

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER, 2018 at 4.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. MacKnight in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Curran, M. Dixon, Galbraith, E. Gibson, Jackson, Marshall, Taylor and Turner

Also in attendance:-

Councillor Stuart Porthouse, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration

Ms Catherine Auld; Head of International Relations, Business Engagement and Investment, Sunderland City Council

Mr Gary Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader, Strategy and Performance, Sunderland City Council

Mr Colin Curtis, Assistant Head of Place Management (Technical), Sunderland City Council

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Team Manager, Sunderland City Council

Mr Tom Terrett, Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services, Sunderland City Council

Mrs Christine Tilley, Governance Services Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor O'Brien.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th September 2018

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th September, 2018 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Annual Work Programme 2018/19

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council reported that the October meeting of the Committee had been cancelled as Mr John Seager, Chief Executive of Siglion had been unable to attend and the only other item which had been available was a report providing feedback on the Waste Management visits which the Committee had undertaken.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11th September, 2018 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Consultation on the Publication Draft of the Core Strategy and Development Plan

The Head of Planning and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated), to update on the outcomes of the consultation of the Publication Draft of the Core Strategy and Development Plan and to advise the Scrutiny Committee of the next stages in the progress of the Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stuart Porthouse, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration thanked the Chairman for allowing him to attend the meeting and introduced the report highlighting the need for the Council to have a plan to guide and shape development and set the parameters for this to be achieved.

Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Team Manager, Sunderland City Council provided the Committee with a power point presentation detailing the preparation that had been undertaken to produce the Plan, the importance of having a Plan and the consultation carried out on the Plan from 15th June to 27th July 2018 seeking representations to the Publication draft.

Ms Sloan advised that the representations had been taken on board and a response would be published on the website to the issues raised.

Ms Sloan advised that the Cabinet and Full Council would be recommended to approve submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State.

In response to Councillor M. Dixon, Ms Sloan advised that the future policy on empty properties was part of the Housing Strategy and Local Plan. There was a policy in the Plan encouraging properties to be brought back into use. She added that through the Housing Strategy the Council would have the tools to work with landlords and partners to bring properties back into use. There was also Sunderland Homes Limited which was a new project and had bought 4 homes which it hoped to bring back into use in the New Year.

In response to Councillor Dixon and the Chairman, Ms Sloan advised that the Council would be defending its requirements for 15% affordable homes on development sites.

In response to Councillor E. Gibson who enquired about the settlement break in Doxford ward, Ms Sloan advised that it had been difficult to defend the policy of the settlement break as it was quite old, however going forward they would be in a more stronger position to defend.

In response to Councillor Turner who enquired whether there would be enough school places, Ms Sloan advised that Officers were working closely with the

Education Department and there was an education report as part of the Plan which would be reviewed on an annual basis to look at capacity.

In response to Councillor Taylor who enquired what happened when sites which the Council was not supporting were removed from the Plan, Ms Sloan advised that the developers continued to fight for them to be included and the Council would argue its case to prevent the site coming forward.

Ms Sloan confirmed in response to Councillor Jackson that with regards to shaping areas, thresholds would be established and policy and guidance included in the Plan in relation to houses in multiple occupation.

Councillor Porthouse commented that the one thing which came through was the importance of the Plan to control developers from building wherever they wanted to build. It was important that the Plan was approved and protected the Green Belt and the sites the Council wanted to protect.

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

2. RESOLVED that the outcomes of the statutory consultation on the Plan (Appendix A) be noted and that the Cabinet and Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations of the report.

Business Centres Overview – Progress Report

The Head of International Relations, Business Engagement and Investment submitted a report (copy circulated), on progress in relation to Evolve Business Centre, Sunderland Software Centre and Washington Business Centre.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Catherine Auld; Head of International Relations, Business Engagement and Investment, Sunderland City Council briefed the Committee on the report which provided an overview of the performance of the three business centres, including occupancy levels, financial information and an overview of actions which were being taken to increase occupancy.

Ms Auld referred Members to section 4 of the report which set out the financial information in respect of each centre and then covered the occupancy information. She highlighted section 5 regarding approaches to reducing expenditure and increasing income and the refreshed marketing approach being developed in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Affairs and Communications Team.

In response to Councillors Gibson and Dixon, Ms Auld advised that at the Software Centre companies had been allowed to buy parking and therefore there was very limited space visitor parking. Parking was free at the Evolve Business Centre and the Washington Business Centre. They had looked at building more parking to improve the offer at the Software Centre however they had not been able to do this. The number of permits at Tatham Street had been increased and they had also looked at doing the same at other car parks in the city.

