

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Councillor R Ward (Chair)

Councillors G Bentley, C Brady, B Emery, K Flunder, N Hawkins, I Herdman, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes, L Page, H Plimley, D Price, P Roberts and J Salt

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor M Bowen, M Deaville, A Hart, K Martin, J Porter, S E Ralphs MBE, L Swindlehurst, P Wilkinson, N Yates, J T Jones, C J S Atkins, M Gledhill, I Plant and P Routledge

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Aberley, H Sheldon MBE and P Wood

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

Substitute members were as follows:-

- Councillor Martin for Councillor Bentley
- Councillor Wilkinson for Councillor Wood
- Councillor Yates for Councillor Page
- Councillor Swindlehurst for Councillor Salt.

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

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 November 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Agenda No.	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda Item 10 – Car Park Strategy	Cllr Wilkinson	Other – Business owner of premise situated on High Street, Cheadle.
	Cllr Routledge	Other – Morrison's employee.

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Agenda Item 9 - Rural Sports Villages	Councillor Porter	Other – One of the applications for outdoor sports capital funding was within his ward.
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QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

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: *The print and distribution of the guide was undertaken by a reputable firm which the Council had previously contracted to undertake this type of work. Every household in the Moorlands should have received a copy and I have received compliments about the guide. A further hospitality & food guide was currently being produced by the Council.*

Councillor Bentley reported that only a few residents and businesses in Cheadle had received this guide, to which Councillor Ralphs was sorry to hear and asked if he could keep her updated on the receipt of the hospitality and food guide in Cheadle once it has been distributed.

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: *This leaflet had not been produced by SMDC.*

The lack of any mention of Cheadle within the leaflet was a concern to Councillor Bentley and he thought that the Council made a financial contribution to the organisation that had produced the leaflet.

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: *I regret that the Nicholson Museum and Art Gallery had to temporarily close due to the pandemic. However, an ambitious programme of events is planned from February 2022, when the Nicholson is due to reopen.*

On behalf of Councillor Cawley, Councillor Gledhill explained, that he had secured an offer for items to come on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, but he had not received a response from senior officers at the Council. He requested for this project to be considered. In response, the Leader advised, that she hadn't received any communication from Councillor Cawley in relation to this matter.

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Plans were in place for a William Morris Exhibition which had been planned a year in advance.

In response to the second question around tourism and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC), Councillor Ralphs explained, the relocation of the TIC was due to the high cost of the site when situated on the Market Place and the type of work undertaken by the staff had changed, as tourists independently carried out research on the internet. There were plans to relocate the TIC to Moorlands House and a report would be available in the near future.

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.”

An apparent lack of response from senior officers in relation to this matter and the sale price of the land was queried, to which Neil Rodgers – Director (Place), agreed to investigate and provide a detailed response after the meeting. This would be circulated to all members of the Panel.

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?”

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Response from Councillor Hart: *It's difficult to reply to a statement and this matter will be scrutinised as part of the main agenda item on the Car Parking Strategy. Substantial consultation has taken place in Cheadle and some aspects have been accommodated within the Strategy.*

By way of supplementary questions, Councillor Wilkinson agreed that consultation had taken place in Cheadle, but his view was that opinions had not been listened to. The Portfolio Holder advised that comments had been taken on board and accommodated as best as possible, within the proposed strategy. The Panel was given assurance that there was no hidden agenda to redevelop the car park.

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-

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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.

Councillor Hoptroff also reported issues with the delivery of the Christmas Guide, and it was agreed by the Leader, that inquiries would be made with the relevant officers and the company involved. The outcome would be provided after the meeting.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Panel's Work Programme be agreed.

22 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT ISSUES AND OPTIONS - (DOCUMENT AND PRESENTATION).

The Panel gave its consideration to a briefing paper which outlined the need to review the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Staffordshire Moorlands. The current SPD dated back to 2004 and therefore

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required updating to take account of changes within the legislative and policy framework.

As part of the initial work undertaken, a series of stakeholder engagement was carried out with key service areas across the Council and the County Council to gain a more detailed understanding of current processes, key issues and potential opportunities that could be addressed through the SPD.

The Issues and Options document was the next stage in the review process leading to production of an updated Developer Contributions SPD. It identified key planning obligations that that could be sought to mitigate against the impacts of development and set out a number of options for consideration and inclusion within the SPD, including the recommended approach taken where relevant. Where appropriate, a preferred option had also been given based on stakeholder engagement and desktop research. The next steps in this process would be to refine these options and develop a first draft SPD document.

