

PLACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

29th January 2024

Present: Councillor Robyn Norfolk in the Chair

Councillors Collier, Cooper (Vice-Chair),
Desayrah, Geraghty, Gregson, Jagger,
Piotrowski, Riaz, Round and Stanley

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Cockeram

Officers:

David Blake, Managing Director
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance
and Resources
Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director –
Operations, Homes and Communities
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning
and Governance
Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
Duncan Rudge, Head of Planning
Kevin Moore, Head of Property and Asset
Management
Alan New, Lead Commissioner for Leisure,
Play and Health and Wellbeing

Apologies: Councillor Cleary

The Committee stood and observed a minute's silence prior to the start of the meeting in memory of Paul Walters, former Chairman of St Peters Parish Council, who had died recently.

32 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Stanley for Councillor Cleary.

33 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Geraghty – Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document (Minute 39) - as a member of Worcestershire County Councillor and Chair of the Shrub Hill Quarter Steering Committee; and UKSPF Final Year (2024/25) Allocations (Minute 43) – as a member of Worcestershire County Council

Councillor Norfolk - Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document (Minute 39) – as a member of the Shrub Hill Quarter Steering Committee

Councillors Collier and Cooper – Battenhall Park – Pump Track Proposal (Minute 37) – as members of Bike Worcester

Councillor Desayrah – Cotswold Way Public Open Space Improvements (Minute 38) – as local Ward Member.

34 Public Participation

The following people all spoke on Battenhall Park - Pump Track Proposal (Minute 37):

Carla Williams spoke on behalf of local residents objecting to the location of the pump track on grounds of unsuitability (terrain and location), access (including users, emergency services & construction & maintenance vehicles), parking, noise nuisance, disturbance to aquatic life, wildlife and depriving the whole community of a unique green, safe space widely used by so many.

Nicola Stobbs focussed on children's voices and their right to play, reminding everyone that although this site might have been deemed unsuitable for the pump track, a new site should be found with as short a delay as possible. She sought reassurances that this will remain on the Place and Economic Development Committee agenda as a standing item until a pump track is built.

Rob Collier of Bike Worcester supported the decision to consider other sites for a pump track, immaterial of the considerations of Battenhall Park. He invited councillors to form a cross-party working group with Bike Worcester to support the City Council in mounting an ambitious pump track programme that delivers a destination pump track site as well as several local schemes in the next two years.

Gary Vallance was wholeheartedly behind the installation of a modern pump track in Battenhall Park, ideally as the forerunner to a wider provision of similar facilities across the city. In his experience, those against the notion of a pump track were often misinformed as to the nature of these facilities in the context of their setting. He hoped to bring some clarity and offered his services to those involved in the project.

Paul Sobczyk raised concerns that the project was about to stall and wanted to do all he could as both a local resident and young riders' leader to support the proposal. He considered that the central issues of concern related to noise, anti-social behaviour, litter, and damage to green space. These are serious matters, especially for those living nearby. He asked Committee Members to consider an alternative to the recommendation at 1.2 which would be to explore the potential for reducing the severity of all the impacts of concern. This must be done with the full involvement of those living in closest proximity. He urged Members not to discard the hard work and community enthusiasm that has gone into the project so far, and not to be distracted with alternative locations in Worcester.

The Chair thanked all speakers and stated that all would be provided with a written response.

35 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36 Setting the Budget for 2024/25 and MTFP to 2028/29

The Committee considered the priorities within the budgets relating to services within the remit of the Committee for 2024/25. The Head of Finance presented the report and accompanying appendices and asked Members to consider any potential changes for the areas that fall under the remit of the Committee, including any new budget proposals.

Members did not identify any changes to budgets or the capital programme and there were no new budget proposals. The Head of Finance advised that any new proposals can be submitted to the 6th February 2024 Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the proposed Budgets for the various services identified for 2024/25;**
- 2. note the priorities each service;**
- 3. note the services' Capital Programme and future projects; and**
- 4. recommend the Policy and Resources Committee to agree the proposed budgets as set out in the report.**

37 Battenhall Park Pump Track

The Chair invited a local Ward Member, Councillor Cockeram, to address the Committee prior to the presentation of the item. Councillor Cockeram spoke in support of a pump track in St Peters Ward but said he thought there were other locations in the Ward which would be as good, if not better. He noted that the budget and location for this facility were decided some time ago but by previous councillors and without sufficient community consultation in his view. Councillor Cockeram also said that a destination pump track would be needed for the whole of the city.

