

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R Ward (Chair)

Councillors G Bentley, J Davies, B Emery, K Flunder, N Hawkins, I Herdman, K Hoptroff, L Page, D Price, J Redfern, P Roberts, J Salt and H Sheldon MBE.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor K J Jackson, I Whitehouse, J Porter and S Scalise.

APOLOGIES: Councillors C Brady, P Elkin, A Hart and H Plimley.

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

Councillor Jackson was substitute member for Councillor Brady and Councillor Whitehouse was substitute member for Councillor Elkin.

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

DECIDED – That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel held on 3 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were none.

75 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

| Agenda No. | Member Declaring Interest | Nature of Interest |
|--|---|---|
| Item 9 and 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wharf Road Strategic Development- Tunstall Road Masterplan | Cllrs Davies, Emery, Flunder, Hoptroff, Roberts and Whitehouse. | Other – Members of the Planning Applications Committee. |
| Item 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wharf Road Strategic Development Site | Cllr Flunder | Other – County Councillor for this area. |

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|-----------------------------------|--------------|---|
| | Cllr Salt | Other – Son attends the school which has use of the playing fields. |
| Item 13 - Acquisition Strategy | Cllr Jackson | Other – Friend of the owner of the Mill Quarter, Leek. |

76 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

Question from Councillor Hoptroff:

Q1. Wheelchair and mobility scooter uses have several problems around Leek Town centre and no doubt around the rest of the Moorlands. One of these is the lack of accessible toilets at night. Several pubs and restaurants have no disabled toilets, mostly due to the layout of the properties being in old buildings that can't be adapted. This restricts users in their choices of venues to visit and visiting the town centre at night in general.

Is it possible and feasible to open up disabled toilets at night with Radar key access? I know this may not be possible on Silk Street without a lot of cost and alterations to the shutters. But where possible and with the planned refurbishment of the bus station toilets could this be an option?

This will go some way into creating a wheelchair friendly town.

Response:

The door is going to be widened to modern standards for disabled or "accessible" users and will be accessed with a radar key during normal opening hours. The override lock is electric and automatic and therefore there is potential to programme this to close later than the current closing time of the WCs – 6pm.

However, we do have longstanding issues of anti-social use of these WCs. Radar keys themselves may not keep the accessible WCs exclusive as they are easily purchased online. Anyone with a radar key would have access.

When the new WCs open, we could trial a later opening of this particular toilet until say 11pm for a period, but I think we would have to see how this goes. If the WCs are being misused and vandalised we would probably need to revert to closing them earlier again.

By way of supplementary questions, Councillor Hoptroff asked which toilets this response related to and when the works would be completed.

Councillor Scalise advised that this response related to the bus station toilets, the quotes for the work had recently been received and a date for the commencement of the works would be emailed to members.

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Question from Councillor Cawley:

- Q2.** I note a report a few days ago in the national press about physical activity and health outcomes. The report indicated that even a small increase in physical activity among older people can improve health and increase longevity reducing the possibility of use of primary and acute health services resulting in considerable savings to the NHS.

I further note that SMDC has in place a Physical Activity and Sport Strategy- Towards an active Staffordshire Moorlands 2017 and beyond I am assuming that the document became policy in October 2016.

Given that its 3 years into the strategy I wondered how the targets in the three year old report are being met? And if the objectives referred to in the report are not being met what obstacles exist impeding their progress

Response:

This Council's Sport & Physical Activity strategy, "Towards an active Staffordshire Moorlands 2017-2021" was adopted by Cabinet in June 2017, an update was then provided to this Committee in September 2018 detailing our progress in its first year.

Our strategy seeks during its life to encourage 4,000 more residents to become active, identifies key areas of priority as: women and girls, people with a limiting illness or disability, people aged 55 years and over, people in lower social grades and children and young people (aged 5 to 18). In addition we have committed to delivering based approaches to increase activity levels in six areas; Leek (North), Biddulph (East), Cheadle, Forsbrook, Cellarhead and Endon.

A method of monitoring is difficult, one method is by using the Sport England Active Lives Survey, which is undertaken every year and based is on questionnaire responses from a random sample size of 1,000 people. Data for 2018-19 is unfortunately not yet available but we do know that:

- the percentage of residents classed as inactive (those who are active 30 mins or less per week) fell in 2017-18 to 33.3% of our population, from 34.8% in 2015-16.
- the percentage of residents classed as being active (those who undertake 150 mins of activity or more per week) rose to 56.7% in 2017-18 from 52.5% in 2015-16.

