

CABINET – 18 FEBRUARY 2020

ITEM 3 – MIDLANDS ENGINE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The report was considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 12 February and the minutes of the meeting are detailed below.

Members received a presentation from Mr K Harrison – Development Corporation Programme, which provided background information on the development corporation proposition and the three sites involved at Toton, Radcliffe Power Station and East Midlands Airport.

Members raised a number of concerns about the development corporation proposition and in particular the lack of detail in relation to infrastructure and connectivity, sustainable transport, the level of growth considering the Council's movement towards zero carbon, the need for new housing, community engagement and local consultation, and engagement with members.

Members were advised that it was the intention to set up a member working group to be regularly consulted on the progress of the Development Corporation work over the next two years during the period of the Interim Delivery Vehicle.

It is intended that the member working group would be cross party, along committee proportionality lines, including members whose wards are directly affected, to be chaired by Cllr Robert Ashman as Portfolio Holder. Terms of reference would be required and meetings would be arranged on a quarterly basis, or as and when needed, to give the working group the opportunity to have an input into key decisions in advance of the establishment of the locally led Development Corporation.

EXTRACT of the DRAFT MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillor D Harrison (Chairman)

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

In attendance: Councillors R Canny, J Legrys and A C Saffell

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mr T Delaney, Mr C Elston, Mr C Lambert and Mrs R Wallace

MIDLANDS ENGINE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

A presentation was given to Members by Mr K Harrison, Director – Development Corporation Programme, detailing the proposed three sites and the development corporation proposition.

At the request of the Chairman it was agreed to circulate the presentation slides to all Committee Members.

Councillor C Benfield raised concerns regarding the level of growth considering the Council's movement towards zero carbon. He also commented that the Midlands area was 25 percent less productive than the rest of the UK and was therefore interested in how the promised improvement in productivity would actually work. Mr K Harrison reported that the growth was not for growths sake and new sustainable methods would be investigated. He added that the key was to improve transport links across the Midlands as they would benefit the jobs being created.

Councillor K Merrie raised concerns that promises were constantly made regarding connectivity and green methods of transport but unfortunately it never materialised. Mr K Harrison assured Members that there was a Midlands Connect Team involved which had identified a number of key investments as part of the project which would create a strategy to address these issues.

The Head of Planning and Infrastructure then went on to present the report to Members which provided supporting information on the proposition to establish a Development Corporation.

In response to a question from Councillor M Hay regarding keeping Members informed, the Head of Planning and Infrastructure explained that the plan was to create a Member working group to be regularly consulted on the progress over the next two years. He referred Members to recommendation c) of the report.

Councillor T Eynon raised concerns that there was no mention of any housing to match the jobs being created, therefore she questioned how it would align with the climate emergency when it was assumed that people would travel to the sites by car.

Councillor C Benfield raised concerns that the statement of intent was not detailed enough as it did not include how the objectives would actually be met. He would also like to see the appointed member representatives have some influence or control over the project rather than just to oversee it. Mr K Harrison explained that the statement of intent was a set of shared aspirations which would be used as a guide to shape the project going forward, therefore more detail would be available in due course.

Councillor B Harrison – Rushton asked for assurance that local communities would be involved as the northern parishes would be directly affected by the project. Mr K Harrison recognised the need for community engagement and confirmed that work would also be undertaken with local authorities in relation to planning, employment and housing going forward.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor A C Saffell – Ward Member in Castle Donington, addressed the Committee. He commented that the current infrastructure in Castle Donington was lacking and the traffic flowing through the centre due to growth in the area had a big impact on the village. He asked Members to be cautious as an inadequate infrastructure would damage local businesses. He concluded that it was essential that the right kind of housing be built to suit the employees that the businesses were attracting.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor R Canny – Ward Member in Castle Donington, addressed the Committee. She felt it was important to have a steer in the direction of the project as Castle Donington was already struggling with the current amount of growth. Her main concerns was connectivity and how freight was to be transported. She felt that encouragement was required for freight to use specific freight lines rather than lorries on the already swamped roads, especially as there was air quality issues in the area.

The Head of Planning and Infrastructure reported that connectivity was one of the main issues for officers and a number of workshops had been attended with specific concerns raised on the matter. He added that a consultant had been commissioned to look at the issues.

The Strategic Director explained that the report before Members was a generic report which was being submitted to the other Local Authorities involved and welcomed all comments made. He added that the priority area was the impact on communities and recognised the importance of consultation.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor R Ashman – Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder, addressed the Committee. He stated that the Committee could request him to attend and provide an update at any time. He would be happy to do so.

It was moved by Councillor G Hault, seconded by Councillor B Harrison-Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The Statement of Intent which has been agreed by relevant Local Authority Chief Executives and which sets out the shared aspirations of the Local Authorities for the Development Corporation Proposition be endorsed.
- b) North West Leicestershire's participation and involvement in the establishment of a suitable interim delivery structure created to undertake development activities in advance of the establishment of a statutory locally led Development Corporation be endorsed.
- c) The setting up of a Member Working Group to be regularly consulted on the progress of the Development Corporation work over the next two years during the period of the interim delivery vehicle be endorsed.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

- d) The report be endorsed by Cabinet.