

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH 2021

PRESENT: Councillor R Ward (Chair)

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor C J S Atkins, M Bowen, M A Deaville, M Gledhill, G Heath, T Holmes, K J Jackson, B Johnson, L A Malyon, K Martin, I Plant, J Porter, S E Ralphs MBE, P Routledge, S Scalise, L Swindlehurst and P Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES: Councillor H Plimley.

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

Councillor Heath substituted for Councillor Plimley.

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

Councillor Salt referred to her question at the previous meeting to the Portfolio Holder, in relation to the refurbishment of the lanterns in Biddulph and advised that she had not received a timescale or name of the responsible officer.

DECIDED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 27 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were none.

41 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

Agenda Item	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda Item 9 – Cheadle Town Centre Projects	Cllr Wilkinson	Other – Owns a business on High Street, Cheadle.

Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 17 March 2021

Agenda Item	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda Item – Not specified.	Cllr Price	Other – Owns a business in Leek Town Centre.

42

QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

Question received from Councillor Hoptroff: -

Q1. “There has been a lot of public backlash at the allocation of £22,500 on fees for the Leek Trestle Market consultation. It is perceived that the Cabinet have already made their decision, so any opposition to their plan that comes out of the consultation will be disregarded anyway. Can Councillor Wain justify the allocation of this money?”

Response:

Proposals to refurbish Leek Market Hall were discussed at the Service Delivery and Overview Panel meeting on 29th January 2020 where members highlighted the importance of consultation with members and traders. Some members of the Panel felt that a wider consultation of the proposals for the market should take place and suggested that a full public meeting should be held. In July 2020, the decision report to undertake a feasibility study and business case to explore options for Leek Market Hall was subject to a call in request where it was noted that ' A key aspect of the feasibility study is the commitment to a full consultation' and that 'the debate on the Trestle Market in the Council Chamber earlier this year was a full one which was well attended and many present continually emphasised the importance of wide consultation with as wide as possible'.

In response to this, a specification was issued to appoint consultancy services for the preparation of a feasibility study and business case to explore possible enhancement and investment to Leek Market Hall to provide improved retail facilities and trader opportunities.

7 tenders were received and assessed. Quarterbridge Project Management were awarded the contract, having the best technical competence score and best commercial (Vfm) score. The submitted costs from the 6 other tenders ranged 102% to 159% of Quarterbridge's submission.

The specification also requested that widespread consultation was undertaken to inform the feasibility study and business case report. Stakeholder consultation has been conducted with District Councillors, Leek East Ward Councillors, Leek Town Councillors, Archer Fairs (licensed antique market operator), Stall holders and Leek's business community. A final report is expected in April.

By way of supplementary questions, Councillor Hoptroff informed the Panel that the public were concerned that the outcome of the consultation had been pre-judged and requested assurance that all comments made in the report would be taken into account.

Councillor Ralphs was of the opinion that this query didn't relate to the original question. The public backlash referred to by Councillor Hoptroff, related to the spend

Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 17 March 2021

on further consultation which had been requested as part of the Call-in procedure, rather than a feasibility study. It was confirmed that a final report would be considered by the Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Question received from Councillor Malyon: -

Q2. "Could someone tell me why we have a member of the public as a Cabinet Members advisor from June 2019 to the present day?"

Response:

The Leader explained that she could request advice from anyone. This included advice from officers and when needed, from specialists in particular areas of work. Advisors were not paid or privy to any Cabinet meetings or documents.

Councillor Malyon asked when this had been scrutinised and if advice on planning matters had been provided. In response, the Leader confirmed that scrutiny panels did not scrutinise her requests for advice and she did not have any involvement with planning matters, unless the application was within her ward.

Questions received from Councillor Wilkinson:-

Q3. "What are the operating times of Tape Street Car Park in Cheadle?"

Response:

The operational hours of the Tape Street Car Park are 8am – 6pm. Restrictions apply within these hours. However the chargeable hours are 9.30am – 3.30pm This means that customers are only required to pay and display between 9.30am to 3.30pm.

By way of supplementary questions, Councillor Wilkinson felt that these times were restrictive during the evening and should be changed in-line with other car parks in the area. The Leader suggested that this important query should be submitted as a question to the Car Parking Working Group and the Cheadle Stakeholder Panel.

Q4. "This Council has spent in the region of £60,000 on consultants Cushman & Wakefield. Is there any justification in spending more money on consultation?"

Response:

Councillor Ralphs explained, that the consultation was a direct result of the Call-in of the Cheadle Town Centre Projects report in November 2020 and the Stakeholder Panel had also agreed for further consultation to be undertaken.

Councillor Wilkinson highlighted the importance of the correct consultation, feedback to residents and requested the reasons previous projects had not come forward in Cheadle.

In response, the Leader advised that these queries and requests for information would be dealt with by the Stakeholder Panel. The second supplementary question was around the Council's budget for projects in Cheadle and if there would be a requirement for match funding. Councillor Ralphs explained that the Stakeholder Panel would identify projects that residents wished for in Cheadle. For any identified projects, a business case would need to be made and then funding would be sought.

Question received from Councillor Page:-

Q5. "Please could Councillor Porter provide an update on the transfer of Wetley Moor Common to SWT as promised at the last Service Delivery meeting on 27 January 2021?"

