

PLACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14th March 2022

Present: Councillor Mrs Lucy Hodgson in the Chair
Councillors Agar, A. Amos, Geraghty, Gregson, Hodges (Vice-Chair), Norfolk and Stanley

Officers: Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning and Governance
Zoey West, Deputy Director – Economic Development
Duncan Rudge, Head of Planning
Jonathan Lester, Planning Enforcement Officer

58 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

59 Declarations of Interest

None.

60 Public Participation

None.

61 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

62 Untidy Properties

The Committee received a report on untidy land and properties in the city. Examples of untidy land were identified in Appendix 1 attached to the report.

Members had previously requested an update and overview of the actions taken by the Council to address land and properties in the city which are in a significant condition of untidiness or disrepair. There are a number of mechanisms through which a property in a condition of concern to residents and neighbours, may also be of interest to the Council and these were highlighted at paragraph 2.1 of the report.

The Planning Enforcement Officer, in presenting the report, explained that section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provided local planning authorities with powers to address properties and land that are adversely affecting the amenity of the area.

Paragraph 3.6 of the report explained the process once a decision is taken to pursue a case. Table 1 at paragraph 3.7 of the report highlighted the number of cases investigated since 2015 and how many were outstanding. Further interventions were also included within the report.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance and the Planning Enforcement Officer responded to questions from Committee Members on the tidy up process and action taken to deal with outstanding cases. Committee Members noted that the resource for this area of work has now been increased, which was welcomed.

Committee Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report and the actions being taken by the Council to address cases of long-term untidy land and properties.

63 Strategic Play Area Development Plan

The Committee considered a report on a proposal to develop a Worcester City Strategic Play Area Development Plan. The following appendices were attached to the report – Appendix 1 total children’s and youth play provision by Ward; Appendix 2 map of play provision categorised as toddler, junior or youth and Appendix 3 map of Worcester City Council owned play areas and those owned by other organisations and broke down and categorised further into children or youth.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance presented the report and informed Committee Members that the Council does not at the present time have a strategic plan which guides the Council’s investment decisions around outdoor play area provision.

Members had requested that consideration be given to the development of a strategic plan and it is noted that play provision is an agreed priority in the newly revised Worcester City Plan 2022-2027. An officer working group had convened and their findings and recommendations were set out in paragraphs 2.5-2.26 of the report.

The preferred option is to produce a Strategic Play Area Development Plan and the aims of the plan were highlighted in paragraph 3.3 of the report. In order to develop the Plan, officers stated that it would be essential to undertake an engagement and consultation exercise by a specialist contractor. Committee Members were informed that there would be an opportunity for the Children and Young People’s Champion to raise the profile of the project and the consultation.

It is anticipated that the proposed Strategic Play Area Development Plan would be brought to Committee for approval in October. Emphasis was made on the basis that the plan would aim to enhance, and not reduce, current level of provision. The preferred option was to also progress site feasibility for city centre play provision which would be subject for further Member approval.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance and the Head of Planning responded to questions from Committee Members on elements of the S106 contributions, specific budget allocation for play related proposals and the need to look at demographics as some areas in greater need than others. It was noted that residents do not necessarily recognise ward boundaries and that the open space assessment, which was established to deal with new developments, would look at in terms of prioritisation.

Committee Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular the current available information on identified needs for outdoor play provision, funding opportunities and constraints;**
- 2. approve the engagement of a specialist contractor to undertake a detailed consultation exercise around future outdoor play space provision across the city and from that consultation, develop proposals for a Strategic Play Area Development Plan to be brought back to Committee in October 2022 for approval;**
- 3. delegate authority to the Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities - in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Place and Economic Development Committee to procure and appoint a suitable contractor as set out in 2 above;**
- 4. recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the allocation of £40,000 for this work; and**
- 5. concurrent with the work set out above, supports the identification of potential city centre locations for investment in youth play provision, with detailed proposals to be brought back to Members for consideration.**

64 Proposed Committee Performance Scorecard 2022/23

The Committee considered the proposed content of the Place and Economic Development Committee Scorecard for 2022/23. The Deputy Director – Economic Development presented the report and summarised the main points, including Key Projects and Activities, new projects and current projects that have been removed.

Following changes in the management of the Planning Service, a renewed focus is being given to planning performance targets, particularly in respect of development management (planning applications). This is an important area of scrutiny not just for to monitor customer satisfaction but also because the Council's planning function can be subject to intervention by the Secretary of State should specified performance targets not be met.

Committee Members were also informed that the Council's Internal Audit Service will be undertaking an audit this year of the Planning Service, focussing first on the customer experience and the control measures in place to ensure performance targets are tracked, reported and delivered against.

The Head of Planning explained to Committee Members that he was also looking to introduce a specific measure for householder applications, as it was important that these need to be determined within a reasonable time and where we set the measure would be important, a review would be carried out in 12 months. These proposed set of measures would be visible to the Committee and are accountable.

The Head of Planning stated that if Committee Members were in agreement with the additional proposed measure he would prepare the detail and would circulate to the Chair and Vice Chair for agreement.

Members welcomed the additional measure proposed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approve the proposed content of the Committee Performance Scorecard for 2022/23, and agree to the additional performance measure relating to Householder applications to be delegated to the Chair and Vice Chair for agreement.

65 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 8.55p.m.

Chairman at the meeting on
6th June 2022