



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 16th FEBRUARY 2022

PRESENT: Councillor S Goodall (Chair), Councillors T Clements, R Claymore, A Cooper and Dr S Peuple

CABINET: Councillor Stephen Doyle

The following officers were present: Anna Miller (Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration), Matthew Fletcher (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Chesworth and B Price.

The Chair thanked Councillor M Summers for his contribution to the Committee following his retirement as a member of this Committee as a result of his appointment to Cabinet.

72 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 19 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peuple and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)

73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

74 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair reported that:

1. A Community Safety Focus Half Day had been held on 15th February 2022, to which all councillors had been invited and which was designed to

provide councillors with a forum to discuss with Officers and external partners in further depth the work to support community safety in Staffordshire and locally in Tamworth. This forum had brought together councillors, officers and external partners to discuss matters raised by constituents with councillors, the work and the priorities of the Staffordshire Commissioner and Tamworth Police and the Local Business Crime Partnership.

The Chair was seeking feedback from those who attended the event to inform future sessions. The Chair and Vice-Chair thanked councillors and officers for their attendance at the session.

2. The Committee's annual report was being prepared and would be presented to the March meeting of the Committee, prior to presentation to full Council in the next municipal year.
3. The Committee's recommendations to full Council following the Committee's consideration of aspects of Motion to Enjoy Fireworks Responsibly would be presented to full Council on 22 February 2022.

75 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair reported that following the 19th January 2022 Committee meeting, where this Committee received an update on the Castle Curtain Wall he attended Cabinet on 20th January, where this matter was an item for decision. At that Cabinet meeting the Chair reported to Cabinet the following recommendations from the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Committee had resolved to recommend to Cabinet that:

1. Cabinet instruct that the contracted castle architects act as external quality assurance for the works;
2. previous contractors performance be taken into account in the tender appraisal.

The Chair reported that Cabinet approved these recommendations as part of the overall approval of the project.

76 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH COMMITTEE FROM CABINET OR COUNCIL

No new items were identified.

77 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE WORKPLAN

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Skills, Planning, Economy and Waste, Councillor S Doyle, the Assistant Director Growth & Regeneration and the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration to the meeting to provide an overview of the proposal to define and agree a 3-year work plan, with associated resources that addressed key council priorities, by delivering tourism and economic development focused activity, primarily in the town centre. The Chair

reported that this item was before the Committee for its consideration prior to Cabinet on 17th March 2022.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted the key points which would be covered; Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (Staffordshire DMP), a package of economic measures focussed on the town centre and a change in focus of the grants available.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration highlighted the following areas to the Committee:

1. The challenges faced by the local economy and particularly the town centre / high street in terms of the COVID pandemic and changing consumer behaviours as well as the opportunity offered by the investment in the Tamworth town centre as part of the Future High Street Fund.
2. In terms of tourism and heritage development theme, the proposal was to invest in the Staffordshire DMP as well as to invest in a bespoke Borough wide tourism action plan to increase the tourism offer, working with stakeholders. This required a clear picture of deliverable actions, review of the suite of materials used, channels used, and to understand the target market for tourism in Tamworth; whether that be potentially families, overnight stays, and / or commercial tourism to accommodate local developments.
3. In terms of the town centre business support programme, the proposal involved externally commissioned business advisers who would actively support town centre businesses' growth in order to; (i) attract and support new businesses to open in the town centre, (ii) encourage existing businesses growth and (iii) encourage diversification of business types with a focus on food / hospitality and leisure / heritage. In conjunction with this it was planned to introduce town centre business grants in place of the current start up business grants to support businesses to adapt and grow and to realise the opportunities provided as a result of the Future High Street Fund programme.

The Committee commented and sought clarifications in the following areas:

- How any external business advisers would work with the existing Economic Development team, where it was reported that they would assist in providing additional resource to the team as well as further expertise in this specific area, from their experience of working with other councils, which would support the more general project management experience of the team.
- The remit for the business adviser role and the cost / benefit analysis undertaken. It was reported that the tender documentation included details of the outputs required to be delivered by the business advisers, and benchmarking with other councils had been undertaken, however some flexibility had been retained in terms of the specific activities provided by any supplier.
- More analysis around the benefits the business advice service would bring was sought, where it was reported that this service would aim to upskill town centre businesses and to provide additional support to them, which following the impact of the pandemic, was required to help some

businesses to adapt, including in terms of use of social media. It was reported that this would be expected, over several years, to benefit the town centre street scene and create further employment. It was further reported that, at times, given the regulatory nature of some of the council's activities, some businesses could be more receptive to seeking and receiving advice from external business advisers which could result in overall improvements for the wider town.