Response:

SMDC is continuing work behind the scenes to progress the transfer of eleven countryside sites to SWT not just Wetley Moor. Officers have met with colleagues from SWT and are in ongoing dialogue to ensure that the management arrangement that had previously been developed in 2018 remains fit for purpose for both organisations, due to the time that has passed since its initial development. Furthermore we have received a commitment from SOTCC that a report will be presented to their Cabinet in May in regards to the transfer of Wetley Moor and officers will work with colleagues to enable this to happen. It is expected that a further report will need to come back to members at SMDC once the final arrangements have been developed.

43 **CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP UPDATE. (PRESENTATION)**

Katy Webster – Head of Assets, gave a presentation to provide an update on the Car Parking Working Group.

The Council had made a commitment to review the car parks and renew the strategy to ensure car parks met the needs of residents and visitors.

Parking Matters Consultants had been appointed, the first meeting of the Car Parking Working Group had taken place and the data collection exercise was complete. The importance of stakeholder engagement was highlighted and the various types of consultation was explained to the Panel. The emerging messages from the consultation so far included:-

- The importance of the towns being treated individually
- Key priorities were recovery from Covid-19, regeneration, growth and vital high streets
- Payment options
- Review of free parking periods
- Improvement of the look, feel and infrastructure of car parks

The final slide of the presentation set out the next steps of the Parking Strategy Review.

Councillor Hart explained the importance of the Staffordshire Moorlands being a gateway to the Peak Park and as he was the Council's representative for the Peak Park he offered to assist with the communication between the authorities.

Members shared their concerns in relation to timescales and support for the high streets re-opening. It was suggested that free car parking should be offered until the end of June 2021. The concerns around the timescales were appreciated and the Portfolio Holder would discuss the request for free parking days with Cabinet.

Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 17 March 2021

In response to a query around electric vehicles and the management of car parks by private companies, Katy Webster advised there were many options around the infrastructure and parking for electric vehicles and gave assurance that all options would be given consideration.

The Panel also discussed a joined up approach to enforcement, the differing parking needs of the towns, rural areas and the overarching elements applicable to both.

DECIDED: That the update be **NOTED**.

44 **LEEK MARKET HALL UPDATE. (VERBAL UPDATE)**

Sarah Porru – Head of Regeneration, provided an update on Leek Market Hall to the Panel.

In May 2020, Cabinet agreed for a feasibility study to be carried out and for a business case to be prepared which looked at the options for investment at Leek Market Hall to improve the facility and increase footfall.

Quarterbridge had been appointed and the consultants had considered baseline information regarding the current operation, cost information to the Council and comparison of charges. They also identified comparison markets and the lessons/ideas that could be taken from these as well as work to understand the existing and potential customer base.

The consultants had spoken with a number of members and stakeholders which included the Leader of the Council, SMDC Portfolio holders, SMDC Leek East Ward Councillors, Leek Town Councillors, Archer Fairs (operated a licensed market on Friday in the Market Hall and Leek Blues & Americana Festival organisers. In addition, online surveys had been shared with market traders and Leek retailers.

A draft report was due to be received which would put forward three possible options for enhancement of the market. The draft report would be brought back to this Panel with details of potential benefits and level of investment required for each option.

DECIDED: That the update be received.

45 **CHEADLE TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS.**

The Panel considered a report which set out the progress on Cheadle town centre projects since December 2020, including progress with procurement of a consultation programme on options for the regeneration of Cheadle town centre.

Meetings of the Cheadle Stakeholder Panel had been held at the end of January and February this year. The meetings had mapped a route to identifying any further options for Cheadle town centre and for ensuring a full public engagement with all issues and options for the town. This timeline of steps was set out at paragraph 7.26 of the report.

A Stakeholder Workshop, facilitated by the Consultation Institute had been arranged. Outcomes from the Workshop would help to identify any alternatives to those options for Cheadle town centre set out in the Cushman & Wakefield study of May 2020.

A public consultation exercise and survey, overseen by the Stakeholder Panel, was being commissioned to seek the views of local people, businesses and organisations

Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 17 March 2021

of Cheadle on all the regeneration issues and opportunities for the town centre. The contract was expected to be awarded at the start of April.

Following analysis of options, consultation responses and other public feedback in relation to car parking and the Leisure Centre, a report would be taken to Cabinet to propose a way forward and include the recommendation of a preferred option.

The Council had secured funding under the One Public Estate programme to help deliver the preferred option once agreed.

Discussion took place around the increased population of Cheadle which had led to increased demand for leisure facilities, the current site being the most appropriate location for the Leisure Centre and the recently awarded Disabled Facilities Grant for Changing Places facilities.

Officers advised that a study of the facilities had identified that the Centre did not meet the current need of the growing population. It was confirmed that no options had been discounted in relation to the location of the Leisure Centre. A written response would be sent to Councillor Price in regard to the Changing Places Disabled Facilities Grant.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Sports clarified that the Disabled Facilities Grant investment showed a clear commitment to the Leisure Centre, which in his opinion, was in the correct location but was in need of improvement. Three excellent Stakeholder Panel meetings had taken place with numerous contributions from both residents and businesses of Cheadle. A fully inclusive consultation, to include surrounding areas, would inform the options for the Leisure Centre. A suggestion was made for the Parish Assembly to be a forum for the parishes to be kept up to date.

DECIDED:

- 1) The Panel **NOTED** the progress on Cheadle town centre projects;
- 2) For the Panel to receive regular updates, as the consultation progressed.

46 **WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Given the cost incurred by the Council for consultancy work, Councillor Salt enquired if it would be possible for the Council to look into the feasibility of degree level apprenticeship schemes being offered to assist with future consultation exercises.

DECIDED: That the Work Programme for 2020-21 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

_____ Chairman _____ Date