

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY, 4TH APRIL, 2017 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor David Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Curran, M. Dixon, Essl, G. Galbraith, Marshall, Porthouse, Turner and W. Turton.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Idris Balarabe, Senior Urban Designer

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer

Mr Dan Hattle, Planning Implementation Manager, Planning and Property

Ms Jane Hibberd, Head of Strategy and Policy for People and Neighbourhoods

Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation

Mrs Liz McEvoy, Team Leader Housing Strategy

Ms Julie Smith, Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety, Strategy and Performance

Mrs Christine Tilley, Community Governance Services Team Leader

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves to one another.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E. Gibson and Taylor.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7th March 2017

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7th March, 2017 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7th March, 2017 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Blackburn, Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation advised that a report would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the new governance arrangements around the partnership relating to the Northumbria Safer Roads Initiative later in the year.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

A Draft Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022

The Chief Operating Officer - Place submitted a report (copy circulated) to consult with and get feedback from the Scrutiny Committee on the draft Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mrs Liz McEvoy, Team Leader Housing Strategy briefed the Committee on the purpose of having a Housing Strategy and the work undertaken to date to identify the Council's housing priorities and actions to address and deliver with partners, together with arrangements for public consultation. Mrs McEvoy advised that a report on the draft Housing Strategy would be submitted to Cabinet later that month also and that it was intended that Working Groups would be set up to deliver the actions needed. Although the Housing Strategy was intended to set out a clear direction for the next five years, it would be reviewed after a year to ensure it was in line with the principles of the Housing White Paper. Mrs McEvoy invited Members to discuss the draft with residents living in their communities.

In response to Members questions and concerns, Mrs McEvoy advised that part of the Housing Strategy was to provide choice and look at self-build and custom build and pilot small sites for development. The private rented sector had doubled within the last 10 years. Currently in Sunderland 12% of the total housing stock was in the private rented sector, 23% was social housing for rent and the remainder was owner occupiers. The Government White Paper was suggesting a new definition of 'Affordable Housing' and the Council would be commenting on the need in Sunderland for affordable rents.

There was an overall decrease in the numbers of students coming to study at the University of Sunderland and an interim Student Accommodation Policy was in place as it was felt that there was sufficient accommodation at the moment. In spite of this, however there was building work going on near St Peter's campus which would be monitored through the planning process rather than as part of the Housing Strategy.

A new Housing Strategy Team had been established and its key role was to ensure that a Citywide Housing Strategy was developed and delivered. Key priorities included diversifying the housing offer to meet identified housing need. 40% of all new homes were to be 4 bed+. Another priority was to reduce the number of homes that have been empty for over two years or were creating problems within communities. There were 2,300 empty homes within the private sector and there were now different tools available to the Local Authority to use to get empty properties back into use. The Intervention Team had brought 104 properties back into use however due to reduced resources, focus was now being directed on the more difficult ones to achieve.

The condition of the private rented sector housing was showing an improvement, however there were pockets that were not so good and the Government was in the process of introducing new tools.

Sunderland utilised a lot of brownfield sites but developers were advising that these were not viable and further work was being undertaken to see how these could be unlocked. A review of greenfield sites was on-going.

Tenants were able to call the Council where there were health hazards in the property they were renting and Environmental Health Officers would make an assessment and request the Landlord to carry out the works where this was needed. However, this was more difficult to address in respect of owner occupiers. There were good and bad landlords and the same could be said of tenants.

The Chairman thanked Mrs McEvoy on behalf of the Committee for her attendance. Mrs McEvoy having thanked the Committee for its feedback, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the consultation being undertaken on the draft Housing Strategy for Sunderland be noted and the feedback provided by the Committee as detailed above be received and noted by the Housing Strategy Team.

Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor (SSTC) – Progress Report

The Chief Operating Officer – Place submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Committee with a progress report on the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation played a video recording of the development of the new River Wear crossing and provided the Committee with a presentation detailing the works to be completed in each of the 5 phases of the SSTC and the anticipated completion dates.

Mr Jackson highlighted the anticipated benefits to be brought to the city by the scheme. In response to Members' questions Mr Jackson advised that the building funding profile and what was coming forward determined the length of time it would take to complete the scheme, however it was hoped that the gap to completion could be kept as short as possible.

There were a number of constraints which needed to be managed as well as things having to be re-located. There were a number of proposals in relation to the Wearmouth Bridge to change access and/or the traffic signals in order to get better capacity. It was inevitable that the network would become more intelligent in the long term to improve the movement of transport to maximum efficiency and provide the opportunity for the more vulnerable road users to cross.

At this point in time there was a working relationship between Nissan and the Port of Tyne and there was still a significant amount of infrastructure investment to do in Sunderland. There was a big opportunity for the Port in Sunderland, however this would be a business decision.

The SSTC was the biggest priority at the moment for the City alongside the IAMP.