Ms Auld commented that the continuing regeneration of the city might improve the position regarding the Software Centre. A model for the next 3 to 4 years was in place to increase occupancy and a reserve set aside to meet shortfalls in income and smooth the impact of under occupancy during this period. Funding from the European Development Fund had been provided for the Centre and this specified the type of companies which could be supported both to start up and grow and Officers tried to interpret this as flexibly as possible whilst reducing the risk of claw back.

The Chairman commented that it was disappointing that the uptake at the Software Centre was not as expected and supported the need for further advertising and promotion on social media.

Ms Auld advised that the next report to the Committee would detail the types of company in the centres.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Gambling Act 2005 – Approval of the Council’s Statement of Policies

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a report (copy circulated), asking the Committee to consider and comment on the responsibility of the Council with regard to the publishing of a statement of principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Tom Terrett, Head of Public Protection and Regulatory Services, Sunderland City Council briefed the Committee on the requirements of the Act and the current position and referred Members to the revised draft of the Statement of Principles, amended in line with the comments received and set out as Appendix 1 to the report.

In response to Councillor Dixon, Mr Terrett advised that any reduction in the permitted betting stake was a decision of the Government and that the Council was not responsible for any consequences businesses might suffer as a result.

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

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the Cabinet and Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee recommend that the draft statement of principles be approved under the Gambling Act 2005.

Waste Management Facilities Visits - Feedback

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), to provide feedback following the Committee’s visit on 13 September 2018 to view the facilities to treat waste located at the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Facility and also on the visit of 30 October 2018 to consider issues

relating to the collection of recyclable waste and the operation of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) plant in Hartlepool.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Colin Curtis, Assistant Head of Place Management (Technical), Sunderland City Council briefed the Committee on the report highlighting the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (STWWMP) made up of Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland councils and the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy which was agreed between the authorities in order to tackle the environmental and financial challenges.

Mr Curtis advised that the current position on recycling in Sunderland was 30% and needed to be much higher. The National target was 50% by 2020, although this was not a statutory target. The Council was reviewing its strategies to improve recycling for the future, although it was difficult to put firm plans in place and make the necessary investment without the assurance that the national strategy and policy was not going to change.

Councillors Curran and Jackson commented positively on the visits to the waste management facilities advising that they had been very informative.

Councillor Taylor informed Members of the issues around waste in Washington with regards to waste escaping from vehicles and breeches around waste permits. He commented on the need for a more joined up approach to managing the issues he had reported to the Committee and suggested that it would be useful for the Committee to visit the waste sites in Washington.

Mr Curtis commented that he understood Councillor Taylor's concerns in relation to waste management issues in Washington. He advised that where the Council was a stakeholder in a site, Officers of the Council met regularly to monitor how the contract was being performed.

Councillor Turner suggested that Officers came along to the Voluntary Sector Community Group meetings to inform residents what they should be recycling.

Mr Curtis stated that this was something they could try to put in place as there were partner organisations who had people that did talks on this.

Councillor Galbraith commented that he was concerned at the amount of sorting out of the waste that was carried out at the waste management site when it was supposed to be already sorted and added that if the waste was presented correctly that this would save money.

Mr Curtis confirmed that this would reduce costs. He added that waste was getting lighter. The Council was collecting more however the tonnage was only at 30%. There was a need to get the balance right and the standard of materials that were being recycled needed to be better. Communications with residents were needed to get them to do more and thought needed to be given to how robust to be with those who did not recycle. Human intervention at the Waste Management site would still be needed to sort the recyclables. New Guidance was awaited from Government as to what types of waste they wanted Council's to recycle.

Councillor Blackburn suggested exchanging the Council's load from one recycle site to another to verify the load. He pointed out that paper weighed more when it was wet. He commented that there was confusion from residents as to what could be recycled and that the Council should work with residents on any future communications to ensure it was clear and understandable.

The Chairman requested that more information be provided to Members concerning the contamination labels put on bins so that they were able to explain the reason why to residents if they were asked.

Mr Curtis commented that he would take the above issues on board and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the feedback detailed above be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2018-19

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out the current work programme of the Committee for the 2018-19 Municipal year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer advised that Mr John Seager, Chief Executive of Siglion would be in attendance at the December meeting of the Committee. Reports on Stadium Village Master Plan and the International Strategy remained to be programmed onto the Committee's work programme.

6. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme for 2018-19 and detailed above, be noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

A report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 23rd October, 2018 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to contact him if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

The Chairman referred to item 180725/274 on the Notice and asked if further information could be provided as to whether this meant the fees for Care and Support at Home for Adults were to increase.

The Committee having being informed that the matter had been raised at the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny meeting by Councillor Davison, it was:-

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

The Chairman closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) D. MACKNIGHT,
Chairman.