

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

PRESENT

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Drinkwater (Vice-Chair), Miss Hassall (Vice-Chair), Awty, Mrs Baker, Mrs Eagland, Mrs Evans, Marshall and Mrs Stanhope MBE.

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

AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE was received from Councillor Mrs Fisher.

At the meeting held on 23rd January 2018 the following matters were considered:

1. WORK PROGRAMME

- 1.1 Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme.
- 1.2 Consideration was given to the work programme and it was reported that another meeting of the Car Park Strategy Member Task Group would be required and it was requested that this be arranged.
- 1.3 An update was also given by Councillor Mrs Baker in regard to the Public Realm Member Task Group and it was reported that a meeting with Officers had been scheduled and matters were progressing
- 1.4 Details were requested on the item regarding Heritage Assets and it was confirmed that it did not include landscape but more the listed buildings on the "at risk" register. It was noted that this report would be considered at the March meeting.
- 1.5 Also at the March meeting, it was confirmed that there would be an item on Events in the District.

2. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

- 2.1 The Committee received a report giving an update on the consultation on the Draft Local Plan Allocations document which would be closing on the 19th February 2018. It was noted that after Officers had considered responses, a report would be submitted to Cabinet. The intention would then be to submit the Plan for Independent examination following the consultation process.
- 2.2 The report also updated Members on the Local Plan Review and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report that had been prepared to inform it. Other section of the report covered the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Governance Structure and Administration arrangements and the progress of Neighbourhood Plans.

- 2.3 Discussions focused around Neighbourhood Plans and concern was expressed that progress of the Burntwood plan had stalled and it was requested whether Lichfield District Council Officers could offer any assistance. It was reported that Officers were available to give Parishes advice and indeed it was in the District Council's interests to ensure neighbourhood plans were prepared in accordance with the Local Plan. An update on the Armitage with Handsacre Neighbourhood Plan and it was reported that the consultation responses were currently being considered.
- 2.4 It was noted that a decision was awaited for the Crown site and if approved would be considered as a windfall site. It was noted that the Curborough site would not be considered as a windfall site as is proposed to be included within the Local Plan Allocations document and as such the site would contribute to the housing requirements of the current Local Plan.
- 2.5 The Committee agreed the following
- (a) That the progress associated with the Local Plan Allocations be noted;
 - (b) That the Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report be noted;
 - (c) That the timetable proposed for initial consultation on the Local Plan Review be noted;
 - (d) That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Local Plan Review Scoping document in line with the identified scope; and
 - (e) That the recent progress in relation to neighbourhood plans within Lichfield District be noted.

3. NOTES OF THE LOCAL PLAN SUB GROUP

- 3.1 The Committee received the notes of the Local Plan Sub Group for the meetings held on the 5th October and 20th December 2017.

4. IMPLEMENTING THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 4.1 The Committee received a report giving an update on progress with implementing the Council's Economic Development Strategy along with information on the current performance of the Strategic Plan's priority objective of delivering a Vibrant and Prosperous Economy.
- 4.2 It was reported that to deliver the strategy, activities could not be delivered by just the Council and so collaborative working with partners were being undertaken and the Committee discussed each of these partnership arrangements and activities separately.
- 4.3 The Tamworth and Lichfield shared business support service was confirmed to be still working well with daily communications between the sites and shared event hosting.
- 4.4 Local Business Groups was then discussed and it was noted that Officers gave support to both the Lichfield BID and Burntwood Business Community. It was asked if there were too many business groups in the area including the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Businesses. It was reported that the groups focused on different areas including small business or manufacturing and it was the Officer's role to help bring them together. It was requested if more collaborative working across these bodies could be encouraged.

- 4.5 It was reported that there were two European Funded Programmes and when asked, it was noted that they were due to end in March 2019 but an extension could be applied for.
- 4.6 The next section was Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Growth Hubs and it was noted that the Council was a member of both the GBSLEP and SSLEP who offered different support. It was asked if there could be more signposting for businesses to know what each LEP could offer and it was reported that when referrals were received, both Growth Hubs were recommended. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the identity of the LEP's were an issue especially outside of the large cities and the GBSLEP had made a commitment to ensure this changed. There was concern that the level of investment in neighbouring authorities could have a knock on effect for the district however the Officers felt it was a positive effect.
- 4.7 Place was discussed and Members were pleased to note that the Olaf Johnson site in Burntwood had moved forward and felt residents would be happy to see progress. There was some concern that the number of affordable housing was small with 137 over five years. The level of premises within the district receiving Broadband was considered at length and Members felt the 5% still not able to access it was high and in turn having an impact on especially rural business opportunities materialising. It was reported that work was underway on alternative methods including community fibre partnerships to tackle this.
- 4.8 Under the section of Business, Members were pleased to note that there would be another survey undertaken and it was requested that details on focus, objectives and methodology be shared with the Committee when appropriate. Members were also pleased that a CRM system had been developed to capture information.
- 4.9 Regarding KPIs, it was requested whether information on lost and displaced jobs could also be recorded along with jobs created along with apprenticeships.
- 4.10 It was agreed that the current work being undertaken to deliver the priorities within the Economic Development Strategy for Lichfield District, performance having regard to the Council's priority objective of a Vibrant and Prosperous Economy, KPI's and economic development activities helping to deliver these KPI's be noted.

5. REVIEW OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 5.1 The Committee received a report seeking views on the size and operation of the Planning Committee. It was reported that the Development Management Service was subject to an independent review by the Planning Officers Society in December 2016 and as part of it, one of the recommendations was to look at the size of the Committee as it was larger than neighbouring authorities. It was reported that following this recommendation, a Member/Officer task group was set up to investigate this further. It was reported that best practice advice encouraged smaller committees as they were focused and offered greater consistency in decision making.
- 5.2 Performance regarding major planning appeals was considered and it was noted that although it had got better, the threshold had been changed meaning the council was in the lower quartile giving the risk of designation.
- 5.3 It was reported that after its investigations, the task group was in agreement that the Planning Committee should reduce to 15 Members with 3 further Councillors fully trained to act as replacements if circumstances arose. It was also suggested that the Committee Room host the meetings as the visual and audio facilities were enhanced in that room. However the Chamber would still be used when large public galleries were anticipated.

5.4 The Committee were supportive of the views of the task group and also welcomed the opportunity to review the new Committee operation after one year. It was requested that, as much as possible, a good geographical spread in the Membership be achieved. It was also asked if types of training could be considered exemplifying day courses at Warwick University and the use of case studies.

5.5 The Committee agreed the following

- (1) That the report be noted and Planning Committee be recommended to approve:
 - the reduction in the size of the Planning Committee to 15 Members;
 - the training of 3 additional Members to act as permanent replacements as circumstances arise;
 - the hosting of Planning Committee meetings in the Committee Room on the provision that the Council Chamber will still host when larger public galleries are anticipated; and
- (2) That the performance and operation of the new Planning Committee be subject to review by the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee after one year of its operation.

Councillor Richard Cox
Chairman

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