

PLACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

13th March 2023

Present: Councillor Mrs. Lucy Hodgson in the Chair
Councillors Bayliss, Cronin, Desayrah, A. Ditta, Geraghty, Gregson, Laurenson, Lewing, Norfolk (Vice-Chair) and Stanley

Officers: David Blake, Managing Director
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning and Governance
Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities
Zoey West, Deputy Director – Economic Development
Duncan Rudge, Head of Planning

43 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

44 Declarations of Interest

None.

45 Public Participation

None.

46 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

47 Strategic Play Area Development Plan

The Committee considered an update report on the development of a Worcester Play Plan presented by the Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities.

In March 2022 the Committee approved a report that included funding of £40,000 in order to appoint a specialist contractor to undertake a consultation and engagement exercise in respect of future outdoor play space provision across the city, and from that consultation develop a Worcester 'Play Plan'.

Following a procurement exercise and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, an architect and urban design consortium led by Harper Perry Ltd were appointed to undertake this work on the Council's behalf and commenced their commission during November 2022.

A consultation strategy was developed and signed off by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee. The consultation has taken various forms including an online consultation portal and in-person engagement events at a number of locations across the City. Details of these were outlined in paragraphs 3.4-3.12 of the report. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 3.13-3.15 the consultation exercise was extended until just before the start of the Council pre-election period.

Harper Perry Ltd have discussed their approach to developing a draft Worcester Play Plan, which will centre around 3 approaches; 'Doorstep' Play, 'Neighbourhood' Play and 'Destination' Play. A further report will be presented to the Committee in June 2023 that will seek approval of a draft Worcester Play Plan as well as an action plan for implementation.

An 'all Member' briefing session will be held during May 2023 where Harper Perry, along with officers, will present the draft plan.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members particularly around the online survey responses and the engagement process.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to

- 1. note the contents of this report, and in particular the work undertaken to date to plan for and consult on future play provision for Worcester;**
- 2. note the extension of the 'The Future of Play in Worcester' consultation period to 19th March 2023; and**
- 3. note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in June 2023 presenting the finalised Worcester Play Plan together with an action plan for implementation.**

48 Towns Heritage and Riverside Project Update

The Committee considered an update report on the Town Fund Heritage and Riverside Project.

The Towns Funds investment of £19.6m in Worcester included a range of projects that were included in the Town Investment Plan, including Shrub Hill, Active Travel, Community Skills, Health and Well-being Centre and Heritage and Riverside.

The Deputy Director – Economic Development provided an update on progress on the latter of these projects, which combined two of the original priority projects in the Worcester Town Investment Plan; Heritage Tourism and Riverside as a Destination.

Details of the Riverside, St Andrew's and Heritage projects were outlined by the Deputy Director - Economic Development as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the report and the progress currently being made with the project.

49 Angel Place Market in Worcester City Centre

The Committee considered a report on the Angel Place Market in Worcester City Centre.

The Deputy Director – Economic Development in presenting the report provided background to the review of Worcester markets and in particular Angel Place Market.

The Council was successful in securing funding through the Future High Streets Fund which includes the redevelopment of Angel Place. The design of the area is being developed by project team in partnership with consultants and considers the outcomes of the markets review, the view of members and stakeholders, and the longer-term vision to create a cultural hub for the city in the area.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Angel Place design process options outlined in paragraph 2.8 of the report. Option 2 being the preferred option of officers. The detail for each option was highlighted in the report.

Committee Members welcomed the report and supported the preferred option as outlined by officers in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to the preferred option to continue with a market operator model and award the contract to Angel Place market to the current operator of the High Streets market for the remainder of the contract period.

50 Proposed Committee Performance Scorecard 2023-24

The Committee considered the proposed content of the Place and Economic Development Performance Scorecard for 2023/24. The Managing Director presented the report and highlighted the main points, including details of 2022/23 scorecard content which will be removed and new projects and activities to be included for 2023/24.

Committee Members were informed by officers that it was proposed to introduce a new KPI for 2023/24 related to planning enforcement. The reason for its addition and the target rationale behind it was explained to Members.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on detailed aspects of the report and the proposed new KPI.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the proposed content of the Place and Economic Development Performance Scorecard for 2023/24.

51 Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy - Consultation response by Worcester City Council

The Committee considered a report on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy and the consultation response by Worcester City Council, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The consultation on the 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy' commenced on 22nd December 2022 and closed on 2nd March 2023. The proposed changes are likely to have implications for decision-taking on planning applications, alongside new transitional arrangements for plan making. Subject to comments received the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is proposed to come into effect in Spring 2023, with further consultation on the reform agenda to follow.

The proposed reforms outlined six main policy objectives and these were highlighted at paragraph 3.1 of the report.

With regard to the draft version of the new NPPF, many of the proposed changes in the consultation are focused upon matters of housing supply and delivery, including issues relating to the five-year housing land supply. These were highlighted in paragraph 4.1 of the report. The Committee's attention was drawn to the 6th bullet point where there is no requirement to review or alter Green Belt when producing local plans if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period (paragraph 142). Other issues covered in the consultation were highlighted at paragraph 4.2.

The Head of Planning responded to questions and points of clarification from Committee Members to the City Council's response outlined in Appendix 1 attached the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note Worcester City Council's response to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy consultation.

52 Any Other Business

None.

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

Chair at the meeting on
5th June 2023