

ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2020

PRESENT:

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Ball (Vice-Chair), S Wilcox (Vice-Chair), Binney, D Ennis, Gwilt, Ho, Marshall, Parton-Hughes, Ray, Warburton and Westwood.

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

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Little

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting as circulated were agreed and signed as a correct record.

22 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was discussed by the Committee. Some disappointment was noted that there had still been no report in respect of the Development of Burntwood. It was reported that it remained on the work programme to keep minds focused and although nothing to report at this time, the Leader and Deputy Leader would be meeting the Leader of Burntwood Town Council shortly and would then be able to give a verbal update on the Town Deal soon.

It was confirmed that the Government had still not come to a decision on the location and makeup of the Local Enterprise Partnerships but this would remain on the work programme until there was.

It was also noted that there may be updates on HS2 dependant on what was decided nationally.

It was asked if there was opportunity to consider how the Council could reduce its carbon footprint through its activities. It was reported that Councillor A Yeates had been appointed as Champion for this area so it may be more appropriate for the Community, Housing and Health (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee to consider and it was agreed to scope this further.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.

23 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN LICHFIELD CITY

The Committee received a report on the findings of the work undertaken by Bournemouth University (BU) to assess the economic impact of key events and festivals that take place in Lichfield City. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for this area was in attendance and

requested the Committees views on the outcomes from the BU study and how events and festivals could be improved.

The Committee discussed various areas where they felt improvements could be made. The first was to have consideration for the current businesses in the city centre. It was noted that there had been some negative comments made in the study by local businesses and it was suggested that there could be some compensation for those who lose income on the days these events took place. An example was given that a baked goods stall was situated outside a bakery. It was reported that there was currently no mechanism for compensation however better coordination of the location of the stalls by event organisers could reduce impact. It was asked whether offering the stall directly in front of the business to them to use themselves could be considered. It was also noted that the use of generators was affecting businesses and it was noted that integrated power supplies for the use of events could be considered as part of the city centre master planning process or that businesses own supply could be used. The Committee felt there should be some recognition of the fact that local business pay rates and stall holders do not.

The number of events and festivals were discussed and it was agreed that there could be scope for more however there should be a more diverse offering than currently. It was felt that there were no events to attract younger people although it was noted that the Council may not be able to directly influence this and this demographic may just not wish to attend. It was also discussed that events outside the city centre could be organised which in turn would create a more varied offering including a potential Country show for the rural areas of the district.

Health and safety at events was considered and it felt that stewarding was vital. It was proposed that a permanent team could gain experience and so add value and reduce risks. It was felt that better stewarding could also enable access during events especially emergency vehicles. It was noted that road closure orders stated that event organisers should allow access and that had not always been successful. The Committee agreed that the application process should be simplified and streamlined.

Marketing of events was then discussed and it was agreed that this was key. It was agreed that having a single point of contact at the Council would be of great benefit and help deal with the other points that the Committee had raised. It was discussed that a resource like this could help enable more community based events and liaise with businesses, Cathedral, other organisations and event organisers to ensure there was more coordination and guidance through the whole process.

The Committee requested that the BU study key recommendations be considered further when investigating improving the festival and events for the city along with a potential resource for a single point of contact at the Council to help market, enable and coordinate events. With this, there should be a simpler application process, a more diverse offering of events that benefit the whole district.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report be noted and the views of the Committee and recommendations of the BU Study on improving festivals and events be considered by the Cabinet member in preparing a policy approach for LDC.

(2) That the following recommendations from the Bournemouth University report (page 22) be considered further

“The key events programme brings socio-economic benefits to the city, and consideration should be given to enhance and develop it further.

It is suggested that event organisers should look to work more closely and collaboratively with the council and local businesses. Improved communications from event organisers to local businesses would be beneficial. This should include making them aware of any road closures, and any opportunities there are for businesses to get involved with their event.

More events could be encouraged throughout the year to account for seasonal peaks and troughs. A more varied event programme, celebrating the history and heritage of Lichfield may also attract a wider audience.

There should be more promotion and marketing of events to increase awareness of them. Events should be promoted to a wider audience within a 2 hour drive of Lichfield to encourage more non-locals to attend.

It is also important that key events reflect what they are marketed as, with stalls, activities and products reflecting the theme of the event.

Greater consideration should be given to the layout and placement of stalls at events. Through working with local businesses, event organisers should look to place stalls which result in minimal congestion or in areas that will not cause issues with local businesses.”