The Committee went on to consider the report on the Battenhall Park – Pump Track proposal, presented by the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities.

The report updated Members on the work undertaken and presented the business case developed to date for the installation of a pump track at Battenhall Park. This project supports the delivery of the Worcester Play Plan. Officers had undertaken further work in respect of this project including a public consultation exercise, a procurement exercise for the installation of the track, the commissioning of an environmental survey and further engagement with planning colleagues.

The public consultation information leaflet was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The consultation via an on-line survey went live on 26th October and closed on the 26th November. Door-to-door consultation was undertaken by the Community Engagement Team on 23rd November. Full details of the consultation responses were shown in Appendix 2 attached to the report. The headline results from the consultation were set out at paragraph 2.8 of the report. Although most

are supportive of a pump track at this location there were those that strongly opposed it.

Two bids were received in response to the running of a procurement exercise during Autumn 2023, as highlighted at paragraph 2.31 of the report. Both bids were within the £60,000 capital funding for which provision had been made within the capital programme.

Due to a combination of practical challenges that exist with the Battenhall Park site and the stated level of opposition that has been communicated through consultation, this has led officers to recommend that a decision on this location is deferred. This did not mean that the site had been discounted as unsuitable.

A deferment will allow investigation work to be undertaken on additional sites, with a view to a further report being presented to this Committee with an option appraisal of sites. This will also enable officers to consider the option of more than one pump track or similar facility that would include a destination type facility, followed by that of a neighbourhood type facility. The deficit in facilities for children and young people to use their wheels in safe, traffic-free spaces, is felt across the city and multiple sites would ultimately be of benefit.

The Chair asked the Corporate Director whether, if the recommendation in the report was agreed, it does not mean the end of wheels-based play provision in St Peters. The Corporate Director confirmed that was correct. The Chair also referred to the survey/consultations and worrying allegations that the consultation system is being misused. The Corporate Director stated this had been noted and that an upgrade to the current system was being looked at or possibly a new one.

An amendment to recommendation 1.2 of the report was made by a Committee Member as follows:

"This Committee approves a pump track at Battenhall Park, on the condition that officers work with residents, in particular people living closest to the location to address concerns relating to anti-social behaviour, environmental considerations, and instruct officers to undertake work to investigate further locations across the city, including within the St Peters Ward."

The amendment to recommendation 1.2 was seconded. The proposer then spoke in support of the amendment.

Committee Members proceeded to debate the amendment where a range of views were expressed. Some Members spoke in favour of support of this facility and felt that there was a pressing need to bring forward the project given how long it had been in development. Those Members felt this choice of location was acceptable as long as there was engagement with residents to help address their concerns. Other Members spoke in opposition of this choice of location and raised concerns including in relation to the community consultation exercise, environmental impact, accessibility, parking, safety.

Officers responded to questions, comments and points of clarification from Committee Members.

The Chair asked Committee Members to take a vote on the amendment to the recommendation at 1.2 which had been proposed and seconded. Upon being put to the vote the amendment of recommendation 1.2 was agreed.

The Committee then proceeded to vote on the recommendation, as amended. Upon being put to the vote the proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular the results from the public consultation exercise included at Appendix 2;**
- 2. approve a pump track at Battenhall Park, on the condition that officers work with residents, in particular people living closet to the location to address concerns relating to anti-social behaviour, environmental considerations, and instructs officers to undertake work to investigate further locations across the city, including within the St Peters Ward;**
- 3. note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in June 2024, that will provide the outcomes of investigation work in respect of additional locations that could be considered for delivering pump track facilities.**

38 Cotswold Way Public Open Space Improvements

The Chair stated that this and all subsequent items would be taken as read. Officers did not make a presentation on the items but responded to questions and comments.

The Committee received a report on the Cotswold Way Public Open Space improvements.

As part of the 2022/23 budget setting a capital allocation of £100,00 was approved for improvements to Cotswold Way Public Open Space, situated between Cranham Drive and Chedworth Close within the Warndon Ward. During Summer 2023 officers consulted with both Warndon Ward Councillors to develop a project brief, some informal resident engagement was also undertaken.

