

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12 September 2019

PRESENT – Councillors B Jones (Chair) Bartch, Boddy, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Durham, Howarth, McCollom, Tait and Wallis

APOLOGIES – Councillor McEwan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Harker, Keir, Mrs H Scott, Tom Bryant (Tees Valley Combined Authority) and Jonathan Owen (Market Asset Management (Darlington) Ltd)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Williams (Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services), Ian Thompson (Assistant Director Community Services), Dave Winstanley (Assistant Director Capital Projects, Transport and Highways Planning), Elizabeth Davison (Assistant Director Resources), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services), Mike Crawshaw (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

P9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P10 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 JULY 2019

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 4 July 2019.

A discussion ensued in respect of the format of the minutes following a request from a Member.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

(b) That the minutes remain in the current format.

P11 TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Head of Transport, Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) gave a presentation on the Tees Valley Combined Authority Strategic Transport Plan (STP).

Details were provided on the challenges and opportunities in the Tees Valley; and the proposed vision for Tees Valley, to provide a high quality, clean, quick, affordable, reliable, integrated and safe transport network for people and freight to move within, to and from the Tees Valley.

The STP had been developed by the Combined Authority for the period up to 2029 to deliver three broad objectives; social opportunity, economic growth and environmental protection and enhancement; detailed why investment was needed; the schemes and initiatives to achieve the vision; and set out how the plan would be

delivered and funded.

Members were advised of the pertinent highlights for Darlington including Darlington Station; Darlington Northern Link Road and wider connectivity along the A66; capacity enhancement scheme for the A19 Tees Crossing; Demand Responsive Transport pilot; cycling and walking infrastructure; Wheels to Work Scheme; electric vehicle charging infrastructure; bus partnership and bus improvement corridors.

It was confirmed that formal consultation on the STP had begun. The documentation and a questionnaire were available on the TVCA website and a number of public events had been held across the Tees Valley.

Following a question raised by a Member in respect of the pinch points at Darlington and Middlesbrough train stations, it was confirmed that the TVCA have engaged with the East Coast Mainline Programme Board; a business case was in development; and that this would improve the capacity for East-West train services.

Members highlighted the issue of deliverability by the TVCA and were assured that there was only £66.5 million of the budget left to approve; the TVCA were working closely with Darlington Borough Council to ensure project funding was released in good time; and a project programme board was in place to monitor project progress.

Members queried the aspirations for the plan in respect of the different modes of transport and noted that whilst there were no specific targets, the aim was to reduce the number of car journeys by improving the public transport network and that research was to be undertaken in the Tees Valley with non-bus users.

Discussion ensued on the Darlington Northern Link Road and A19 Tees Crossing, both of which were a strategic transport priority for the Tees Valley Combined Authority; the draft business case for the northern link road was being revisited to identify lower cost options; and due to the 5-year investment periods it was unlikely that both schemes would be progressed in one period.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

P12 INDOOR/OUTDOOR MARKETS - UPDATE

The Director, Market Asset Management (Darlington) Ltd gave a presentation to update Members on progress made to date on the Indoor and Outdoor Market.

The presentation highlighted that MAM had a 99 year lease in partnership with Darlington Borough Council; were obligated to undertake structural repairs and modernisation work; were providing support to Darlington Borough Council to secure the Future High Street Fund; and detailed the proposed developments for the Indoor Market including a temperate garden; market vaults for dining; an enterprise haven for start-up businesses; and farmgate facilities for local growers.

Members were advised of the current challenges; that better utilisation of the market was needed with longer trading hours and a greater variety of businesses to ensure Darlington's offer was different to other local towns; and details were provided of the programme of work and progress made to date.

A discussion ensued on the opening times of the market and Members were advised of the plans for the market to be open on a Sunday. Members were assured that the new building design would allow independent trading; and noted the intention to relocate the Outdoor Market to the Outdoor Market Place, taking into consideration the extensive events programme that was in place.

Members raised concerns in respect of reparation work being undertaken by traders; it was confirmed that short term roofing repairs were completed; further work would be undertaken in January 2020; and appropriate access would be put in place to allow roof maintenance.