There is a vast amount of work happening across the Staffordshire Moorlands to address physical activity levels and targets. In 2018-19, we also:

- increased the attendance levels at our leisure centres in 2018-19 to 899,510 attendances from 898,096 in 2017-18 (please note the 2018-19 figures were affected by some site closures for essential maintenance works),
- supported four voluntary organisations or clubs in obtaining funding for projects,
- obtained £50,000 ourselves in external funding,

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- supported the delivery of a skate park and play area for Cheadle Town Council at the Tean Rd recreation ground,
- installed a new skate park at Brough Park,
- continued to support our Sports Councils and refreshed this work including revising our sports grants scheme,
- completed an initial review of our leisure facilities, this has informed us as these should be improved in the future, further work will continue on this project, a report is due to be presented to this Committee in November providing a further update.

To deliver our strategy we need to create new and improve on existing partnerships, we will continue to work with our sports clubs, associations and volunteers as all play a key part in supporting our aspirations to change behaviour and encourage increased activity levels.

An update report from Officers is scheduled in the forward plan for this Panel, this will provide a more comprehensive update on all the excellent work being undertaken and give a clearer picture of the progress being made, whilst enabling members to challenge and scrutinise accordingly.

Questions from Councillor Yates:

- Q3.** The Biddulph Town Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is aware that a letter was sent from Urban Vision to Dai Lerner querying a number of issues in relation to the development of the Local Plan. Concern was raised about the apparent disparities between the two documents, despite a number of opportunities for officers to be engaged with the process. To date, no response has been received by the consultant. As a statutory planning body, the Working Group is particularly interested in the following point:

We are concerned that relevant evidence supplied to officers in February and again in May has not been taken into account. This includes the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust ecological and environmental mapping, which provides more detailed and up-to-date information than the evidence that SMDC is using, which dates from 2015-2016.

Will all this information be acknowledged and submitted by SMDC as part of Local Plan information sent to the Inspector to enable him to make the correct decision?

Response:

Officers have engaged with the Town Council on the preparation of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Consultation on modifications to the Local Plan will commence shortly. Consultees will be able to submit supporting information to their responses for consideration by the Inspector provided that they relate to the modifications to the Local Plan.

- Q4.** We understand that the country parks and open green spaces owned by SMDC are in the process of being transferred to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust: What is the progress on the transfer, and can you provide a comprehensive list of the land affected?

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Response:

We are pursuing the management transfer of eleven sites to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The project will deliver approximately £54,000 per annum of savings to this authority by reducing the overall management cost of the sites. In transferring the management to this charitable organisation, who specialise in conservation and wildlife management, the sites will benefit from their expertise and ability to tap into funding pots not open to local authorities to further improve these sites.

The sites proposed to transfer under this arrangement are as follows:

- Biddulph Grange Country Park
- Ladderedge Country Park
- Wetley Moor Common SSSI
- Brough Park Fields LNR
- Marshes Hill Common LNR and SBI
- Cecily Brook LNR
- Hales Hall Pool LNR
- Whitemoor LNR
- Hoften's Cross LNR and SBI
- Biddulph Valley Way
- Newpool Meadows

There are no plans to transfer the management of any other open spaces to the Wildlife Trust.

The transfer of management to SWT is dependent on them taking over the management for all eleven sites. Wetley Moor is a site jointly owned by SMDC and SOTCC, and whilst SOTCC Officers have advised they would be happy to transfer the freehold of this site to SMDC, member approval for the transfer is yet to be obtained. We have obtained agreement with Brown Edge Parish Council in regards to Marshes Hill Common enabling this site to be included in the transfer plans. We are working with Biddulph Town Council to develop a lease for the operation and management of the visitor centre at Biddulph Grange Country Park, the remainder of the site will transfer to SWT. All other sites are in the direct control and ownership of SMDC.

In order to complete the project and deliver the savings target, we will continue to work with colleagues at SOTCC to enable the transfer to occur.

77 **ALLIANCE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (AES) ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION.**

Kevin Melling and Jane Thomason from Alliance Environmental Services, introduced a presentation on the following subject areas:-

- Introduction
- Financial Summary
- Key Performance Indicators 2018-19
- Waste Performance
- Strategic Outlook
- Employee Success

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- Community Engagement
- Waste Service Transformation
- Trials of Lower Carbon Fleet
- External Outlook
- Summary and Next Steps

Members asked where plastics collected by the Council were sent to and in response, the Panel was advised that as recyclables were a commodity, the location changed on a monthly basis but in general they were sent to places in the UK and Europe. Items which could not be recycled were processed at the incinerator in Stoke which produced electricity.

Queries were raised around the strength of the signal for the in-cab technology and if there was the capability for these systems to record pot holes and send the information to the County Council. It was confirmed that the technology was being developed, there were some areas where the signal was weak but overall, the in-cab technology could record real time information. The management and volume of the data which could be recorded and provided to the County Council was an issue at present.

Discussion took place around the use of hydrogen to power vehicles, household waste recycling centres, increased engagement with universities and businesses and community engagement.

