

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R Ward (Chair)

Councillors G Bentley, C Brady, J Davies, B Emery, K Flunder, A Hart, N Hawkins, I Herdman, L Page, H Plimley, D Price, J Redfern, P Roberts, J Salt, H Sheldon MBE and I Whitehouse

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor N Yates, C J S Atkins, M A Deaville, E Fallows, M Gledhill, K J Jackson, I Lawson, L A Malyon, I Plant, J Porter, S E Ralphs MBE, P Routledge, S Scalise and E Wain

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Aberley and K Hoptroff

9 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

Councillor Yates substituted for Councillor Hoptroff.

10 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

At this point of the meeting, Cllr Brady advised the Panel that he had not received the response to his supplementary question in relation to Parkwood Leisure raised at the previous meeting. Councillor Deaville confirmed that he would look into this and ensure a written response was provided to Councillor Brady.

DECIDED – That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel held on 22 July November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY. (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).**

There were no urgent items.

12 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

Agenda Item	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda Item 7 – Covid-19 Pandemic - Reinstatement of Services and Economic Recovery.	Cllrs. Flunder & Deaville and Price	Other – Had received a Small Business Grant.

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QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

Q1. Question Received from Councillor Malyon

“Could I ask if the person who told officers to do this (creation of a Council Member Permit Holder parking space) will be asked to compensate the Council the costs of this work, and apologise to the Leader, Council and the people of Staffordshire Moorlands for the embarrassment caused.”

Councillor Wain apologised, the parking space had been removed and he confirmed that he would repay the costs after he had received a detailed breakdown. The Portfolio Holder wished to point out that he had assisted the Council as far as possible and had rarely claimed expenses over the past 30 years.

Q2. Question received from Cllr Price

“Could the Council please be informed of the costs of both the painting and subsequent removal - after only a few days - of the ‘Council Member Permit Holder Only’ parking space in Silk Street carpark in Leek?”

The Portfolio Holder explained that the costs associated with the parking space were £545 plus VAT. He had requested a full breakdown of the cost.

Councillor Price thanked Councillor Wain for his response and commented further on the culture of the Council and the decision making process.

Q3. Question received from Cllr Page

“Can the Service Delivery O&S Panel be provided with a full detailed register of all SMDC assets? To include all property including, but not limited to, bus shelters, street lighting, benches, signage, parks etc. In addition all maintenance records for the last five years and for the next 2 years should be provided.”

Response:

The Council’s Asset Register is kept by the Finance Team is a matter of record and can be provided to the panel. The Council’s spend on Repair and Maintenance across the assets is published yearly in the accounts and budgets are set in the Medium Term Financial Plan. Compiling records of minor spend as well as other records such as emails authorising works, invoices and other records would amount to weeks of work for multiple officers depending on the level of detail required. If members of the panel have a specific question or requirement regarding an asset, officers will deal with it appropriately.

By way of supplementary question, Councillor Page asked how he could request a copy of the Asset Register and should an asset require attention who should he inform. Councillor Wain replied and suggested he contacted Katy Webster – Head of Assets, Sarah Porru – Head of Regeneration or the Democratic Services Team.

Q4. Question received from Cllr Salt

“When will Biddulph receive and how much will Biddulph Town Council be awarded for its Artisan market for this financial year 2020-2021?”

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Response: A payment of £2k will be made to Biddulph Town Council w/c 14th September 2020.

Councillor Salt wished to ascertain how the grant for Biddulph compared to Leek and Cheadle and the basis the grants were calculated. This information would be provided after the meeting.

14 COVID-19 PANDEMIC - REINSTATEMENT OF SERVICES AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

Alicia Patterson – Head of Environmental Health and Sarah Porru – Head of Regeneration, introduced a report which identified the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery and noted the plans that were being put in place for recovery.

Whilst some elements of the COVID-19 response continued to be ongoing, a recovery response had been initiated so services would be ready as lockdown restrictions began to be eased. Work therefore commenced in the planning of the Council's recovery in late April.

The proposed response had been categorised into five work streams. These work streams were:

- Reinstatement of services;
- Economic recovery;
- Community recovery;
- Financial recovery; and
- Advantages of the positive legacy.

The purpose of the report was to consider the recovery process as it had developed so far, for the following work streams relative to this Panels area of activity:

- Reinstatement of Services,
- Economic Recovery,

The report set out the recovery work that had been undertaken to date and the planned work going forward. The Panel was encouraged to highlight any areas that required further consideration.

Members thanked the Officers for the comprehensive report and raised the following questions/queries:-

Availability of face- to- face service at Receptions - For safety to be ensured, Receptions remained closed to members of the public. Customer Advisors triaged enquiries and in special circumstances could arrange one to one appointments. It was the responsibility of Biddulph Town Council to decide as to whether to open the Town Hall building to the public.

Forum for town centre recovery arrangements:- The composition of this forum was queried, as some members thought that the representatives should have been selected by the Town Councils.

Additional support and guidance for community venues & events – The Council was working with community type businesses. All event organisers had been offered

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support to ensure events were Covid-19 safe, that Track and Trace was in place and events would be closely monitored. The guidance on the Council's website was due to be updated and would include clear guidelines for events.

Small Business Grants – The criteria for the grants was clarified and it was confirmed that the Council had done as much as possible to ensure all eligible businesses had been contacted and supported. The deadline for applications would be checked after the meeting.

Future High Street Fund and loss of income due to free car parking in August – Unfortunately, the application for the Future High Street Fund in Cheadle had been unsuccessful. However, the Council had been invited to take part in a Task Force Project. This had been postponed, and upon commencement of the project, Cheadle Town Council would be notified. The data relating to the free car parking in August was currently being analysed, and once completed, this information would be circulated to the Panel.