Concern was also raised in respect of the number of traders closing their stalls however Members were assured that the priority was to maintain the current stall holders. It was highlighted that whilst Darlington had a wide range of independent businesses, investment was required to modernise the stalls which, along with the creation of an enterprise haven, would encourage new businesses.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

P13 DARLINGTON RAIL HERITAGE QUARTER

The Assistant Director, Community Services gave a presentation on the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter which outlined the proposals to develop the Darlington rail heritage offer for 2025 and beyond.

Members were provided with details of engagement undertaken; initial reactions to the master plan; and that the key themes to include on site were heritage, skills, innovation, play, events, interpretation, skills and learning.

Members were informed of the proposed site master plan which included development of Head of Steam to include an Immersive Experience; restoration of the Goods Shed for use as entry point to the site café retail and functions; development of the Carriage Works; proposal to build a new three line shed with a viewing gallery; and a bespoke play area; all of which will enable Darlington to deliver a unique and in-demand visitor experience.

Details were provided on the Phased Delivery; the estimated costs and timescales; and the potential funding sources, including £20 million confirmed from the Tees Valley Combined Authority Investment Plan.

The Business Plan Assumptions were outlined including an aspiration of 230,000 visitors annually; the Head of Steam, Immersive Experience and play were expected to be the key attractions; and a meeting had been held with National Railway Museum at York to improve partnership working, to ensure the 2025 celebrations were worldwide.

Discussion ensued in respect of a statue of George or Robert Pease and the acquisition of a building in Northgate as part of the heritage offer; it was confirmed that a Heritage Action Zone bid had been submitted to the government; and that if successful, this would enable a number of heritage sites to be linked from the town

centre to the Head of Steam.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

P14 DARLINGTON CREMATORIUM REFURBISHMENT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the current position with regard to the Crematorium, the work undertaken to date and seeking Members' feedback on the proposed options prior to its consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 October 2019.

The submitted report stated that Darlington Crematorium was the fifth to open in the country in 1901; comprised of a chapel with seating for 65 mourners and an overspill annexe to accommodate 40 standing, a waiting room, vestry and crematory; and that the cremators and Chapel no longer met modern-day requirements.

Information was provided on the requirements to treat cremation emissions; Darlington Crematorium was a member of Cremation Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation (CAMEO) and paid a levy to those crematoriums that were abated; that to fund this levy an environmental surcharge of £50 has been charged on top of every adult cremation since 2009, which had increased to £55.

Details were provided on other crematoria in the local area; the number of cremations on an annual basis; and that Darlington Crematorium was expected to have 1650 to 1700 cremations per annum.

Members were advised of the studies taken place on potential options for Darlington Crematorium; and the three options for this Scrutiny Committee to consider; Option 1 – New build/new site; Option 2 – To replace the existing cremators alongside limited improvements to the chapel; and Option 3 – Replace the existing cremators as well as redeveloping the existing chapel into a bereavement service office and new chapel within West Cemetery on part of the land identified for future burials; including advantages, disadvantages and financial implications associated with each option.

Members questioned the possibility of offering environmentally friendly cremations at Darlington Crematorium and details were provided on resomation, a process which used alkaline hydrolysis to cremate remains.

Discussion ensued on the facilities at Darlington Crematorium. Following a site visit by Members it was felt that the Chapel was not fit for purpose and that option 3 was the preferred option. Following a suggestion that a fourth option would be to do nothing, Members were advised that this was not a viable option due to the income generated by the crematorium.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That Cabinet be advised that Place Scrutiny Committee identified Option 3 to be the preferred option.

(c) That the views of Place Scrutiny Committee be taken into consideration by

Cabinet when considering the Darlington Crematorium Refurbishment at its meeting on 8 October 2019.

(NOTE 1 - A vote on the preferred option was taken by those Members present at the meeting and eight Councillors voted in favour of Option 3 and one Councillor voted in favour of option 2.)

(NOTE 2 - Councillor Boddy was not present at the meeting when the vote was taken.)

P15 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.

RESOLVED –That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.