Once adopted, the SPD will help ensure that development proposals made a positive contribution to sustainable development by providing social, economic and environmental benefits to the community as a whole that was in line with current local plan policies. In addition, it would also help to increase understanding of Planning Obligations and provide greater transparency in how they were applied, thereby enabling developers to take potential costs of proposed development into account at the earliest opportunity.

Mark James – Principal Planning Officer and Ruth Woodisse – Planning Officer, gave a presentation which covered the following subject areas: -

- Section 106 Agreements
- Background
- Purpose of SPD
- Limitations
- Scope
- Issues and options
- Indexation
- Prioritisation options and sub-option
- Viability
- Monitoring fees
- Affordable housing
- Open space, sport and recreation
- Biodiversity and Climate Change
- Health
- Training and Employment
- Transport and accessibility
- Education

Members broadly welcomed the document and thanked the officers for their comprehensive report.

Discussion took place around a more ambitious SPD in regard to climate change, neighbourhood plans and additional support for education. A suggestion was made for a cross working group (Planning Applications

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Committee, Health & Service Delivery O&S Panels), to assist with a more meaningful and understandable document.

More details on green infrastructure and travel plans were requested and for reports to be available as soon as possible prior to meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

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RURAL SPORTS VILLAGES

The Panel gave its consideration to a report which detailed the progress of the work undertaken to identify and support projects with a view to allocating outdoor sports capital funding.

Towards an Active Staffordshire Moorlands was the Council's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy which identified key priorities and actions that the Council would take, supported by its partners, to enable residents to become more active.

The Council has assigned £100,000 of capital funds in the current MTFP to be used towards supporting the delivery of local projects, with a focus on a 'sports village' concept and particularly projects that were located in more rural areas of the District.

At the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 3rd August 2021, approval was given to allocate £11,500 funding from the outdoor sports capital budget towards projects being delivered by Waterhouses Parish Council and Kingsley Parish Council. Both projects were progressing well, new maintenance equipment had been purchased by Waterhouses Parish Council, whilst the funds given to Kingsley Parish Council had enabled them to access additional funding from a local business to complete the installation of a new play area during spring 2022.

It was now requested that allocation of further funds totalling £10,700 to Endon & Stanley Parish Council and Leek Cricket Club. Should approval be given, £77,800 would remain available to allocate towards projects identified in the future.

Endon and Stanley Parish Council wished to improve the walking/running track which borders the playing fields at Hillswood Playing Fields. The total cost to upgrade the track was £6,700 and it was proposed to allocate the full amount towards this due to match funding being unavailable. As an 'in kind' contribution towards the project, the Parish Council would plant a variety of trees in the vicinity, install picnic tables, bird/bat boxes and improve the outdoor gym area that was on the edge of the track.

Leek Cricket Club had aspirations to improve their grounds maintenance programme and develop their intergenerational work within the club, through the refurbishment of existing grounds maintenance equipment. The cost to refurbish their equipment was £6,650 and the club had raised £2,650 towards this project. It was therefore proposed that £4,000 funding was allocated to this project from the outdoor sports capital budget.

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Officers were also working on a project to develop a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Hot Lane playing fields in Biddulph Moor. In order to assess the viability of developing this project further, a feasibility study was required which would include various site surveys that would enable an accurate cost to complete the project to be identified. A recent enquiry to a reputable company had provided a cost of this study at around £6,500. It was recommended that revenue funds would be allocated to commission this study. Once this had been completed an updated report would be brought forward with a request to allocate capital funds from the Rural Sports Villages Fund.

In order to maintain momentum when developing projects, working with partners and planning, it was proposed that future reports which request funds to be allocated from the outdoor sports capital budget be made via a delegated decision report, to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure.

Concerns were expressed in relation to Ball Haye Green Football Club and the Bowling Green at Brough Park, to which Councillor Deaville gave assurance that everything possible was being done to accommodate the football club, and that he would investigate the maintenance issues at the bowling green.

Other members also commented on reduced levels of maintenance since the staff had transferred to AES. This was noted and would be investigated after the meeting.

As Chair of the Leisure Facilities Working Group, Councillor Salt enquired as to when the next meeting would take place as it had not met for a while. She also asked if a potential allotment site at Slater Street in Biddulph could be given consideration. These points were noted, and officers would respond accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made in supporting projects that were previously allocated capital funding and the work undertaken to develop new projects be noted.
2. That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the allocation of £10,700 towards two projects in Endon and Leek from the outdoor sports capital budget as detailed within the report.
3. That the Cabinet be recommended that future reports requesting funding can progress via delegated decision reports to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Sports.

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CAR PARK STRATEGY

Councillor Hart – Portfolio Holder for Property and Tourism, presented the newly-drafted Staffordshire Moorlands Car Parking Strategy to members of the Panel.