- Further details around the benefits of the Staffordshire DMP for Tamworth, and whether the larger figure to be allocated to this over three years, would deliver locally to Tamworth and whether the investment could be better spent locally. It was reported that to share in the best practice across Staffordshire required the council to make this investment, and that the position was proposed to be reviewed in the second year to determine whether to continue with a third year. The Committee discussed whether an earlier review, prior to the investment in the second year, could be appropriate.
- How we advertise Tamworth as a tourism destination, where it was reported that to be effective there needed to be a tourism strategy / an action plan, with a budget alongside, to ensure that our social media presence and wider advertising was co-ordinated and that these types of activities would be explored further.
- The challenges faced by small business, including the difficulties with business rates, which were Government, not council, controlled and what the council was doing to work for a better business tax, all of which would keep people investing in Tamworth. It was reported that in Tamworth smaller premises and new premises to be delivered as part of the Future High Street fund would be designed with small business rates relief in mind.
- Clarification on the costings for all aspects of the proposals within the report was sought where it was reported that all the proposals within the report were within current budgets and no additional resources were required. The report aimed to provide details of the refocussing of activities and resources to deliver on the recommendations outlined in the report.
- The intended focus of the new grants proposed in terms of encouraging diversification of business types focussed on food / hospitality and leisure / heritage, and whether the focus was intended to be to more sectors. It was reported that where town centres nationally had focussed on their food / hospitality and leisure / heritage offerings, their town centres had fared well, and studies had shown this. As a result the proposal was, whilst not ignoring other sectors, to support the town centre by encouraging more choice within the sectors identified which could promote diversification within them, by supporting, for example, different types of food / hospitality offerings within Tamworth and/or venues targeted at different end users.
- In terms of the grants process, and the budgets allocated, which were intended to run quarterly, whether there was sufficient flexibility to manage grants to both smaller businesses and potentially, exceptionally, to a larger chain within the current scheme, which it was reported would be the case.
- Whether further consideration could be given in future reports to the environment and sustainability implications section and whether when

initiatives being promoted could provide opportunities in these areas, such opportunities could be identified in these reports.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was agreed that Recommendation 1 in the report be amended, as set out below, and Recommendation 4 be added.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted and recommended to Cabinet that:

1. A financial contribution be made to support Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP) for financial year 2022/2023 with delegated authority given to the Assistant Director Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant Portfolio holder(s) to make a decision on extending the contribution into financial years 2023/2025.
2. The package of economic measures detailed in the report focusing on Town Centre businesses and the wider tourism based economy be agreed.
3. The change of focus was noted from the current Start-Up Business grant to the Town Centre Business Grant.
4. Organisations which remained at this time subject to investigation by HMRC in respect of any applications for COVID related claims would be ineligible for Town Centre Business Grants.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peuple and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)

The Committee thanked the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration for his, and his team's, work in processing the COVID recovery grants during the pandemic.

The Portfolio Holder and the Officers left the meeting.

78 INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY & GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN REVIEW

The Committee considered its work plan and updated it as follows:

Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Work Plan

| Work Plan 2021 - 2022 | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| DATE | SUBJECT |
| 24th March 2022 | Community Safety Plan |
| 24th March 2022 | Annual report (draft) of the IS&G Committee |
| 24th March 2022 | Waste Management update |
| 24th March 2022 | Future High Streets Fund update |
| 24th March 2022 | Reset & Recovery – Marmion House regeneration |
| June 2022 | Overview of Borough Council services relating to Community Safety |
| Quarterly updates | Future High Street Fund (Growth) |
| Quarterly updates | Waste Management |
| Quarterly | Reset & Recovery updates |
| Date to be confirmed | Council Housing Repairs Policy |
| Date to be confirmed | Review of policy / engagement with stakeholders relating to Travellers |
| Date to be confirmed | Fire Safety Update |
| Date to be confirmed | EV Charging update |
| Date to be confirmed | Review of Taxi Licensing Policy – Points System |
| Date to be confirmed | Amington local centre |
| Date to be confirmed | Town Hall |
| Date to be confirmed | Local Plan |

| Working Groups | | |
|--|---|---|
| Topic | Possible WG Members | Target IS&G Com meeting date |
| Review of policy / engagement relating to Travellers | | |
| Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth | Cllrs B Price (WG chair) Dr S Peale and R Claymore | |

| Upcoming Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee Meetings |
|---|
| 24 th March 2022 |

79 FORWARD PLAN

No further items were identified from the Forward Plan for inclusion in the Committee's work plan at this time.

80 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

There were no working group updates.

Chair