Members asked if there were plans for the Council's Grounds Maintenance to be transferred to AES and if the size of the bins which contained the non recyclable waste at HPBC had been reduced. Officers explained that the final phase of the transfer to AES would incorporate the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services. A decision had not been made to change the size of the bin referred to at HPBC and as the recycling performance was lower, staff raised awareness and encouraged residents to make behavioural changes in relation to their refuse.

It had been brought to some members' attention that there was a possibility of green waste being chargeable and food waste to be collected separately. Some members thought that all types of waste should be reduced, and were concerned about the variety of plastics used and if there could be any uniformity. At present, there were no aspirations to change collection methodology, there wouldn't be any major changes to the Refuse Collection Service until the national strategy was fully understood and this Panel would have the opportunity to scrutinise any proposals. The Government were trying to address uniformity of services across the Country and the possible taxation of plastic producers.

The composting process and education for those people which disposed of their refuse incorrectly was also explained to the Panel.

A Councillor enquired if the Christmas collection dates had been prepared and how residents would access this information. Nicola Kemp advised, that this information was currently being prepared and would be available on the Council's website and sent to Parish Councils.

The Panel was reminded of the visit to the Materials Recovery Facility at Shotton in Deeside.

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Members congratulated the representatives from AES on the performance of the organisation and the Chair gave his thanks for the informative presentation and thorough responses to questions.

DECIDED: That the presentation be noted.

78 ALLIANCE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT.

The purpose of the report is to brief the Panel on the performance of Alliance Environmental Services Ltd (AES) during 2018/19.

Since 1st July 2018 waste collection, waste communications and fleet services had all been delivered by AES.

Performance reports together with supporting evidence were issued to the Service Commissioning team on a monthly basis to enable the AES's performance to be monitored. Monthly contract meetings were held with officers of the Council and AES, at these the monthly performance reports were reviewed and discussed in detail to ensure performance was on track to meet the agreed target.

In addition, two AES Commissioning Board meetings were held during each financial year. These meetings were attended by the Council's Portfolio Holder for the Environment and High Peak Borough Council's Executive Councillor for Climate Change, Environment and Community Safety. The board meeting held on the 15th August enabled attendees to challenge AES in regards to their previous year's performance ahead of their attendance at this Panel.

A total of eight Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) were monitored for waste services in 2018/19 and an additional six for fleet management. The key results to note in 2018/19 were detailed within the report.

DECIDED: That the Panel **NOTED** the performance of Alliance Environmental Services Ltd (AES) during 2018/19.

79 WHARF ROAD STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITE

(Councillor Roberts left the room as he had declared an "other" interest)

Sara Porru, Head of Regeneration introduced a report which informed Councillors of the Wharf Road masterplan, which had been prepared to assist with the delivery of the emerging Local Plan.

As part of the Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme, Sanderson Weatherall were commissioned in September 2018 to complete a masterplan for the Wharf Road Strategic Development area identified in the emerging Local Plan (DSB1).

The basis for commissioning the masterplan was based on several objectives:

- Assist delivery of the Local Plan
- Bring together the landowners with a co-ordinated vision for the site
- Devise a strategic vision for the site which could then be

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promoted to developers and investors.

As part of the masterplan process, a review of the housing market found limited interest from private sector developers. The research suggested that this was due to Biddulph being a secondary location in comparison to larger towns such as Congleton and Tunstall which offered more amenities and job opportunities. Consequently, the consultants found the sales rates anticipated for new build at Wharf Road would be slightly lower given its rural location and poor public transport links. The consultants also identified it was possibly not a lack of demand, but also lack of development opportunities. No land had been allocated for new residential development since the 1998 Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan identified suitable land for 3802 homes across the whole the Staffordshire Moorlands over the Local Plan period.

Three options were developed for the site, in line with the emerging Local Plan DSB1 policy. The options focused, not on what should be delivered in terms of residential dwellings or mix, but where on the site it should be located.

Options 1 & 2 focused the retail/ employment element of the scheme to the north of the site, whilst option 3 identified an area in the south of the site for this use.

The Council's preferred option 3 would potentially deliver approximately 471 residential units (including land to the east of Meadow Way) and an additional 145 residential dwellings with the land at BDNEW. Subsequently, following post hearing comments from the Local Plan Inspector in December 2018, the area of land known as BDNEW, which lies to the West of the Biddulph Valley Way had been deleted by the Council (in June 2019) as a Local Plan allocation. The Wharf Road Masterplan had already been commissioned and was nearing completion before the inspector sent his comments to the Council. The completed masterplan therefore recognised this change by providing two options, including and excluding BDNEW.

