members received a report updating on the progress with the Lichfield District Local Plan, the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and the production of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule. It was reported that the Main Modifications to the Local Plan were currently out to consultation and that there had not been many representations received so far but that this was expected to change closer to the end of the consultation period. It was reported that on the receipt of representations it would be up the Planning Inspector on how to proceed but it was very likely that he will choose to reopen hearing sessions to consider the matters raised.
- 6.2 It was then reported that work was ongoing in all eight communities where Neighbourhood Plans were being progressed and more applications from Burntwood Town Council, Wall Parish Council and Whittington & Fisherwick Parish Council had now been received.
- 6.3 It was then reported that work was continuing on the CIL and a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) had been devised and due to be subject to a six week consultation starting on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014. It was noted that it was not intended to include a householder charge as part of the charging schedule.
- 6.4 Members asked if it could be checked which area of charging Highfields came under as it was currently shown on the PDCS as Lichfield City although the area came under Burntwood.
- 6.5 Members then asked if the schedule could be reviewed after 12 months in operation and it was noted that it would be difficult to change the amounts as it would require the need for consultation and re-examination by an Inspector.
- 6.6 Members noted that Neil Cox, Planning Policy Manager, was leaving the Authority and the Committee thanked him for all his work and helping them understand the processes and complexities of the Local Plan. Members also noted that Claire Eggington would be taking over the role and congratulated her on her appointment.
- 6.7 The progress of the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy, neighbourhood plan preparation and work to progress the Community Infrastructure Levy was noted.

## **7. VOTE OF THANKS**

7.1 It was proposed, duly seconded and resolved that the sincere thanks of the Committee be recorded to all the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Officers for their work during the past year.

R. E. Cox  
Chairman  
Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee