

Chairman - Councillor W J Kemp

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

J A Barron
A G Cooper
B M Cross
A S Harp

P A Leason
B McKeown
G P K Pardesi
M Phillips

Also present:-

Cabinet Member - Councillor F Beatty - Economic Development and
Planning Portfolio

Cabinet Member - Councillor J M Pert - Community and Health Portfolio

Cabinet Member - Councillor R M Smith - Resources Portfolio

Officers in attendance:-

Mr R Simpson	-	Head of Operations
Dr T Redpath	-	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager
Miss M Smith	-	Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager
Miss J McCloy	-	Deputy Chief Accountant
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr A Bailey	-	Scrutiny Officer

EDP40 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 October 2020, as published in Digest No 266, were submitted and signed.

EDP41 Economic Recovery – Progress Update

The Committee considered a report that updated the Committee on the update progress made on the Economic Recovery workstream as part of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular the Reopening High Streets Safely initiatives.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager introduced the report by explaining that the Borough Council had worked in partnership with stakeholders and communities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and was now planning the longer-term recovery of the Borough.

The Committee were informed that the Council's Economic Growth Strategy 2020-2025 (which was developed by stakeholders within the Stafford Growth, Regeneration and Infrastructure Partnership) had been reviewed and the associated Implementation Plan amended to include a focus on economic recovery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Implementation Plan was reported to Cabinet on 8 October 2020 and the SGRIP group continue to deliver the agreed actions.

From June 2020 the Council were eligible to claim funding via the Reopening High Streets Safely scheme and two new workstreams around business support and marketing were created. Following a period of recruitment and procurement those two areas of work are now up and running.

Following the introduction, the Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Planning Portfolio) and the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager:-

- Clarification on the number of businesses forced to close as a result of the pandemic
- Clarification of the number of businesses remaining in Stafford Town Centre
- An explanation of the recruitment process and duties for the two new Business Support Officer positions
- The need to consider what a future town centre would look like post COVID
- Details of the businesses currently being contacted by the Council to offer funding advice
- The future trends for businesses to continue trading after the Pandemic
- An outline of the criteria used to identify the 341 businesses in the local retail market
- An explanation of the discretionary grants available to local businesses during the Pandemic
- Details of future marketing campaigns and the need to shop local

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the report be noted.

EDP42 **Fees and Charges Review 2021**

This matter had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 5 November 2020 and was submitted to this Committee for consultation.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance (V1 20/20/20) in relation to proposed Fees and Charges for 2021.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Head of Operations and Deputy Chief Accountant:-

- An explanation of Stone Town Council decision to subsidise car parking charges in Stone until Christmas 2020
- Details of Stafford Indoor Market charges during both Lockdowns
- The reasons as to why the outdoor market could not operate during the Lockdowns

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the decision of the Cabinet as set out in Minute No CAB121/20, regarding the proposed Fees and Charges for 2021 be noted.

EDP43 **Corporate Business Plan 2021 – 2024 Consultation**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager (V1 2/11/2020) in relation to the refresh of the Corporate Business Plan for 2021 – 2024.

The Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager explained that this was the second iteration of the Corporate Business Plan in this format and it detailed the Council's aspirations for economic growth, community wellbeing, financial sustainability and incorporates a new business objective that focused upon climate change and green recovery.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Cabinet Member (Community and Health Portfolio), the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager and the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager:-

- An explanation of the methods of raising awareness of the consultation for the Corporate Business Plan
- The possibility of reducing the wording in the Corporate Business Objectives
- An explanation of the areas of deprivation in the Borough
- Confirmation that crime levels were below the National average in the Borough
- The new jobs created at Redhill business Park
- An explanation that minimum Housing Standards would be considered as part of the New Local Plan

- An outline of the Stafford Brooks Project
- The deadline for the Council to become a Carbon Neutral Authority
- The difficulties in providing the amount of affordable housing stipulated in the Planning White paper
- An update on the Garden Communities Programme
- An update on the numbers of rough sleepers in Stafford and Stone
- An explanation of the work involved in supporting vulnerable people

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the report be noted.

EDP44 Performance Reporting 2019-20

The Committee considered the performance and financial management details for those areas within the remit of the Committee for the quarter 2 period up to 30 September 2020.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Cabinet Member (Economic Development and Planning Portfolio), the Head of Operations, the Health and Housing Manager, the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager, the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager and the Deputy Chief Accountant:-

- 1.2.1 – Delivery of the Stafford Town Centre Strategic Framework – an outline of the available funding streams
- An explanation of the Planning and Regeneration Forecast Outturn
- Clarification of staffing variations and recruitment
- A description of the Government’s proposed scheme of reimbursement
- An explanation of Growth Point
- A description of the Pearl Brook Path Improvements
- An outline of the Stafford Town Centre Enhancements

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the performance and financial management data relating to areas of activity within this Committee’s remit be noted.

EPD45 Work Programme - Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

Considered the report of the Head of Law and Administration, which presented the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme for forthcoming meetings up to February 2021.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the Work Programme with the Cabinet Member (Community and Health Portfolio) and the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager:-

- The ways of holding Staffordshire County Council to account for the spending of Section 106 funds in the local area
- The Community Infrastructure Levy
- The response from Staffordshire County Council in relation to the Committee's request for them to review the provision of public transportation, particularly in rural areas of Stafford Borough

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Work Programme be noted, subject to the amendments made at the meeting.

CHAIR