

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 27 August 2020

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Donoghue and Haszeldine,

ABSENT – Councillors Tait

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Crudass, Dulston, Harker, Johnson (Resources Portfolio), Keir, Lee, Marshall (Economy Portfolio) and McEwan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Dave Winstanley (Assistant Director Capital Projects, Transport and Highways Planning), Mark Ladyman (Assistant Director Economic Growth), Graham Hall (Head of Community Safety), Mike Crawshaw (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services), Raymond Linch (Managing Director) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

CLS10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CLS11 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

(1) 9 JULY 2020

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 9 July 2020.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 9 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

(2) 16 JULY 2020

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 16 July 2020.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 16 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

CLS12 DARLINGTON MARKETS

The Assistant Director Economic Growth and Managing Director, Market Asset Management (MAM) gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on progress made to date on the redevelopment of the Indoor market.

The presentation outlined the concepts for future trade; and detailed phase one of the redevelopment. Work to the roof was underway and was due to be completed by the launch of phase one; phase one was out to tender with an anticipated start date of

January 2021 and completion date of April 2021; and that this would include a new entrance, public toilets, food and beverage offer, space for live entertainment and communal seating.

Details were provided on phase two of the redevelopment; this was due to start in April 2021, with a completion date of November 2021; phase two would include general improvements to the retail market.

It was reported that the market had been generating losses; the redevelopment would help the market to become profitable; MAM would be investing £1.8M in the market, with £300K invested to date; and that this redevelopment work would improve town centre footfall and provide a vibrant family based evening economy.

Following a question by Members it was confirmed that a planning application for the temperate garden and vaults had not been submitted; MAM would work closely with Heritage England, Darlington Borough Council and the public to ensure heritage requirements were met prior to the submission of this planning application, with work anticipated to start in December 2021 and be completed by May 2022.

Discussion ensued on the traders within the indoor market; concerns were raised in respect of rent and the loss of traders. The Managing Director, MAM confirmed that rent in Darlington was lower than the national average; that vacant possession was required to begin phase one; six traders had served notice, whilst negotiations were taking place with other traders; MAM had appointed staff to promote the market via social media and to provide support to traders.

Following concerns raised in respect of the safety of night time use of the indoor market, Members were assured that the food and beverage offer would be fenced off from the rest of the market; and security cameras and guards would be in place.

Members highlighted the need for improved communication to ensure the public were aware that redevelopment work on the market was progressing in a timely manner.

Discussion ensued on the decision to relocate the outdoor market to the market square, with Members querying the involvement of traders in the decision, and the impact of the relocation on number of traders and footfall. Members were advised that the decision was undertaken in light of Covid-19 and social distancing requirements; the market square was identified as the most appropriate space to allow social distancing, for both the safety of traders and members of the public; the local representative of national market traders was involved in the discussions regarding the relocation, however whilst they understood the rationale, they were not in support of the decision. The Assistant Director, Economic Growth confirmed that whilst social distancing was still required, there was no further move of the outdoor market anticipated in the near future.

It was reported that traders were experiencing higher levels of trade on the outdoor market in its current location; Members requested figures in respect of footfall, number of traders, and forward forecasting.

Following a question from a Member, the Managing Director, MAM confirmed that a long term strategy for the outdoor market would be developed and shared with

Members.

RESOLVED – (a) That the presentation be noted.

(b) That a written response be provided to Members detailing figures for footfall, number of traders and forward forecasting.

(c) That the long term strategy for the Outdoor Market be shared with Members of this Scrutiny Committee.

CLS13 TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY 2021-2031

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Members views on the Draft Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031, as part of the wider consultation prior to being considered by Cabinet.

It was reported that a Tree and Woodland Strategy had been in place since 2000; covered the Council's approach to the management and development of trees throughout the Borough, including council owned and trees on private land in private ownership; that this was the second update of the Strategy; and that public consultation would run from 1 September 2020 for a period of six weeks.

Discussion ensued in respect of residents' concerns on the management of trees, particularly those in an inappropriate location; the commitment to plant 10,000 trees in partnership with 'Friends of' and community groups; and staffing levels within the department. Following a query from Members regarding the maintenance schedule, including tree inspections, the Senior Arboricultural Officer confirmed that not all trees were inspected on an individual basis; some locations, such as woodlands, were inspected by undertaking a visual audit of the periphery; any trees near to roads and pathways were inspected and removed as and when required.

RESOLVED – That, as part of the consultation process, Cabinet be advised of this Scrutiny's view that:

- (a) consideration should be given to the addition of impact on quality of life as a factor when considering tree removal;
- (b) clarification be sought in respect of the special circumstances that would prevent the replacement of a tree following removal;
- (c) clarification be sought as to whether trees removed are replaced by the same number of trees.
- (d) consideration should be given to the inclusion of hedgerows, including their replacement when removed, in the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031.

CLS14 CONTEST AND PREVENT

The Head of Community Safety gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on Contest and Prevent.

Details were provided of the terrorist threat to the UK including the key factors

considered when identifying threat level; there were five levels of threat; and that the current national threat level was substantial - an attack was likely.

The presentation outlined Contest, the UK's strategy for countering terrorism; the Prevent strategy, in place to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; the objectives of the Prevent strategy were outlined; and the actions involved in relation to Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

Members noted in relation to Pursue, that since March 2020 there were 800 investigations being undertaken by counter terrorism; since March 2017 a total of 25 attacks had been thwarted; and that in 2009 there had been 200 arrests in relation to counter terrorism, with 46 of those convicted.

Details were provided of the local delivery plan; the County Durham and Darlington Contest Group, chaired by Durham Constabulary met on a six monthly basis; a Regional Prevent Forum had been introduced to discuss and share threats, risks and good practice; a Local Authority Community Resilience Officer had been appointed; and a survey was undertaken on the threat relating to crowded places, with a number of recommendations identified and shared with strategic groups.

The Channel process and future developments were outlined.

Members made reference to the term 'right wing extremism' and suggested the term 'political extremism' was used in its place. Members questioned the impact on resources from Dovetail and were advised that high risk areas had received additional funding. Whilst the North East was not a high risk area, requests had been made for additional funding and resources in light of an increase in right wing extremism.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Head of Community Safety for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS15 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTER 4 2019/2020

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with an update on performance against those key performance indicators within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee for the period 2019/20.

Members were advised that of the 25 indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee 16 were reported six monthly at nine were reported annually.

It was reported that of the 25 indicators, five of these did not have data available, nine were showing performance better than the same period last year, two indicators were showing performance the same, whilst nine indicators were showing performance not as good as the same period last year.

Following a question in relation to ENV023 – Number of prosecutions for fly tipping, Members were advised that the increase in prosecutions since lockdown was as a result of increased resources, with a new, fully manned department now in place.

RESOLVED – (a) That the submitted report be noted.

(b) That Members give consideration to further performance indicators to be reported to this Scrutiny Committee.

CLS16 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.

Members were advised that the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee would focus on Rail; a Quad of Aims was being drafted for a Rail 2025 task and finish group to investigate work being undertaken to support the 2025 celebrations; and that this would feed into the next meeting.

The Chair proposed that a walk in the woods with the Senior Arboricultural Officer be arranged to enable Members to gain an understanding of the work of the local authority arborists.

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

(b) That a 'walk in the woods' be arranged for Members of this Scrutiny Committee.