Officers were aware of the problems getting out of St Mary's car park and proposals were being looked at alongside proposals for the former Vaux site. It was anticipated that the new bridge would be completed in the Spring of 2018, on time

and under budget as it was thought that all the potential problems had been identified and solutions had been thought through.

The Chairman having thanked Mr Jackson for his presentation, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the progress being made with the SSTC be received and noted.

Minster Quarter Masterplan Supplementary Planning Documents

The Chief Operating Officer – Place submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise and consult with the Committee on the responses received following public consultation on the draft Minster Quarter Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Idris Balarabe, Senior Urban Designer provide the Committee with a presentation detailing the key issues and concerns raised through the consultation process which centred around the feasibility of a new museum facility, the development of the former Crowtree Leisure Centre site, the delivery of the key developments sites and green infrastructure requirements.

Councillor Blackburn asked about the implications of delay or cancellation of a new Magistrates Court building and who would be responsible for its upkeep.

In response, Mr Balarabe advised that it was frustrating but the Council did not have any control over the situation. The Plan contained options if the new Magistrates Court did not go ahead and it was important to remember that it was a long term vision for the area. It was for Government to upkeep the building.

Councillor Galbraith referred to difficulties for traffic movement in the area and that the proposal for the Next Building could worsen the situation. She commented that it was important that new developments like Next were part of the overall long term vision for the area.

Mr Balarabe replied to say that Officers were looking at parking and access around the Sunderland Empire Theatre and would look at High Street West to develop a proposal, whilst working hard to retain and protect the character of the area by stipulating what materials could be used to ensure any developments were compatible with what was already in place in the Quarter.

Councillor Porthouse referred to the difficulties in accessing the new Next building. He also mentioned the importance of encouraging greater footfall in the area and that this and the pedestrianisation of High Street West was an obstruction to this aim.

Mr Dan Hattle, Planning Implementation Manager, Planning and Property advised that the area had been pedestrianised for a long time and the recent refurbishment was only an attempt to lift the quality of this. Opinion differed on the effect of pedestrianisation on footfall in an area but at a recent meeting with businesses located in Park Lane for example, traders had supported it and did not want to have vehicles in the area and share the space. With regards to the Next development,

there was a requirement for parking as there would be a click and collect service. It was important to look to balance the interests of both pedestrians and vehicle users in the area.

Cllr Turner felt that the Council should look to encourage more niche/specialised shops into the area.

Mr Hattle stated that the Council could not specify which shops came into an area and that it could only create the blueprint to allow this to happen.

Cllr Dixon asked about the long term vision for High Street West.

Mr Hattle stated that there was an opportunity to have an offer in the daytime and the evening and link the Minster Quarter to the Sunnyside area on an evening. The plan was not restrictive to retail and would welcome and encourage other uses as long as there were no detrimental effects.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their report commenting that he looked forward to receiving a further update and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the amendments made to the Draft Minster Quarter Masterplan in light of responses received during the public consultation on the document and other considerations be received and noted; and
- ii) the comments of the Committee as detailed above be referred to the Cabinet when it considers the adoption of the amended Minster Quarter Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Update Report: The Prevent Duty

The Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Transformation submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Scrutiny Committee with regard to the implementation of the Prevent Duty in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Jane Hibberd, Head of Strategy and Policy for People and Neighbourhoods briefed the Committee on the report highlighting the establishment of the Sunderland Prevent Co-ordination Group to oversee compliance and the key outcomes it was set out to achieve as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

Ms Hibberd also pointed out the Prevent Action Plan which was structured around the 3 themes that run throughout the Prevent statutory guidance of Leadership, Partnership and Capabilities and the key outcomes being achieved through the action plan set out at paragraph 3.3. She referred the Committee to the examples of some of the improvement actions within the plan and the progress made to date detailed at Appendix 1.

Ms Julie Smith, Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety, Strategy and Performance briefed the Committee on the prevent referrals set out at paragraph 4 of the report.

In response to Members questions Ms Hibberd advised that the Prevent Duty was relevant to all schools and therefore all staff needed to complete the training and follow the self-assessment for which a toolkit was provided. She advised that there was also a process map showing how to make a Prevent referral and that the Council held a list of those schools which had completed the training. Workshops to Raise Awareness on Prevent had also been offered to Councillors to complete and Ms Hibberd offered to share the web link through Mr Diamond to Members wanting to refresh their training which she suggested could also be cascaded in their local communities to community workers.

Full consideration having being given to the report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the update report on the action taking place to ensure the City's compliance with the Prevent Duty, together with the overview of the level of Prevent referrals be received and noted.

Draft Annual Report 2016/17

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), seeking approval of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2016/17 that would be presented to Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee report be approved for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17, subject to any final comments being submitted to Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer in the next two weeks.

Annual Work Programme 2016/17

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), attaching for Members' information, a copy of the current work programme for the Committee's work during the 2016-17 Council Year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

A report providing an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 28th March 2017 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

8. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their work over the year.

(Signed) D. SNOWDON,
Chairman.