Outbreak Control Board – Councillor Deaville emphasised the importance of issues being reported and two way communication. He gave assurance that the Director of Public Health at Staffordshire County Council acted immediately to intelligence/concerns. Members were thanked for their diligence and the Environmental Health Team for its swift response to any matters of concern.

Parking Review – The Car Parking Strategy was part of the Corporate Plan and it was anticipated that consultation would take place with town councils, economic groups and other stakeholders this Autumn. Councillor Ralphs clarified the make up of the Forum which primarily focussed on free car parking in August, two meetings had taken place and a final meeting to conclude would be held on 18th September 2020.

Covid-19 Test Centres – Councillor Deaville advised that the situation in the Moorlands was much better than currently reported nationally on the news. After the meeting, he would send details of a County Council App to order a test on-line, the location of the testing centres and any relevant testing data. Testing had taken place locally and positive feedback had been received. Councillor Atkins informed the Panel that Staffordshire County Council had commissioned laboratory work to be undertaken at the University Hospitals of North Midlands.

Registration of new food business – The Head of Environmental Health explained that in the region of 40 new food businesses had been created since 'lockdown' and each of these had received a telephone call to offer advice and support. She would look into additional publicity to raise the profile of the star rating scheme.

A member also expressed their concern in relation to paragraph 8.28 of the report as it was thought that there were some significant implications in the way in which the Council would operate its planning functions. There was also some disappointment around the climate change element of the report and it was requested this was revisited.

DECIDED:

The Panel:-

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- 1) **NOTE** the details of the Council's recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic as outlined in the report;
- 2) **SUPPORT** the proposed recovery plans outlined in the report;
- 3) **IDENTIFIED** areas of activity which required further consideration.

15 **PLANNING WHITE PAPER**

Councillor Wain – Portfolio Holder – Planning, Development and Property and Ben Haywood – Head of Development Services, introduced a report which appraised Members of:

- a. recent changes to the planning system enacted in the Business and Planning Act 2020
- b. proposed changes to the current Planning System as set out in the Government Consultation Document Published 6 August 2020
- c. proposed changes as set out in the White Paper "Planning for the Future" which was published for consultation by Government on 6th August 2020

The Panel was also asked to consider the Council's response to the consultations and key issues and concerns were highlighted. Due to the level of information to be considered, it was suggested that a seminar was convened for all members to be invited to attend.

The Business and Planning Bill received Royal Assent on 22 July 2020. It introduced a series of changes to planning legislation intended to help businesses, particularly in the hard-hit hospitality and construction sectors, to get back to work safely and quickly. The key changes and implication were detailed in the report.

The consultation also set out proposals for measures to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system. The 4 main proposals included:

- changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need
- for First Homes to be secured through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system
- support for small and medium-sized builders by temporarily lifting the small sites threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing
- extension of the current Permission in Principle to major development

The proposed changes to the current planning system would update the standard methodology in the assessment of housing requirements and the White Paper, titled "Planning for the Future", set out a series of high-level reforms to streamline and modernise the planning process. Key changes were summarised in the report.

The Chair thanked all officers involved with the preparation of this report and Members made the following comments:-

- It was hoped that a number of the proposals would not be included in the final policy;
- Issues had been identified well in the report;

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- This was an enormous change and would take a long time to establish;
- Small local authorities may not have the skill sets around 'beautiful' design and sustainable places which could lead to a number of issues;
- Concern in relation to paragraph 5.7 - Demolition and Rebuilding for Residential, particularly in the Biddulph area and extension of the opening of holiday parks;
- Major concern around permitted development rights and loss of local input in regard to planning applications;
- In some cases some of the proposals were a backward step;
- Agreed there was a requirement for member training;
- Very little time to make comments;
- For the Councils response to include a section on the protection of nature, climate resilience and more emphasis on living alongside nature.

A member of the Panel requested that the data from the most recent housing need survey be provided by ward as she was very concerned about the figure being set nationally. Mark James – Principal Planning Officer, explained that housing need surveys were specific to parishes and related to affordable housing need in the short term. The Council did have a Strategic Housing Market Assessment which set out housing needs for the Local Plan, based on the Government's previous methodology. For the Staffordshire Moorlands this was 320 homes per year. However, if the proposals within the white paper were agreed, the figure for the number homes in the future would be set nationally.

Ben Haywood – Head of Development Services, gave assurance around the permitted development rights as these would still be subjected to a prior approval process. The Council would have control over the appearance and residential amenity of a development and additional protections such as listed buildings would remain in place.

To separate seminars would be arranged for members. The first would be arranged as soon as possible, and the second towards the end of October to consider the white paper.

DECIDED:

That the Panel **NOTE** the report and **RECOMMEND** delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place) to prepare a final response to both consultations based on the attached summary tables, incorporating any comments of the Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet and to submit them to Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government before the end of the consultation periods.

16 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its Work Programme and agreed the items listed, subject to, the number of fly-tips and prosecutions be incorporated in the AES Annual Performance Update.

DECIDED: That the Work Programme for 2012-21 be agreed.

17 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.**

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At this point in the meeting discussion took place around the agenda item relating to the call-in of the Cabinet decision to dispose of Plot 12-15 Victoria business Park being considered in exempt session.

A vote was taken and it was decided by the Panel, that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting and the report be dealt with confidentially.

18 **CALL-IN OF THE CABINET DECISION IN RELATION TO THE DISPOSAL OF PLOT 12-15 VICTORIA BUSINESS PARK**

The Panel gave its consideration to a call-in report on the Cabinet decision in relation to the disposal of Plot 12-15 Victoria Business Park.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

_____Chairman _____Date