24 LICHFIELD CITY CENTRE CAR PARKING

The Committee received a report on the current occupancy levels, fee income and proposed improvements to the car parking estate within the ownership of Lichfield District Council. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member requested the Committee's views on Sunday charging and potential betterment of the service provided.

The current charging regime was reported and that there was one set of charges for Monday to Saturday and then £1 charge for Sunday parking. It was reported that there were contemplations of charging the midweek amount on Sundays to bring in extra income that could be used for improvements including more cashless payment systems, more electric vehicle (EV) charging points and digital messaging signage to aid car park users.

It was asked how much income would be raised if the extra charges were brought in. It was confirmed that there would not be any extra charging on evenings and with the Sunday alone, it would be approximately £176k but noted that this would be if parking use was as it was at this point and not reduced, which there was a risk of.

The Committee had many concerns that they felt should be considered or investigated further before any progression was made. The first was the effect it could have on the high street and trading as well as the attractiveness of events that were held on the weekend. Members were concerned that it may not be the right time to introduce extra charging as other close areas outside the district were offering better retail experiences with free parking namely Ventura Park in Tamworth and the soon to be completed McArthur Glen Outlet at Cannock Chase. It was asked whether car park charging in other authorities were considered and it was reported that there was regular benchmarking carried out. It was reported that there would have to be a good communications plan to ensure visitors understood the benefits to the service

It was discussed that the city was a religious centre and it may not be fair to charge worshipers and it was suggested to charge the current £1 for the first two hours then the proposed charge after that to help mitigate this concern. It was added that this may help people who leave their vehicles overnight.

When suggested that charging may encourage people to use public transport more it was noted that the Sunday bus service was reducing and was still a cost similar to the proposed charge so many people may stay at home and order online.

There was some suggestion that there should be no charge at all on a Sunday to encourage local shopping and community benefit.

Overall, the Committee agreed with the need to better the car parking provided and investigations for investing in improvements and EV charging but felt the proposed rise in income would not be enough and so other sources should be investigated. It was felt that the projects should be scoped and costed before any decision on charging was made. It was felt that clear communications as to the benefits of the improvements would have to be made especially as investment in EV charging would only benefit a few users to begin with.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Committees views be taken into account and a further report be submitted when ready on the scope and costs of improvement works to car parking.

25 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Committee received a report updating Members on the consultation on the Local Plan Review Preferred Options document. It was reported that the Leader and Deputy Leader had met with local groups including the Burntwood Action Group and there had been a number of consultation events.

It was reported that residents in Fazeley opposed development in the green belt in that area and traffic was already a concern due to Drayton Manor Theme Park and it was asked if Staffordshire County Council had been asked for views and it was reported that they had been consulted. It was also noted that the preferred options were to encourage growth and help areas meet their own housing needs. It was suggested that residents of that area be encouraged to submit representations to ensure all views were considered. It was requested that SCC be invited to a meeting to discuss infrastructure further with the Committee.

It was asked why greenbelt land at Hammerwich had been reclassified from 'important' to 'moderate' as the area was of historical importance. It was reported there were no proposal to remove this land from the green belt.

Neighbourhood plans were discussed and the Committee were pleased to note the progress made by Burntwood Town Council in developing their plan. It was noted that Kings Bromley had also progressed their plan

Thanks were given to the Development Plans team for their hard work.

RESOLVED: (1) That the progress associated with the Local Plan Review be noted;

(2) That the progress associated with the evidence base being advanced to support the local plan review be noted; and

(3) That the recent progress in relation to neighbourhood plans within Lichfield District be noted; and

26 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY AND SECTION 106 UPDATE

The Committee received a report updating them in terms of the administration and progress of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the use of develop contributions to provide key infrastructure, in particular affordable housing. It was reported that there would be a review of the Regulation 123 list to bring the Council in line with regulatory changes.

Discussions centred on affordable housing and there were concerns that 50% CIL monies went to Lichfield City area however there were far less than 50% of the affordable homes for the district, built in the city. It was felt that CIL, S106 and affordable housing should be investigated in more detail and it was suggested that there be a Member Task group created to do this.

It was felt that this group could look at where charging could be introduced including for apartment development as well as the level of offsite contributions as in some cases, this had been smaller than expected. It was reported that one issue was the desire to promote development of brownfield sites however the extra work involved in making the land acceptable to build on lessened the viability to have affordable housing.

It was agreed that there may need to have some input from the Community, Housing & Health (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee as they have the remit for affordable housing although not the planning policy for it.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and further items be added to the work programme.

(The Meeting closed at 8.35 pm)

CHAIRMAN