

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Questions to Portfolio Holders

Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel Wednesday 26 Jan 2022

Questions received from Councillor Bentley: -

Q1. “The Support Businesses Christmas Leaflet to promote shops costing, I believe, £17,000. Who put this together?”

Response from Councillor Ralphs: A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Q2. “Who put the leaflet together that is in theatres bars clubs etc, called Discover Staffordshire? What is the cost and why there is there no mention of Cheadle on there at all?”

Response from Councillor Ralphs: A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Question received from Councillor Cawley:

Q3. “ My wife and I spent a day in Bollington recently. We visited the Discovery Centre, a local history museum, in the Clarence Mill which has been open since the summer and which is funded by local authorities in East Cheshire. Other museums and heritage centres are open in close proximity to Leek and have been for some time in other towns and cities in Staffordshire as well as Cheshire and Derbyshire. Why does the Nicholson Museum and Art Gallery remain closed to the detriment of tourism in Leek as well as handicapping local history and family research?”

Response from Councillor Ralphs: A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Question received from Councillor Yates:

Q4. Plots 12-14 Victoria Business Park, Biddulph

“I note that the special conditions with regards to establishing suitable ground conditions prior to the commencement of the above development have been signed off. Could you please confirm whether these were confirmed via a physical intrusive site investigation (drilling or test pits), or via a desktop, written survey, i.e, the Coal Authority Mine Entry Interpretive Report 15.2.21, with no physical intrusive investigation having taken place?”

Response from Councillor Bowen:

Prior to discharging the conditions attached to the planning permission we consulted with the Coal Authority as it was them who recommended that the condition be attached. They had no objections to the discharge of conditions stating:

“The applicant has submitted a Factual Report (March 2002, prepared by Forkers Ltd) in support of the discharge of the aforementioned condition. On the basis that

*the Coal Mining Risk Assessment (August 2018, prepared by Wardell Armstrong), which accompanied the planning application was able to discount any risks posed by the recorded mine entries, and that the Report is able to confirm that the shallow coal mine workings previously identified underlying the site have been consolidated, the Coal Authority would have **no objection to the LPA discharging Condition 12.***

The Forkers Report was based on an intrusive physical investigation. Paragraph 2.2.1 of the report states:

“Six hundred and ninety one boreholes were drilled with a Krupp rotary percussive drilling head and mast located on a modified JCB 814 360 degree hydraulic excavator. 70mm diameter drilling bits were used with water as a flushing agent. The holes were drilled to depths of between 10m and 45m with 101mm diameter steel casing installed to rockhead in each borehole.”

Question received from Councillor Wilkinson:

Q5. “The proposed car parking strategy for Cheadle will be detrimental to local residents and businesses. Why are SMDC recommending a strategy that the communities of Cheadle and Checkley are opposed to?”

Response from Councillor Hart: A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Question received from Councillor Swindlehurst:

Q6. “At a meeting of a Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2019 the transfer of 11 sites to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust with a promised saving of £54,000 per year to SMDC. My colleague Cllr. Page posed a question 365 days ago to the Portfolio Holder asking what progress had been made with the transfer of Wetley Moor Common which is jointly owned by SMDC and Stoke on Trent City Council. We were assured progress is being made towards a conclusion. I have asked on several occasions in the year since about progress to be told it is progressing. This transfer has implications related to the Green Infrastructure plan and is also the very costly exercise to SMDC). So my question is...

Can members be updated about progress that has been made on the transfer of Wetley Moor Common to Staffordshire Wildlife and when will this transfer materialise?”

Response from Councillor Porter:

I'm pleased to be able to advise that progress with this project has gained pace in recent months. The work programme for this committee includes a report for members of this panel at the meeting due to be held on the 16th March 2022. This report will detail the work that has been undertaken on this project to date and the outcomes of this work this being; the transfer of all of the Moorlands countryside sites to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) in Spring 2022 and any related financial savings.

The project had been delayed due to SMDC waiting on key information in relation to Wetley Moor from SOTCC. This information is still awaited, however officers at SMDC and SWT have developed an alternative proposal which the report will detail.

Question received from Councillor Hoptroff:

Q7. “Can the portfolio holder provide a detailed breakdown of how the SMDC share of the Welcome back funding (33K) was spent, to include fees paid to consultants and the costs for the catalogue?”

Response from Councillor Ralphs:

Welcome Back funding is intended to encourage customers back into town centres High Streets (include or larger villages with a parade of shops) and can support:

- activities that allow the local authority to safely reopen their local economies. E.g. temporary public realm changes
- Communications and public information activity to promote a safe public environment, encourage residents and visitors back and direct business-facing activities including temporary works that are additional to normal maintenance regimes in town centres.
- Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium term impact of Covid-19, including through employment of temporary staff.

Activities funded to date:

	SMDC
Total RHSSF & Welcome Back Grant award	£174,180
spent & committed	
Theme 1 Support to develop an action plan Staff salaries and footfall Wi-Fi	-£37,417
Theme 2: Theme 2 Communications and public information activity (includes printing and distribution of local gift guide and local food guide)	-£30,097
Theme 3: Business-facing awareness (digital skills pack)	-£5,676
Theme 4: Temporary public realm works including additional ‘cleaning’	-£10,313
Theme 5: Support for visitor economy/boost footfall including works undertaken by SLA with town/parish councils, tourism marketing delivered by Marketing Peak District and refresh of Cheadle Heritage Interpretation panels.	-£77,314
Theme 6: Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium-term impact of CV-19 includes proposed Cheadle town centre workshops	-£5000
Balance uncommitted	£8363

The three town councils have all received delegated funding for the delivery of events including

- Leek Town Council (£17,800) To date claimed £6701
- Cheadle Town Council (£15,840) – To date nil claimed
- Biddulph Town Council (£18,450) – To date nil claimed

We are awaiting further information from the Town Councils on their forecast spend to 31.3.2022 but have assumed they will defray their allocations above.