The project brief consisted of the elements, namely Biodiversity Enhancements; Provision of Play Equipment; and Car Parking Provision. Further details of each of these elements were set out in the report at paragraphs 2.5-2.28.

Further information about the project was outlined in Appendix 1 attached to the report, including a map of the project area.

In consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee and Ward Councillors a public consultation scheme was developed and took place between 20th November and 17th December 2023. The consultation results were included in Appendix 2 attached to the report.

The preferred option was outlined in paragraphs 3.1-3.4 of the report.

An additional recommendation was proposed by a Committee Member as follows:

“Recommendation 1.4 – All future development planning of this site will include full consultation with both/all Ward Members and other interested and advisory bodies, (such as, but not limited to, the City Council Youth Team, Safer Neighbourhood Team Warndon and Cranham Primary School), at every stage, and with local residents at all appropriate stages”.

The additional recommendation was seconded.

A concern was raised that individuals could respond multiple times to the consultation via the survey. A suggestion was made that officers could review the methods of consultation in view of the comment made.

Committee Members on the whole supported the proposal, with the additional recommendation, which was a much-needed facility for the area. Members also commented that it was good to see a move away from off the shelf play equipment to the use of natural materials.

The Chair asked Committee Members to take a vote on the additional recommendation which had been proposed and seconded. Upon being put to the vote the additional recommendation was agreed.

The Committee then proceeded to vote on the recommendation, as amended. Upon being put to the vote the proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. note the contents of the report and in particular the results of the public consultation exercise included at Appendix 2;**
- 2. note that biodiversity enhancement works have commenced and can be funded from within existing revenue budgets;**
- 3. approve the release of up to £100,000 capital funding as allocated within the capital programme to progress the design and implementation of a ‘play on the way’ scheme;**
- 4. agree that all future development of this site will include full consultation with both/all ward members and other interested and advisory bodies (such as, but not limited to, the City Council Youth Team, Warndon Safer Neighbourhood Team and Cranham Primary School), at every stage, and with local residents at all appropriate stages; and**
- 5. delegate the Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to agree on a final specification for a ‘play on the way’ scheme’ for the purpose of undertaking a procurement exercise for the design, provision and implementation of such a scheme.**

39 Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee considered a report on the Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The document was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

A series of engagement events organised by Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council took place between April and September 2023 and featured online and in-person activities. The Statement of Community Involvement consultation to date was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

The SPD comprises 6 chapters, which were set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, a brief description was provided for each.

Following approval of the document, an extensive 6-week consultation programme will be undertaken. At the end of the consultation period, a report will be produced which summarises the comments made and the changes which have been incorporated into the document and this consultation report will be published alongside the SPD for adoption.

The Head of Property and Asset Management responded to questions and comments from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. approve the draft Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document for a minimum 6-week public consultation;**
- 2. authorise the Corporate Director – Planning and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft SPD prior to publication for the purposes of the public consultation; and**
- 3. subject to the outcome of the public consultation raising no significant material considerations requiring substantial amendments to the draft SPD, authorise the Corporate Director – Planning and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, to make any necessary minor amendments and refer the draft SPD to Council for adoption.**

40 Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023 for the monitoring period 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023

The Committee received a report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement for the monitoring period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023. The document was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Infrastructure Funding Statement had been prepared by officers, in line with legal requirements for the year 2023, and had been published on the Council's website.

There were no questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the 2023 version of the Infrastructure Funding Statement that has been published on the Council's website.

41 South Worcestershire Housing Land Supply Report - December 2023

The Committee received a report on the South Worcestershire Five-Year Housing Land Supply, December 2023.

The Committee were asked to note the publication of the South Worcestershire Councils Five-Year Land Supply report and appendices, which details the Housing Land Supply for the five year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028.

The five year housing requirement for Worcester City Council is 1,715 dwellings, the National Planning Policy Framework requires a buffer to be added of 5% to ensure choice in the market, therefore the total five year requirement is 1,801 dwellings.

The total deliverable supply for the five-year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028 that can be counted towards Worcester City's supply is 1,733 dwellings.

Therefore, a total supply of 4.81 years can be demonstrated by Worcester City Council. Planning decisions should continue to be made in the context of paragraph 11 and the tilted balance, at least until the council has confirmed whether a four- year supply can be demonstrated in the context of paragraph 226 of the NPPF published in December 2023.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2023 explains that paragraph 226 that where Local Plans are at an advanced stage of plan making, local authorities will only need to demonstrate a four year supply of deliverable housing land. Officers at all three South Worcestershire Councils are currently working on the four-year housing land supply calculations and an addendum to the published five-year housing land supply report will follow in due course.

There were no questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the publication of the South Worcestershire Councils Five Year Housing Land Supply Report and Appendices on 23rd December 2023, which details the housing land supply for the five year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028 on the councils website; and**
- 2. note that based upon the deliverable supply identified within the report, none of the South Worcestershire Councils are currently able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing when measured using the government's standard method for calculating housing need.**

42 Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule Review

The Committee considered a report on the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule review. The draft Charging Schedule consultation document was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Head of Planning explained that a report was presented and approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 19th December 2023 for the South Worcestershire Councils to undertake public consultation on the draft charging schedule. It was originally intended to progress the review of the draft charging schedule quickly to a point of the consultation and thereafter submission, the timing of the Policy and Resources Committee was better aligned with the timetable for the review. Since that time progress has not been as quick as anticipated, with Malvern Hills District Council expected to consider this matter later in January 2024.

The purpose of this report was to seek Committee approval to submit the CIL Draft Charging Schedule, along with supporting documents, following consultation, which has been prepared on the updated evidence base studies and viability analysis and advice from specialist development viability consultants.

For clarification it was confirmed that approval was for the submission of the CIL Draft Charging Schedule and not how the CIL money would be used.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree:

1. **subject to the outcome of the Regulation 16 Publication consultation raising no material compliance issues with respect to the schedule drafting requirements (the Planning Act 2008 and CIL Regulations), authorise the Corporate Director- Planning and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Place and Economic Development Committee, to make minor modifications and submit the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule for Examination, in accordance with Regulation 19 of the CIL Regulations; and**
2. **as part of the Examination process, to authorise the Corporate Director- Planning and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Place and Economic Development Committee, to formally request that the Examiner considers approving the Charging Schedule subject to modifications that are considered necessary by the Examiner to make the Schedule compliant with the drafting requirements.**

43 UKSFP Final Year (2024/25) Allocations

The Committee considered a report on the UKSPF final year allocations 2024/25. The Deputy Director – Economic Development presented the report and highlighted the main points.

Following the decision of the Committee on the 6th November 2023 to reallocate £100k of funding from the People and Skills allocation to the Community and Place intervention, the report provided details of proposed delivery options for

UKSPF funding for 2024/25 in accordance with the People and Skills priorities to ensure that the proposed activity continues to effectively respond to the needs and requirements of the city and its residents. The table at paragraph 3.1 showed the proposed interventions that have been identified through needs assessment and dialogue with stakeholders to address the People and Skills priorities for the city.

A number of delivery proposals had been received, the headline details were set out in paragraph 3.4, with full details provided in Appendix 1 attached to the report. Final contract arrangements will be subject to the satisfactory funding terms and further due diligence regarding value for money when consideration will be given to day rates and unit costs.

Due to the nature of the potential options available for delivery, it is proposed that responsibility for the funding of individual projects within the Community and Place allocation will sit with the Health and Wellbeing Committee.

Officers responded to questions and points of clarification from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. approve the proposed project interventions and allocations as shown in section 3 subject to the completion of final due diligence and suitable funding terms being agreed by the Managing Director in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee;**
- 2. authorise the procurement of one or more delivery partner(s) for a programme of activities to meet the outcomes of the Green Skills allocation and delegates authority to the Managing Director in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Committee to award suitable funding agreements accordingly; and**
- 3. agree that the final uses of the £100k of funding from the People and Skills allocation that has been transferred to the Community and Place intervention for deployment in 2024/25 to invest in community measures to reduce the cost-of-living, will be determined by the Health and Wellbeing Committee.**

44 Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 3 performance for Place and Economic Development for 2023/24.

In response to a question on progress of the demolition of 56 Foregate Street, the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources confirmed that demolition contractors had been appointed and all required documents were in place. There was now a need to make a request to Network Rail to close the line to allow the work to take place.

Reference was made to the Strategic Play Area Development plan and the need to update the information related to Cotswold Way as it referred to this item being presented at the March meeting but was on the agenda for this meeting. Officers agreed to update the narrative.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's quarter 3 performance report for 2023/24.

45 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 9.33p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
11th March 2024