Some Members felt that discussions should still take place with land owners and were keen to have a better understanding of the areas of land which had caused difficulties. The Panel was advised, that it was not appropriate to discuss ownership of land in a public meeting.

Discussion took place around the old school site, County Council's involvement, location of the retail area and extra care units and access points. Members from the Biddulph area stressed the importance of the retail element of the site being positioned at the North of the site.

A Member of the Panel was pleased that this masterplan had come forward but had concerns about openness and wished to ensure that local people and Councillors were involved in the process. In his opinion, the development site didn't fit in with the Neighbourhood Plan for Biddulph and Officers advised that the plan for Wharf Road was inline with the policies set out in the Local Plan. A meeting would take place in Biddulph in relation to masterplans as they would be subject to consultation, if adopted.

Councillor Salt was very worried about the alleged sale of land owned by the County Council and requested that it was noted that she didn't support the masterplan for the Wharf Road development site due to the BDNEW site and the playing fields.

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Officers were asked if this masterplan would be reviewed independently and Officers advised the Panel, that it wouldn't be subject to a public enquiry. If the masterplan was recommended for adoption, further public consultation would take place, followed by a decision made at a meeting of Full Council.

DECIDED:

- 1) That the comments made by Members of the Panel in relation to this masterplan were **NOTED** by Officers;
- 2) The Panel **RECOMMENDED CABINET NOTED** the findings of the masterplan and at this time do not commission further work.

80 **TUNSTALL ROAD MASTERPLAN.**

The Panel gave its consideration to a report which informed Councillors of the Tunstall Road masterplan, which had been prepared to assist with the delivery of the emerging Local Plan.

As part of the Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme, Sanderson Weatherall were commissioned in September 2018 to complete a masterplan for the Tunstall Road Strategic Development area identified in the emerging Local plan for a mixed use development. The basis for commissioning the masterplan was based on several objectives contained within the report.

The masterplan suggested the site was most suited to a housing mix of two and three-bedroom medium to high density dwellings which needed to incorporate the projected 33% affordable housing. The research highlighted a lower level in demand for social rented properties than ownership and therefore suggests that the affordable housing provision may be better suited to ownership options such as shared ownership and staircasing.

The masterplan also considered that delivery of the adjacent industrial site provided evidence of market demand and developer interest for employment use and that this allocation could be effectively considered as the next phase of employment development in this location. Knowledge gained from business enquiries and the businesses expressing interest in Victoria Business Park suggested a range of industrial unit sizes from 2,000- 10,000 sqft could be delivered on this site.

Three options were developed for the site, in line with the emerging Local Plan DSB3 policy. Details of each option were provided in the Executive Summary at Appendix 1.

Following a review of the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme; analysis of the options relevant to the strategic objectives of the brief; and a review of the information event feedback option 03 had been chosen as the preferred option. Details of the preferred option were included within the report.

The masterplan also considered viability of development and a strategy for delivery. This considered opportunities for promotion of a private led scheme with some level of public sector support. Land assembly options were also considered. The site was within several ownerships and further engagement with landowners may be necessary to move forward with delivery.

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The delivery strategy issues highlighted at 3.7 of the report would be considered and a further report would be presented to this Panel recommending actions required to bring forward development.

Some Members of the Panel raised their concerns in relation to the public consultation for this site, in particular for the residents of Victoria Row and felt that their comments hadn't been taken into account. In response, the Officers advised that a high proportion of the residents from Victoria Row had responded to the consultation. Overall, 3 separate sessions were held which resulted in 293 comments, and 243 of these were supportive.

Clarification on the evidence for Option 3 to indicate that this option was the most viable was requested. It was explained that a full business case analysis had been undertaken which set out which option was most financially viable and attractive to potential developers. Members would also have the opportunity to scrutinise the masterplan after the Local Plan Enquiry had taken place.

Councillor Salt requested that it was noted that she didn't agree that Option 3 was the best option for this development site. Further details on the number of Victoria Row residents which had expressed Option 3 as their preferred option was also requested. Details would be provided after the meeting.

The following comments were also made by Councillors:-

- That the access to the industrial area was in the correct location;
- The boundary screening may not be adequate;
- Two access roads off Mill Hayes Road were not necessary;
- For the industrial units to be moved further away from the residential areas;
- The scheme was unimaginative, there was a lack of connectivity and active frontages were needed.

DECIDED: The Panel **NOTED** the findings of the Tunstall Road masterplan.

81 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its Work Programme and agreed the items listed.

DECIDED: That the Work Programme for 2019-20 be agreed.

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

DECIDED:-

That pursuant to Section 100A (2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that exempt information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the paragraphs indicated

83 **INVESTMENT AND ACQUISITION STRATEGY.**

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The Panel considered a report which updated Councillors on the findings and recommendations of an Investment and Acquisition Strategy.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

_____Chairman _____Date