

COUNCIL MEETING – 14 JANUARY 2014

REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

10 December 2013

Present: Councillors Allebone (Chairman), Waters (Vice-Chairman), Bass, Blackwell, Elliott, Gough, Graves, Hawkes, Higgins, Warwick and Watts.

Also present: Mr S Wood, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs S Bateman, Senior Planning Officer, Mr A Munro, Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Mrs N Mackenzie, Economic Regeneration Officer and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors Bell and G Lawman attended the meeting as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that an apology for absence was received from Councillor L Lawman.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 be confirmed and signed.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the Economic Development activity and to provide members of the committee with the opportunity to influence priorities for the unit.

The report provided information, at Appendix 1, on the latest quarterly activity update for the period September to December 2013 and detailed projects that were due to take place between December and March 2014.

The Economic Development Framework highlighted the original four priorities of creating a vibrant town centre, tourism, improving the conditions of growth and increasing skills. In 2011 the BID had been established and this was the lead partner for town centre related activity. Council resources were therefore concentrated on improving conditions of growth and increasing skills and attainment.

The report also detailed information on how to apply for the £10,000, received by Wellingborough's Town Team from the government, to fund projects to enhance the town centre.

The report concluded with the economic development strategy implementation plan for 2013-14 which detailed the work that would be taking place.

Members raised a number of questions regarding the standards of education in the borough, asking whether GCSE results had improved, and on a perceived feeling that young peoples' aspirations had not improved, and asked whether there had been an improvement.

Mrs N Mackenzie, the Economic Regeneration Officer, informed the committee that she did not have figures in relation to the comparison of GCSE results but would obtain them for the next quarterly report. She sat on the local Young Enterprise board which encourages business to support groups of students to form and run their own company for a year.

Mr S Wood, the Head of Planning and Local Development, confirmed that education was one of the main objectives, and fostering better aspirations and ambitions was a high priority. Working with teachers to get them to encourage young people to consider different types of work in the area was the ambition.

A query was also raised about the difference between Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the work of the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP). The Economic Regeneration officer clarified that NEP was one of the 39 LEPs across the country; they were very active in the borough and were busy with the Northamptonshire growth and business plan, which future Government funding and support would be based on. The plan would need to be submitted to government by 19 December 2013.

Members asked if officers could explain the talent match programme for January 2019. The Economic Regeneration officer informed the meeting that this was an initiative being led by the HOPE centre - and an announcement of the result of their funding application for this project was awaited. The intention is that the scheme would assist 18 to 24 year olds, who had been unemployed for 2 years or more, in the Hemmingwell and Queensway areas to find employment. The committee would be informed once the result of the funding application is known.

With regard to an improved visitor economy, members asked if there had been any developments with regard to a proposed marina by Whitworths and whether anything had been submitted to 'Destination Nene Valley'. The Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that there had been input to the 'Destination Nene Valley' project but there was no further information on the marina.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the economic development activity quarterly report;
- (ii) approve the economic development framework and the priorities highlighted as a basis of activity going forward;
- (iii) approve the town team funding application form;
- (iv) approve the updated economic development action plan and the priorities highlighted within it as a basis of activity going forward.

4. ADOPTION OF STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received in response to the consultation on, and adoption of, the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for North Northamptonshire. Consultation had taken place for a period of 8 weeks from 16 August to 11 October 2013. The report detailed the consultation responses received from 21 respondents.

The North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit had produced the new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) on behalf of the partner authorities and had adopted it on 14 November 2013, with a recommendation that partner authorities also adopt it in relation to their responsibilities.

It was hoped that the streamlined version of the SCI would make it easier to use and allow local planning authorities to undertake consultation on other documents, such as supplementary planning documents in accordance with national regulations. Appended to the report was the SCI document along with a suggested amendment, as detailed within the report, to paragraph 5.12.

Members asked for clarity on 'light touch engagement' and what difference there would be if applicants failed to carry out a 'statement of local engagement'.

Mrs S Bateman, the Senior Planning Officer, clarified that an applicant could not be forced to consult and produce a statement of local engagement but would be *encouraged* to do so. The government was keen to withdraw obstacles from developments taking place.

Members also asked if employment land should remain as employment land where possible, rather than being used for residential development. The Senior Planning Officer clarified that the SCI only dealt with how people would be consulted on plans and planning applications and not the relative merits of proposals.

- R1** **RECOMMENDED** that the Statement of Community Involvement be adopted, subject to the amendment to paragraph 5.12, as detailed in the report.

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to update the committee on the Neighbourhood Plans currently being undertaken.

The report detailed the support and resources that the Planning Policy & Regeneration Team had put into helping each of the parish councils involved in preparing a neighbourhood plan.

Mr A Munro, Neighbourhood Planning Officer, updated members on the progress of the Earls Barton, Wollaston and Irchester plans. The plans were

proportionately more arduous to produce than local plans because of the amount of community involvement that was required. All were progressing slowly as a result. Earls Barton had submitted a draft of their plan for comment by the borough council planning officers. Referendum dates had been proposed for August 2014 for Earls Barton, March 2015 for Irchester and June 2015 for Wollaston.

Members raised some concern over the length of time it was taking for the neighbourhood plans to be completed, as planning applications for large developments were being proposed which would be heard before the plans were in place. The Neighbourhood Planning Officer informed the committee that the Planning Inspectorate had indicated that emerging plans were not taken into consideration when determining applications. Concern was also expressed over the delay in developing Stanton Cross and Wellingborough North and the lack of a 5 year deliverable housing supply. Members considered that strong representations should be made to the government regarding the use and importance that should be given to emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

RESOLVED that the update on the progress being made on Neighbourhood Plans, along with the resources allocated to them, be noted.

6. OFF-STREET PARKING ORDER AMENDMENT – MARKET PLACE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the recent consultation in relation to a proposed amendment to the off-street parking order.

A public notice advertising the consultation on the Off-Street Parking Amendment Order had been placed in the Northants Telegraph on 10 October 2013 and letters had been sent to statutory consultees, market traders and surrounding businesses. The report detailed the comments received, along with the response of the Market Working Group.

The Head of Planning and Local Development informed the committee that following the concern of traders about the parking of their trailers, consideration was being given to whether a lock-up compound could be provided within the High Street car park.

RESOLVED that the off-street parking order amendment be approved and implemented.

- In concluding the meeting, the Chairman wished everyone a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.10pm.