

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Remote meeting using Microsoft Teams on WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Councillor D Harrison (Chairman)

Councillors B Harrison-Rushton, C C Benfield, A J Bridgen, T Eynon, G Hout, K Merrie MBE, M B Wyatt and M D Hay (Substitute for Councillor J Geary)

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R Ashman, R D Bayliss and T Gillard

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, M D'Oyly-Watkins, Mr T Delaney, Mr C Elston, Mrs A Harper, Mr C Lambert, Walford, Mrs R Wallace and Miss E Warhurst

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Geary who was substituted by Councillor M Hay, and from Councillor D Tebbutt.

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor M Wyatt declared a pecuniary interest in item 7 – Local Lockdown Grant Fund: Discretionary Funding, and a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 – North West Leicestershire District Council Economy Recovery Plan as a local business owner.

13. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no public questions.

14. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2020.

It was moved by Councillor K Merrie, seconded by Councillor B Harrison-Rushton and by affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July be approved as a correct record.

15. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's work programme, the item action log and the Cabinet's Executive Decision Notice.

A Member referred to an item previously considered by the Committee in relation to Section 106 monies for health provisions and the agreement to have an annual update. It was requested that this be added to the work programme and also to accept the previous offer of a CCG representative to attend the meeting when it was considered.

A Member referred to an item on the action log entitled 'Update on Climate Change and Carbon reduction' and requested that a Task and Finish Group be set up to consider such

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an important matter. The Chairman thanked the Member for the suggestion and confirmed this would be considered going forward.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The Committee's future work programme be updated in accordance with the above requests from the committee.

16. CHANGE OF APPROACH FOR CURRENT RENT ARREARS ENFORCEMENT

The Housing Management Team Manager presented the report to Members.

The Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support of the proposals.

Members welcomed the report and proposals, as this was much needed for tenants in the District who were struggling due to a very difficult year.

Regard was given to the Universal Credit process and the importance of encouraging tenants to place priority on paying their rent. Members felt that it was important to have the right friendly approach when contacting and supporting vulnerable tenants who may be avoiding contact due to their financial worries.

Officers clarified a number of points within the report and provided an explanation in relation to the Housing Revenue Account and the ring fencing of rental income for tenant services.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and as stated within the report, all comments would be provided to Cabinet when it considered the item on 10 November.

17. LOCAL LOCKDOWN GRANT FUND: DISCRETIONARY FUNDING

Following the declaration of a pecuniary interest, Councillor M Wyatt left the meeting for the duration of the item and took no part in the consideration thereon.

The Head of Finance introduced the report and the Strategic Finance Manager who gave a presentation to Members.

The Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support.

Members were happy with the report and had no additional comments. As per the recommendation, this would be fed back to Cabinet when it considered the item on 10 November.

18. NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE ECONOMY RECOVERY PLAN

The Business Focus Team Manager introduced the report and gave a presentation to Members.

The Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support.

Members welcomed the report and work undertaken. A discussion ensued and a number of points within the report were clarified by the Business Focus Team Manager. The following comments were made:

- The concept of developing a Member ambassadorial role to ensure members were engaged and actively involved in supporting local businesses was very much welcomed.
- In relation to Outcome 4.4 of the plan to support start-up businesses with the use of virtual workshops, concerns were raised on the value of such workshops as success rates were generally measured on attendance rates rather than actual outcomes.
- The proposed establishment of a Coalville town centre management function was welcomed.
- The proposal to rollout a 'Wheels to Work' scheme was welcomed; it was felt that this would really help those people that were struggling with transport to work in the current economic climate.
- In relation to the performance metrics within the plan, it was felt that the data did not provide information on the quality of the jobs, which therefore did not give a full picture on the possible drop in local quality of life and local economy. A measurement of quality would be helpful going forward.
- A suggestion was made to contact the Springboard Centre as part of consultation in relation to new business start-ups as this was an established organisation with many contacts.
- Concerns were raised regarding no progress being made with the supporting of local businesses in readiness for the UK's exit for the European Union, considering that the date was fast approaching.

