

PLACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

31st October 2022

- Present:** Councillor Mrs. Lucy Hodgson in the Chair
Councillors Bayliss, Desayrah, A. Ditta,
Geraghty, Lamb, Laurenson, Lewing,
Norfolk (Vice-Chair) and Stanley
- Officers:** David Blake, Managing Director
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance
and Resources
Zoey West, Deputy Director – Economic
Development
Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
Duncan Rudge, Head of Planning
- Apologies:** Councillors Cronin and Gregson

23 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Lamb for Councillor Gregson. Apologies were received from Councillor Cronin.

24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mrs Lucy Hodgson declared an interest in Review of the High Street (Minute no. 27) as a Board member of Worcester BID.

25 Public Participation

None.

26 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 25th July 2022 and 3rd October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27 Review of the High Street

The Committee considered a report on the economic impact of Covid, the changing nature of the high street, and how Worcester is responding. The Deputy Director – Economic Development presented the report and highlighted the main points. The report concluded that the city has shown strong resilience to bounce back from the impact of Covid and she made reference to a number of examples of positive performance, including the introduction of the Discover Worcester app, museums visitor numbers, the Tourism Information Centre and the award of Purple Flag Status.

Reference was also made to the downward trend in car parking income and the number of empty retail spaces.

It is acknowledged that there continue to be challenges, including the increasing energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis, however Officers remain positive that with the range of funding opportunities to support the delivery of a variety of projects, Worcester remains well placed to perform well during the current economic conditions.

The Chair commented on the success of the recent Virtual Time Travel Trail and thanked everyone involved in the Worcester Life Stories project.

Officers responded to questions and comments from Committee Members on various aspects within the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the content of the report.

28 Arts and Cultural Strategy

The Committee considered a report on the Arts and Cultural Strategy. The Deputy Director – Economic Development presented the report and explained that the Strategy had been further developed in response to feedback received and the final draft was now presented for adoption. The draft was attached as Appendix 1 to the report along with Appendix 2 the action plan and Appendix 3 consultation responses.

The Deputy Director – Economic Development summarised the main points made through feedback and the report highlighted the changes made. The Strategy was for a three year period and the action plan would be updated regularly. She responded to questions and comments from Committee Members.

During discussions the Deputy Director – Economic Development agreed to send Committee Members the Social, Environmental and Economic implications which were omitted from section 5 of the report for completeness.

It was also agreed to include reference to the Worcester Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Environmental Sustainability Strategy and the Paint Worcester Festival in the Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. note the feedback from the consultation; and**
- 2. approve the final version of the Arts and Cultural Strategy set out at Appendix 1 to the report.**

29 Setting of the Budget for 2023-24 and MTFP to 2027-28

The Committee considered a report on the Budgets for the various services for 2023/24. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and summarised the main points, including with budgets for various services for 2022/23 and progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan and City Delivery Fund that are relevant to this Committee.

Members were invited to submit suggestions for potential service improvements and/or re-prioritisation of budgets in order to continue to achieve service objectives and to deliver the aims of the City Plan relevant to this Committee, so as to be able to feed proposals into the Committee's consideration of the 2023/24 budget at its meeting in January.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note:

- 1. the Budgets for the various services identified for 2022/23; and**
- 2. the progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan and City Delivery Fund that are relevant to this Committee and confirms the programme of work resourced.**

30 Quarter 2 Performance Report for 2022-23

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 2 performance for Place and Economic Development for 2022/23. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted the main points. Officers responded to questions and comments from Committee Members.

During the discussions concerns were raised over the progress of the draft Strategic Play Area Development Plan and the fact that a report would not be submitted to the Committee until January 2023. The Managing Director in response agreed that it has taken some while but will follow this up as he did not have any further detail to provide at the meeting.

A Member of the Committee highlighted that some residents had complained about paying for the Canaletto Exhibition and asked whether it was worth making publicly available how much these exhibitions cost. The Chair in response stated that this was first exhibition that a charge had been applied. The Managing Director explained that the City and County shared the cost, which is significant, and hoped that on balance the £4 charged would not be a barrier. He was aware that one or two had complained but asked the Member to provide details outside of the meeting.

A query was raised on the KPI relating to employment land completions and the lumping together of B1/B2 and B8 as categories in terms of land. The Head of Planning in response stated that this was being monitored but agreed that it needs breaking down and would take this away from the meeting.

In terms of the performance in planning, the Chair and Members of the Committee thanked the Head of Planning and his team for the improvements made in the last two quarters. The Head of Planning thanked the Committee for their positive comments and agreed that they were heading in the right direction but there was still a lot work to do. He agreed to feedback the comments to the team.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's quarter 2 performance for 2022/23.

31 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 8.05p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
23rd January 2023