

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R Ward (Chair)

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Atkins, B Cawley, S Coleman, M Gledhill, T Holmes, I Plant, S Ralphs MBE, P Routledge, L Swindlehurst and P Wood

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Salt

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

DECIDED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Panel held on 29 January 2020 be **APPROVED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were no urgent items of business.

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

Councillor Atkins substituted for Councillor Salt.

4 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

No declarations of interest were made.

5 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.**

Question from Councillor Hoptroff:

Q1. How are the Disabled Facility Grants being used to promote independent living at home for those with disabilities?

Response:

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's as commonly known) are used for 2 primary purposes; for the funding of mandatory applications for adaptations to assist the applicant to remain living independently in their own home, and for funding discretionary schemes where the budget allows to help individuals with disabilities to move to more suitable accommodation or to

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provide access for the wider disabled community facilities where no such provision currently exists.

To facilitate this, the Council work with other Staffordshire Authorities and the County Council, in partnership with our service provider Millbrook Healthcare, to ensure that our residents can access suitable care advice and where required obtain suitable funding for necessary adaptations to their home. The scheme is promoted through the District and County Councils, and directly by Millbrook Healthcare, to try and reach the widest possible groups of people.

Through the partnership, applicants can access a wide range of adaptations, from ramps and external alterations to level access showers, specialist toilets and baths, stair-lifts, through-floor lifts and even property extensions to accommodate their needs.

By way of supplementary questions, Cllr. Hoptroff asked whether the reported budget underspend of £540,000 was denying support to people in need and what action could be taken if so?

Cllr. Ralphs responded to say that the underspend was due to less claims than anticipated having been received and that it was for members to convey the message that applications were welcomed.

Question from Councillor Brady:

Q2. In view of the financial support Parkwood Community Leisure has received from SMDC during lockdown, what talks have been held with Parkwood to initiate outdoor fitness activities over the summer months and what activities are now being held to promote family physical wellbeing throughout the Staffordshire Moorlands?

Response:

Parkwood have undertaken some initial customer consultation via their Facebook pages to understand what level of interest there might be, following a positive response they are including plans for such sessions ready for the centres to re-open. Government and national governing body guidance must be fully considered when planning such activities to ensure the safety of participants.

With regards to other works promoting physical activity and sport, the Council has supported over 20 different community organisations, clubs and groups in the Moorlands during lockdown to access more than £200,000 external funding to help them survive and plan for the future. We have also recently submitted further funding applications amounting to approximately £15,000 in partnership with 3 community organisations to offer additional support to them over the next 6 months. In addition, government guidance now enables sports to restart on 15 July and we are supporting clubs where possible to re-establish sessions where it is safe to do so.

By way of supplementary questions, Cllr. Brady asked where the £182,000 paid by SMDC to Parkwood Community Leisure between March and June

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2020 gone to, and that specific plans were unclear. It was important not to waste the good weather in terms of outdoor exercise.

Cllr. Ralphs said that SMDC were helping Parkwood in the re-opening process. It was unclear what they can and can't do. Extensive works had been done at all 3 sites during lockdown. A further detailed written response would be issued to all Panel members.

Question from Councillor Atkins:

Q3, Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the Planning Service. It is recommended that Planning Authorities should publish a Local Enforcement Plan. Do we have one and how can the public access it?

Response:

Yes, the Council does have an Enforcement Plan which was adopted by the Planning Applications Committee for a trial period. That period has now ended and we will be bringing a report back recommending formal adoption shortly. A copy of the plan can be obtained from the department. Once it has been permanently adopted it will be placed on the website.

By way of supplementary questions, Cllr. Atkins asked when adoption and subsequent publication was likely to take place?

Cllr. Ralphs advised that this would take place as soon as possible.

Question from Councillor Atkins:

Q4. The Council have published a list of information required in planning applications and the NPPF requires decisions to be made as quickly as possible. If applicants are uncooperative and despite reminders fail to provide necessary details is it reasonable to take two years trying to determine an application for an unauthorised development that is causing environmental problems for neighbours?

Response:

Paragraph 38 of the NPPF advises that the LPA should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Refusing an application for unauthorised development does not rectify the problem and whether it would be expedient to enforce would be a separate decision and may also not ultimately rectify the issue. It is generally regarded that working proactively with developers to regularise breaches is preferable to formal enforcement proceedings and achieves better outcomes in the long run.

By way of supplementary questions, Cllr. Atkins referred to ongoing problems at a specific application site.

Cllr. Ralphs advised that it was not appropriate to comment on an individual application, but would forward the query on for a written response to be issued.

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6 COVID 19 - PANDEMIC REINSTATEMENT OF SERVICES AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Whilst some elements of the COVID-19 response continued to be ongoing, a recovery response was initiated so that services would be ready as lockdown restrictions began to be eased. Work therefore commenced on the planning of the Council's recovery in late April 2020.

The report identified the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery and the plans that were being put into place for recovery.

DECIDED – That the Panel:-

- **NOTED** the details of the Council's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- **SUPPORTED** the proposed recovery plans outlined.

7 CALL-IN OF CABINET DELEGATED DECISION - LEEK MARKET HALL UPDATE REPORT

The Delegated Decision report sought approval to undertake a feasibility study and business case to explore options for investment at Leek Market Hall – formally referred to as the Trestle Market – and provided details of the next steps to deliver improvements.

The Portfolio Holder's decision was that progress on the project to date be noted and that officers commission the preparation of a fully costed feasibility study and business case for consideration.

Call-in requests were received from Councillors Gledhill, Atkins, Price, Cawley, Swindlehurst and Page, citing the following principles of decision:-

- Taking due regard of all relevant considerations;
- A presumption in favour of openness;
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

Members debated the points raised both in the Delegated Decision report and the Call-in.

The matter was then put to a named vote as follows:-

In favour of the Call-in:

Councillors Atkins, Brady, Hawkins, Hoptroff, Page and Price (6)

Against the Call-in:

Councillors Aberley, Davies, Emery, Flunder, Hart, Herdman, Plimley, Redfern, Roberts, Sheldon and Ward (11)

Abstentions:

Councillor Whitehouse (1)

In accordance with the procedure for consideration of Call-ins at Overview & Scrutiny Panel meetings where the Call-in was not successful, the Cabinet were

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asked to note or take account of concerns as it saw fit without holding up the implementation of the decision.,

8 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair requested that the following items be added to the Work Programme:-

- Further COVID-19 pandemic update, with the opportunity for questions and debate; and
- Parkwood Leisure – crisis actions.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

_____Chairman _____Date