It was moved by Councillor K Merrie, seconded by Councillor T Eynon and by affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be reported to Cabinet when it considers the item on 10 November.

19. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPANY TO BE KNOWN AS 'EM DEVCO LIMITED'

The Strategic Director introduced the item and gave a presentation to Members.

The Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support of the proposal.

In principle, Members were supportive of the proposals and the need for development on a large scale was acknowledged. The main concerns raised were in relation to the interim delivery vehicle.

The following comments were raised by Members as part of the thorough discussion:

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- Concerns were raised on the cost element of the project. The project was reliant on the completion of HS2 and government funding; therefore, there was a huge risk that NWLDC and Leicestershire County Council could become liable for the ongoing costs of the Interim Vehicle in addition to any initial financial contribution.
- Members felt that the councillor representative on the Interim Vehicle Board was invaluable as it was important to have an influence on the project to achieve the potential benefits for the district.
- In reference to being net carbon zero, it was pointed out that the promise was to 'prioritise' the reduction of emissions and this did not mean net carbon zero. In addition, the report referred to East Midlands Airport as an inland Freeport on the UK's largest 24-hour airfreight hub, which was not a carbon neutral approach. It was felt that approving this would be welcoming flight scheduling 24 hours a day. Concerns were raised that the proposal did not embrace the climate change emergency and it was felt that it should be in the forefront for any future development.
- Concerns were raised that the legislation for a Freeport and for a locally lead Development Corporation had not yet been approved or details available to examine. In addition, there was no guarantee that the government would allow a Development Corporation at the end of the process, or the desired type of Development Corporation actually be achieved, and clarity was needed in this situation for the Interim Vehicle.
- Members felt it was very important going forward to receive more details as they became available and regular progress updates. The Strategic Director confirmed this would be the case, as well as regular consultation with the Cross Party Working Group.
- A number of Members expressed major concerns with the financial risks for the authority, especially in the current difficult economic climate. It was strongly felt that a risk assessment was essential when the matter was considered by Council.

The Strategic Director reassured members that the recommendations for cabinet were for financial support in principle. When considered by Council there would be specific costs included and £100,000 had already been allocated for the project within the budget. He agreed that as the Council would be reliant on obtaining funding there would be an element of risk involved.

Councillor T Eynon proposed a change to the wording of the Cabinet recommendations to acknowledge the amount of risk involved and to ask for a comprehensive risk assessment to be undertaken before approval by Council. This needed to include the impact of HS2 eastern branch to East Midlands not happening; no government funding for the interim vehicle; climate change challenge not embraced; impact of COVID 19; and new legislation not being forthcoming and an alternative structure for the Development Corporation being necessary, meaning it would not be "locally led". Following a discussion by Members and advice received from the Monitoring Officer, it was agreed that recommendation 3 be amended to read as follows:

'Subject to the comments made by the Committee and the undertaking of a full comprehensive risk assessment prior to consideration at Council, the cabinet recommendations as detailed in the report be approved.'

Subject to the amendment to recommendation 3, It was moved by Councillor T Eynon, seconded by Councillor M Hay and

RESOLVED THAT:

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- 1) The progress made to date regarding the East Midlands Development Corporation and the establishment of an Interim Vehicle be noted.
- 2) Comments made by Committee be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 10 November.
- 3) Subject to the comments made by the Committee and the undertaking of a full comprehensive risk assessment prior to consideration at Council, the cabinet recommendations as detailed in the report be approved.

20. BUILDING CONTROL - PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY

The Head of Planning and Infrastructure presented the report to Members.

A discussion was had on the difficulty to recruit to building control posts nationally and the general movement to shared services for a number of authorities. Members supported the proposals.

It was moved by Councillor K Merrie, seconded by Councillor T Eynon and by affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The work undertaken on the Building Control Project with Charnwood Borough Council to date be noted
- 2) Comments be provided to Cabinet when the matter is considered at its meeting on 10 November.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm