

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 14 November 2017 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 6.00 pm
Concluded 7.25 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT
Heseltine Mallinson	Farley Green H Khan	Ahmed

Observer: Councillor Ross-Shaw, Portfolio Holder, Regeneration, Planning and Transport

Apologies: Councillors H Hussain, Jamil and Nazir

Councillor Farley in the Chair

15. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Green disclosed, in respect of the item relating to Business Support Provision (Minute 18), that he had been approached by a local business in respect of the Priority Street Initiative but had referred the matter to the appropriate officers.

16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

17. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

18. BUSINESS SUPPORT PROVISION

The Strategic Director, Place presented a report (**Document “I”**) which provided an overview of the business support initiatives currently being provided by the Council and its partners within the district and the wider City Region.

In presenting the report the following issues were highlighted and responses

given to Members' questions and comments:

- Officers were considering rolling out a discretionary business rate relief scheme, as utilised as part of the City Centre Growth Scheme, to other district centres.
- Details of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) schemes and other programmes part funded through the European Structural Investment Fund (ECIF) were included within the report. Details of inward investment work could be included within future reports.
- Evaluation was undertaken on a scheme by scheme basis. £23 million of support had been delivered as a result of work by the Invest in Bradford Team last year. It would be difficult to calculate an overall headline figure in terms of the benefit of all schemes as this covered such a wide range of activities.
- The benefits to local business and the district's economy were achieved through ensuring that businesses were resilient and competitive.
- In terms of sustainability; the benefits/outputs were monitored for the length of the relevant programme but it was not possible to continue to do this indefinitely. The Economic Development Team tried to ensure that businesses were aware of the support available to them and that they reviewed their efficiency so that they were in the best possible position to move forward. In terms of the creation of additional employment, verification was undertaken to ensure that the jobs created would be of an appropriate quality.
- A set amount of rate rebate applied per job created regardless of the size of the business concerned. Smaller businesses would be permitted to achieve full rebate whilst others would have a ceiling applied. Approximately 95% of the businesses supported were independent.
- There was a cap on the amount of public funding permitted for a single company (€200,000) which would affect larger businesses if they had claimed relief elsewhere. The aim was for assistance to be provided in situations where the benefit would not have been realised other than through this funding being made available.
- Officers were exploring what could be done to promote the Digital Enterprise Fund and to encourage take-up from Bradford businesses. Currently 17 local businesses had benefitted from this scheme.

A Member commented that the City Centre Growth scheme had not just been aimed at Broadway but towards bringing empty units back into use. He was not aware of any of the businesses that had benefitted from funding/assistance having ceased trading.

Members and the Portfolio Holder also commented that:

- Those car parks under Council control were the cheapest in West Yorkshire.
 - More and more shop units were being brought back into use and it was not true to say that 'half were shut'. There was a recognised issue with the 'top of town' but consultation was currently being undertaken on a masterplan to address this situation.
 - The service charges for market stallholders were spent on the markets.
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- Participation in the Local Enterprise Partnership was very beneficial for the

district and Bradford got its 'fair share'. Part of the Council's role was to ensure that local businesses were aware of, and were encouraged to apply for, the available funding and that there were no barriers to them doing so.

- Parking in the district was cheaper than the rest of West Yorkshire and the large majority of the country. Although the charges at Broadway had recently been increased this was not within the control of the Council and was understood to be in response to supply and demand.
- Bradford markets had a great offer with most of the stalls being occupied; they were being supported by the Council and a new shuttle service was in operation from the Interchange. The service charges associated with renting a stall reflected the costs of running the service. The rents had not been increased for 25 years and the service charges only increased if the costs went up.
- It was believed that the development of a new station would be transformational for the City Centre and the district and was a very important goal; it would bring more people into the City Centre and have a positive impact on investment.

It was noted that a specific item in respect of the district's markets was on the Committee's Work Plan for the 6 March 2018 meeting.

Resolved –

That the contents of Document "I" be noted and welcomed.

NO ACTION

19. ONE CITY PARK PROJECT

Previous reference: Minute 5 (2016/17)

A report was submitted by the Strategic Director, Place which updated Members on the progress made in respect of the One City Park project since the report to the Committee in June 2016 (**Document "J"**).

It was explained that:

- This was a key site for the regeneration of the City Centre. It had been vacant since the demolition of the old police station and outline planning permission had been granted in December 2014.
- There had been a party interested in a substantial part of the site during 2016 but this had not resulted in a formal offer.
- The Council was keen to promote the site and an informal 'Expression of Interest' process had been launched on 18 October 2017. A commercial estate agency was also being used to promote the site directly with developers and companies who may be in a position to relocate in the near future. A more formal process to allow expressions of interest would be pursued in early 2018.

The Assistant Director, Economy and Development responded to questions from

Members:

- Planning permission had originally been sought in order to establish the principle of the delivery of development on the site and to give an indication of the volume of development that could be achieved. This permission was not able to account for any particular form of development the end user might require. There had been no significant changes in policy since that time.
- It was not proposed to extend the existing planning permission as any developer would have to submit a new application, to establish their preferred scheme, in due course. It was considered that the extant permission offered sufficient comfort for any potential developer in respect of the establishment of the principle of development.
- Officers were trying to map the potential demand for this site. There had been a much higher level of interest at the soft launch in October than had been seen previously.
- The site would provide very good quality commercial office space which would be accessible and affordable. The aim was to develop provision that would meet future need. £4.8 million grant remained available to facilitate the project.
- The Council was very clear that this site should also be part of the public infrastructure in terms of accessibility and permeability but did not wish to be too prescriptive in terms of design.
- It was difficult and could be considered counter-productive to have firm contingency arrangements in place at this stage,
- Planning permission was only one part of the wider process. The expressions of interest would be used to inform a process of more formal expressions of interest which would be open to scrutiny. It was not considered that a planning permission that, in reality, would never be delivered was particularly helpful.
- In terms of the £4.8 million grant funding, the project had to be delivered by 2021 and the timeline had been developed in order to achieve this. This funding was to assist in addressing any abnormal costs associated with development of this site or any potential barriers to development.
- The site was specifically targeted for private sector jobs to balance a disproportionate number of public sector jobs in this locality.
- The Council needed to be robust in its commitment to develop a high quality scheme on this site; it was considered that it would have a transformative effect.

In response to comments from some Members expressing concern in respect of the public perception of the planning permission not being renewed and thus the Council's commitment to development of the site, and the need for assurances that something would happen with the site, the Assistant Director undertook to give this issue further consideration.

Further comments were made by Members as follows:

- It was important that it was recognised that the existing situation was temporary; it should be clear that this was a prime development site for the City Centre.
- Contrary to the issues raised in respect of the lapse of planning permission, this was not a matter that had been raised as an issue of concern by the many

different businesses with whom regeneration issues had been discussed during the preceding six month period.

Further to which it was

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made in respect of the One City Park project and the current anticipated timeline for the next stages of delivery, as set out in Document “J”, be noted.
- (2) That the Strategic Director, Place be requested to present a further progress report to the Committee by no later than January 2019, with an earlier report being submitted if there are any significant developments with the project prior to that time.

ACTION: *Strategic Director, Place*

20. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

Previous reference: Bradford West Area Committee, Minute 7 (2017/18)

The Committee’s Work Plan for 2017/18 was submitted (**Document “K”**) for Member’s consideration.

It was noted that a referral from the Bradford West Area Committee, at its meeting held on 5 July 2017, which the Committee had resolved to add to its Work Programme for 2017/18 in respect of a petition relating to traffic matters in the Lumb Lane area of Bradford, with particular reference to parking provision and the potential redevelopment of the Drummond Mills site, would not be considered by the Committee until such time as there were substantive proposals to develop the site. The Assistant Director - Planning, Transportation and Highways had been asked to notify the Scrutiny Lead Officer if and when any proposals to develop the site were submitted.

Resolved –

- (1) That a progress report on the One City Park project be added to the future Work Programme for January 2019.
- (2) That it be noted that the petition relating to traffic matters in the Lumb Lane area of Bradford, with particular reference to parking provision and the potential redevelopment of the Drummond Mills site, will not be considered by the Committee until such time as there are substantive proposals to develop the site.

ACTION: *Scrutiny Lead*

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Regeneration and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER