

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 22 October 2020

PRESENT – Councillors Renton (Chair), Mrs Culley, Allen, Bartch, Cossins, Donoghue, Durham, Haszeldine, McCollom, Tait and Wallis

APOLOGIES –

ABSENT –

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Keir

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Dave Winstanley (Assistant Director Transport and Capital Projects), Ian Thompson (Assistant Director Community Services), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

CLS17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Renton declared an interest as a Trustee of the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

CLS18 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 27 AUGUST 2020

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 August 2020.

RESOLVED – That, with the insertion of ‘maintenance and’ between ‘tree’ and ‘removal’ to Minute CLS13(a); and the replacement of ‘right wing extremism’ with ‘political extremism’ in paragraph 7 of Minute CLS14, the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CLS19 MATTERS ARISING

In relation to Minute CLS12/Aug/20, Members queried the progress of the long term strategy for the Outdoor Market; and were advised that the update from Market Asset Management would be available on the Council’s website.

In relation to Minute CLS13/Aug/20 Members were advised that the walk in the woods had been put on hold in light of the increase in reported Covid-19 cases in Darlington and the introduction of Tier 2 restrictions; the consultation period for the Tree and Woodland Strategy had concluded on 18 October 2020 with 145 responses received; and a report was scheduled for Cabinet 8 December 2020.

CLS20 DARLINGTON STATION

The Assistant Director, Transport and Capital Projects gave a PowerPoint presentation, updating Members on the background and progress made to date on the Darlington Station project.

Reference was made to the aspiration for the Tees Valley Rail network, 'to deliver a high-quality integrated rail network across the Tees Valley that facilitates passenger and freight growth'.

Details were provided of the Tees Valley Rail Network and the current capacity restraints; that major improvements at Darlington and Middlesbrough Station would form the building blocks of improving the Tees Valley rail network; and the project objectives were outlined, including the links to the wider regeneration strategies relating to the town centre, central park and rail heritage quarter.

It was reported that Darlington station was the only East Coast Main Line station in the Tees Valley and a potential HS2 station; the proposals for the new configuration for Darlington Station were outlined which included the provision for a new south bound platform on the East Coast Main Line and new Tees Valley platforms, removing the need for the Tees Valley Line to cross the East Coast Main Line at the South Junction (however, this would still be possible); and the new configuration would allow improved capacity on the Tees Valley and Bishop Lines; and improve connections.

The elements for the delivery of the Darlington Station project and the key features for Station East, Darlington Station and Transport interchange were outlined; the delivery of the project was in two parts with Darlington Borough Council delivering the station gateway and the operational rail and station enhancements led by Network Rail, with a target date for the new track and station being operational in December 2024.

Following a question relating to the indicative dates and target dates, particularly in light of 2025 celebrations, the Assistant Director, Transport and Capital Projects confirmed that Network rail and Department for Transport had introduced a new five stage project management process whereby projects must go through 5 gateways, meeting a certain level of confidence at each gateway; and that locally a project management board was in place, chaired by the Tees Valley Mayor, to have oversight of the project and to review progress.

In relation to the revenue and capital expectations, an Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to government that provided an indicative order of magnitude cost of £85 million for the construction elements and the Department for Transport had approved the scheme to progress to the next stage, and released up to £8.7m to progress the design. With inflation and land costs factored in, the OBC estimated the total order of magnitude cost for the whole project at £105m; this would continue to be refined as the project develops and the next stage would be to submit a Full Business Case (FBC) to government that would include a revised estimate based on the latest design. The FBC would request release of the required funding to deliver the Operational Rail and Station Enhancements elements, with TVCA committing £25m to progress enabling works for the project and to commence the Station Gateway element.

Concern was raised by Members in respect of the residents living and working in close proximity to Darlington Station and were assured that discussions were taking place with planning officers to ensure these matters were considered as part of the planning process; in respect of the transport interchange on Victoria road, there would be consultation with residents; and whilst properties had been acquired in the

area, Waverley Terrace would not be demolished.

Further assurance was provided to Members in respect of the historical integrity; due to the grade II listed status of Darlington Station, there were significant planning processes to adhere to.

RESOLVED –That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Assistant Director, Transport and Capital Projects for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS21 DARLINGTON RAILWAY HERITAGE QUARTER

The Assistant Director, Community Services gave a PowerPoint presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter project; and a briefing note (also previously circulated), outlining projects and activities within the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone, accompanied the presentation.

Details were provided of the indicative site layout plan; this included the development of a 250 space car park in close proximity to the Skerne Bridge site; a new crossing on North road, a plaza between the Goods Shed and Head of Steam Museum, a themed adventure play area, the 1861 shed and private siding from the East Coast Main Line; and that negotiations were underway with Network rail and the Museum Trust in respect of land ownership.

The proposed options for the different elements of the site were outlined, including the Goods Shed which would be the entry point to the Rail Heritage Quarter; Head of Steam Museum; Carriage Works, which would become an exhibition and gallery space; and the Darlington and Stockton walking and cycle network which would run through the site. The start date for work to commence on site was Summer 2021 with a target completion date of early 2024.

It was reported that the work strands for 2025 celebrations were underway; feasibility work for an early locomotive exhibition was in progress, with contact being made with a number of organisations and owners to gain in principle support from owners of early engines from around the world to participate in the event; a review of the options for live steam had commenced, including proposals for a steam train charter excursion for young people from deprived areas and a recreation of 1825 with a replica of Loco No 1 on the Skerne Bridge on 27 September 2025; and Little Inventors, a programme of events with schools leading up to 2025.

Members were advised that the Council was in the process of acquiring the Lime Cells and were working closely with the Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway to submit a National Lottery heritage fund bid. The Lime Cells would be the operating base for the Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway and a five year community engagement programme across the 26 miles, which would commence in 2023.

Following a question in respect of capital and revenue costs between now and 2025 it was reported that the Tees Valley Combined Authority committed £20m to the project; £5m had been allocated from the Towns Fund bid; and £100k from Historic England project for conservation work on the Goods Shed; £500k had been set aside from

Futures Fund to facilitate work up to 2025; and there was no financial contribution from Darlington Borough Council other than officer time, with a significant team in place to deliver the scheme.

Following a question in relation to visitor numbers, the Assistant Director confirmed that a significantly improved event programme would be in place, providing a different offer to other railway museums; the play area would be a significant attraction to the local community, whilst a changeable exhibition space would attract revisits; and the visitor number target was 250,000.

Members were also advised that the museum would be free to access with chargeable rides and exhibitions; and additional income from secondary spend through the site, including the café, shop and special events.

Members were advised of the key Heritage Action Zone projects as outlined in the briefing note and particular reference was made to the History and Heritage Festival 2020 – People and Place; Members were unaware of the festival and highlighted the need for improved advertising and comms to Members and the public, particularly in the lead up to 2025.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Assistant Director, Community Services be thanked for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included in the previously approved work programme.

Discussion ensued on the current work programme; Members were advised that a Members briefing was to be arranged for the update from Environmental Health; and that Members of this scrutiny committee were invited to attend Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2021 to receive an update on the Drug and Alcohol Service.

It was agreed that the reports in relation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Transport Strategy and the Local Transport Plan would be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in February 2021; and it was suggested to complete a quad of aims to examine the School Streets Initiative.

RESOLVED – That the current status of the work programme be noted.