

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Jobs, Regeneration and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 23rd November, 2015 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor H Wells-Bradshaw (Chairman)
Councillor J Weston (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Brookfield, C Browne, B Roberts, S Pochin and G M Walton

Apologies

Councillors D Bebbington and L Durham

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor M Jones – Leader of the Council
Councillor D Stockton – Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Assets
Councillor S Hogben – visiting member

OFFICERS PRESENT

Caroline Simpson – Executive Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity
Julian Cobley – Head of Investment
Karen Teirney – Regeneration Manager
Jez Goodman – Regeneration Programme Manager (Crewe)
Chris Jackson – Senior Projects Officer, Regeneration
David Laycock – Project Manager
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That, subject to the correction of some typographical errors, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Brookfield declared a personal interest in Item 6 as she was employed on a consultancy basis by one of the marketing agents/surveyors for the Royal Arcade portfolio.

20 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of party whip

21 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak

22 CREWE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation on the regeneration of Crewe town centre. This followed on from a presentation the Committee received at its previous meeting regarding the regeneration of Macclesfield town centre. Karen Tierney informed the Committee about the draft regeneration delivery framework which had been approved by Cabinet for consultation in April 2015. The Council had consulted with residents and businesses about the future of the town centre under the slogan "Your Town Your Choice". Nearly 1200 surveys had been completed with 79% agreement to the vision which had been set out in the regeneration framework.

Councillor M Jones, Leader of the Council, arrived during the meeting to contribute to the presentation. The Council had identified various key opportunity sites to be developed as part of the regeneration framework. Jez Goodman provided an overview of some of the sites and the plans for them. These included the Royal Arcade, Crewe Lifestyle Centre, and Crewe University Technical College (UTC) site on West Street. The Committee was also informed about business and infrastructure investment in the town. Councillor Jones informed the Committee that he was expecting the Government to announce that HS2, the high speed rail project, would go through Crewe and have a hub station which would bring lots of investment and economic opportunities to Crewe.

Following the presentation members asked questions and the following points arose:

- The site for the UTC was considered small and potential for expansion was limited with traffic issues in the area. The Committee was informed that there would be scope to expand the proposed building upwards however the UTC would not require a huge site. Highways work such as drop off points and parking would help to ease traffic issues.
- The potential for HS2 may have impacted on some plans however most plans had been developed with the potential for HS2 in mind. There was no overall strategy for planning applications and development. The process would take place over 25 years and would be ongoing which required separate planning applications and development overtime.
- Existing tenants of the Royal Arcade had been consulted on the regeneration framework throughout the process and would be given the opportunity to continue using the site in future.
- It was suggested that access to the town centre was via some areas of deprivation and dilapidation which may discourage visitors to the town centre. These areas also needed to be considered for regeneration in order to improve access and the overall image of the town.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted

Councillor M Jones left the meeting

Jez Goodman, Karen Tierney and Chris Jackson left the meeting

23 SKILLS AND GROWTH ASDV

Julian Cobley and David Laycock provided a report on the creation of a new ASDV for skills and growth. In July 2015 Cabinet had approved the development of a business case for a new way of operating services such as skills and business engagement to improve delivery and provide more benefits to residents and businesses. Cabinet had given the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Assets delegated authority to approve the business case and delivery model for the new ASDV which was due to be decided at a meeting on 7 December 2015.

The current situation in Cheshire East was that there was an ageing work force and changing demographics. There was good GCSE achievement in young people however low employability skills and many graduates from university were moving on from the Borough. It was suggested that the new ASDV would be at the centre of the issue, encouraging the development of the right skills and supporting businesses to develop in the area and retain the skilled workers of the Borough. The ASDV would also work to address skills shortages in industries such as caring and building as well as encouraging development in engineering and science industries.

The proposed model for the ASDV had been developed by considering a range of options using an appraisal tool developed by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). It was decided that a single wholly-owned company limited by shares was the best option.

Members asked questions and the following points arose:

- The ASDV would be funded by revenue from grants and bidding for projects from Government as well as fees from helping other organisations get grants and other fees for discretionary services. It was suggested that private companies were better at generating revenue than local authorities and that the ASDV would be able to do business outside of the Council as well.
- There was a similar model operating on a larger scale in Greater Manchester that was performing successfully. It was anticipated that the arrival of high speed rail in the North West would create a lot of benefits and that Cheshire East needed to be able to compete effectively with places like Greater Manchester to reap the economic benefits of HS2.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the current staff in the teams which were transferring to the ASDV had been assessed to identify any gaps to ensure the ASDV had the necessary capability to achieve its goals. There was experience of the private sector in the staff and the Councillors chosen to be directors of the company would have useful experience. Staff were enthusiastic about the potential change.
- Government had recently decided that in future local authorities would be able to retain all business rates raised in their area. It was hoped that this ASDV would contribute towards increase the business rates raised in Cheshire East.
- Subject to approval of the creation of the ASDV by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Assets, the ASDV was scheduled to begin operating in shadow form in January 2016 with a full launch in April 2016.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted

- (b) That a progress update be provided in March 2016, prior to the ASDV beginning operation, to provide assurance about the readiness of the ASDV to succeed. This will be followed by six monthly performance reports to the Committee to monitor progress.

24 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee gave consideration to its work programme. The Chairman proposed that the Committee set up a task and finish group to consider how changes could be made to the involvement of councillors in section 106 agreement development and management. The Committee agreed and the Chairman asked for volunteers to sit on the task and finish group.

The Committee also agreed that a briefing on HS2 would be added to the work programme due to the expected announcements from Government about whether the line would travel through and stop at Crewe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the work programme be updated as discussed
- (b) That a task and finish group be set up to review S106 Agreements with the following membership: Councillors H Wells-Bradshaw (chair), D Bebbington, S Brookfield, C Browne and J Weston.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.40 pm

Councillor H Wells-Bradshaw (Chairman)