A review of car parking was contained within Aim 4 of the Corporate Plan 2019-23. As part of the recovery from the first wave of Covid-19 in Autumn 2020, this work was escalated within the service plan, such was the importance of parking within the recovery of town centres and to ensure a thriving local economy. Parking Matters were retained towards the end of 2020 to review the existing parking provision with SMDC and to develop a new strategy for the car parks for a 5 year period. The aim was to tackle a number of salient issues, including, condition, payment options and tariffs.

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Wide consultation with the residents, local businesses and visitors who used the car parks had taken place. Members Groups, Town and County Council, Peak Park and local business groups had all been included to ensure the widest spectrum of views had been heard. Balancing conflicting opinions and ideas and setting these against factual evidence was often challenging, and it was inevitable that the strategy would not fulfil the wishes of all, however its focus had been to deliver the vision and ensure that positive changes were made and the service invests for the future and meets the needs of residents businesses and visitors.

Following the consultation and review of the Council's service, Parking Matters produced their base case findings, which were presented to the Car Parking Working Group for feedback. This was then developed into the main report setting out all the findings (Appendix 2). This was discussed by the Car Parking Working Group and Cheadle stakeholder group and further feedback was taken on board. Since then, work had centred around the financial modelling to determine the affordability of free periods and tariff changes in light of impact that Covid-19 had on parking revenues along with the underlying trend of reduction in demand.

The Summary Strategy Report was attached as Appendix 1 and set out the base case findings, reported the outcome of the consultations, made recommendations and finished with an action plan to ensure that the Council's plans were open and transparent for all to see. If the Strategy was adopted this document would be published on the Council's website.

Key actions and projects were as follows:

- 1) Implementation of contactless digital payment provider, such as Pay by Phone to offer an alternative to coin only payments. This could be delivered in the short term, ideally before the end of the financial year.
- 2) Changes in charging hours and tariffs to be implemented for the new financial year, to include short free parking periods on certain car parks to support quick trips into town centres.
- 3) Review of parking permits being offered including provision of a tourist pass.
- 4) Development of a separate EV strategy which determined suitable locations, types of chargers and options for delivery partnerships funding and rollout, supported by the objectives of a County lead strategy to ensure a consistent approach across highways and off-street parking.
- 5) Implementation of new zones across Tape Street Car park to facilitate short stays, including free half hour options and also long stay parking section.
- 6) Commence with the recruitment, (subject to final approvals of the Norse project and the restructure of the Assets team) of a new car parking post to implement the actions set out in the strategy and strategically manage the service.
- 7) Deliver improvements to wayfinding and signage on car parks.

The Strategy noted the importance of the car parks to regeneration initiatives, and the potential for new car parking and consolidation, but that each of these major decisions needed to be reviewed and a business case determined before any decisions could be made.

Although there was support for the Strategy and the investment plans that it contained, there were concerns raised by some members in relation to the detrimental impact it would have on the town of Cheadle. In particular, the proposed

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increased charging period of 8am – 6pm and 1 hour free parking at Well Street, and only half an hour at Tape Street. It was asserted that the extended charging times would negatively affect businesses on the High Street and the town would be congested during school pick up and collection times, due to the free 1 hour parking period only being available at Well Street.

Members queried the cost of a new officer, increased enforcement and if the Council had checked the rateable value of the Tape Street Car Park.

It was felt by some members that the report did not reflect the needs of Cheadle, the emerging work of the High Street Task Force and the lack of an agreed Masterplan for Cheadle. If the Strategy was adopted, a member commented that they had the right to challenge parking policies under the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Discussion also took place around a dedicated EV Charging car park, advantages and disadvantages of cashless payments, lack of child and parent bays and consultation in rural areas.

The Portfolio Holder noted the concerns raised by members and explained that the increased charging period generated the income for the Council to be able to offer the free parking periods. Assurance was given that the machines which accepted cash would be phased out gradually and the payment App was compatible with most mobile phones. Other councillors commented that some of the points raised during meetings of the Car Parking Working Group had been incorporated, such as zoned parking areas.

The time restraints in relation to the setting of the Council's Budget and the adoption of the Strategy was highlighted to the Panel.

Members proposed that the Cabinet should review the Strategy 12 months after implementation to evaluate its impact and that consideration be given to defer the changes relating to the revised charging period in Cheadle. The meeting closed at this point in order for Cabinet members to consider the implications of the proposals with view to a further meeting of the Panel being arranged should this be beneficial.

The meeting closed at 9.52 pm

_____Chairman_____Date