

**FOR: COUNCIL MEETING**

**17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2015**

**AGENDA ITEM 9**

**(BUFF ENCLOSURE)**

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

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Drinkwater (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Eagland (Vice Chairman), Mrs Barnett, Hogan, Mrs Fisher, Isaacs, Leytham, Roberts, Mrs Richards, Smedley, Mrs Stanhope MBE, and Willis-Croft.

No apologies for absence were received.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors Pritchard, Spruce and Wilcox attended the meeting).

At the meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 the following matters were considered:

**1. CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

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

**2. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 2.1 The Work Programme had been circulated and considered.
- 2.2 It was agreed that the Work Programme be noted.

**3. PARKING MATTERS INCLUDING CIVIL PARKING ARRANGEMENTS – AN UPDATE**

- 3.1 Members considered a report informing them of the likely position regarding arrangements for on-street parking enforcement from April 2015 onwards along with potential implications for the management of the off-street parking estate. It was reported that Staffordshire County Council (SCC) had given formal notice that it intended to cease the current parking enforcement arrangements and take the on-street enforcement function in house from April 2015.
- 3.2 It was reported that there had not been much more information forthcoming since that announcement until now when SCC notified that it would commence meetings with District Councils to discuss hand over arrangements. It was then reported that SCC then planned to have meetings with employees in February, commence a media campaign in March and implement the changes in April.
- 3.3 It was also reported that regarding off-street parking enforcement that preliminary conversations had been held with Stoke City Council and its officers were confident that they would be able to deliver an enforcement service along with other functions including machine maintenance. It was noted that if it were found that the offer from Stoke City

Council was not acceptable, the possibility of entering into an arrangement with another authority or private company was a viable alternative.

- 3.4 Members felt that on-street parking was a big problem and noted that many complaints were received regarding the matter. Concerns were voiced about the County Council's intentions relating to CPE going forward. The Committee was particularly concerned that as a consequence of the proposed new arrangements there would no longer be a mechanism for local District Members to comment or feed in views as it was reported that the Local Parking Board would cease to operate and SCC would be reliant on views and information received from County Ward Members only. Members concerns were noted however the Cabinet Member responded by saying that the responsible body for CPE was the County Council and therefore it was for them to decide how the service should be provided. As the new arrangements were yet to come into operation, it was impossible to say whether they would work or not satisfactorily. Members suggested the introduction of an online forum to allow for residents to register their concerns regarding parking matters and this feedback be used as a way to evidence problems to SCC.
- 3.5 Members felt that there was a need to ensure that the off-street service provided was as high a quality as possible. Car park users should expect and receive a suitable level of service. It was also crucial to note the importance of car parking income received by the Authority.
- 3.6 On a technical/operational point, Members reported that one of the ticket machines at Bird Street Car Park was not working and complaints were being received by the public. This seemed to be an on-going issue and raised a question about the service being provided to Bird Street Users. Officers reported that they were not aware of a problem but would look into the matter.
- 3.7 It was agreed that Officers continue to update Members on the intentions of the County Council regarding on-street CPE and also continue to pursue the aim of joint delivery for off-street enforcement.

#### **4. MID YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT – ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN 14/15 FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

- 4.1 The Committee received a report on progress against the activities and projects set out in the Directorate's One Year Action Plan for 14/15. It was noted that key performance indicators relating to activity during the first six months of the year was also included in the report.
- 4.2 It was noted that the only area that was not on target was the preparation of a new Biodiversity Strategy 2013-2023 and that this was due to delays in the establishment of the evidence base.
- 4.3 Members congratulated Officers for getting the Local Plan found sound by the Planning Inspector.
- 4.4 The report was noted.

#### **5. DIRECTORATE TOP 10 – 15/16**

- 5.1 The Committee received a report on the top 10 issues which are facing the Development Directorate in 2015/16 along with the proposed activity and performance indicators that will be reported to the Committee in March 2015.

- 5.2 It was noted that there were some reoccurring items including the Local Plan. Members felt it would be useful to have previous year's Top 10s to be able to consider any capacity issues and have something to measure against.
- 5.3 The report was noted.

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

- 6.1 Members received an update on the Local Plan. It was reported that the Planning Inspector had released his findings and recommendations to the Council. He had found the Local Plan sound subject to certain modifications being made. It was reported that most of the modifications were ones that had been considered through the re-opened hearings into the Plan and previously agreed by the Council and put forward as suggested changes. Through the hearings a series of more minor modifications were also issued by the Authority to provide clarity on certain matters or correct errors.
- 6.2 The next steps were reported to the Committee. It was noted that a report would be considered by Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February and then Council on the 17<sup>th</sup> February with the intention the Plan would be formally approved and adopted by the Authority. There would then follow a 6 week period to allow for any legal challenge. Members were notified that nationally, challenges to Plans were becoming more commonplace. Any such challenge could however only be on procedural or legal grounds and not in respect of Planning Judgements made by the Authority. Members asked what the cost of such a legal challenge would be and it was reported that it was difficult to quantify and dependant on factors including reasons for challenge, amount of time the case took to hear and so on. It was noted that a budget had been set aside for challenges and there could be a possibility of getting costs awarded if found in the Council's favour.
- 6.3 Members still had concerns regarding the duty to cooperate with Birmingham City Council and the potential of having to help that Authority deliver some of its housing need. It was reported that sovereignty of decision making on matters affecting the District remained at all times with the District Council however in reaching his conclusions on the Local Plan, the Planning Inspector wished to see how the Authority had met its statutory duty to liaise with the City Council on such matters and contribute to discussions about how housing needs could be met. It was reported that other Local Authorities had also engaged with the City Council recognising housing need as a cross-boundary issue. Whether the Council would have to consider accommodating an element of housing needs arising outside of its area was for consideration if and when it is established that there is a shortfall and work currently taking place involving the GBSLEP suggests how this potentially could be met across a wider geography. Members felt that because there was a pressure for housing in the Sutton Coldfield area, that bordered the District and this could well mean Lichfield would have to supply housing for their needs.
- 6.4 Members considered the issue of green belt and noted that any further release of green belt land in the District would have to pass stringent tests first. It was reported that although viewed as a more favourable alternative to green belt sites, some brown field locations were not appropriate for development being unsustainable. Notwithstanding this, the Committee was assured that there still needed to be good arguments for the use of green belt land to accommodate development and stringent tests applied to justify its release.
- 6.5 In addition to the Local Plan, members were also advised that a revised Local Development Scheme would be reported to the Cabinet and Council setting out a timetable for subsequent Local Plan documents.

- 6.6 Along with Officers, past and present Cabinet Members for Development were thanked for their hard work in getting the Local Plan to this point in the process.
- 6.7 It was agreed that the progress of the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy, Neighbourhood Plan preparation and work to progress the Community Infrastructure Levy be noted. Members were asked in particular to note and endorse the further Main Modifications to the Plan.

R. E. Cox  
Chairman

Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee