

REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 13 June 2013 at 6.00 p.m. at the Council House

Panel Members Present: Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor S. Wade
Councillor R. Worrall
Councillor K. Sears
Councillor H. Sarohi

Officers Present: Mike Tichford – Assistant Director, Regeneration
Matt Underhill - Committee Business and Governance Manager

247/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flower, Anson and Andrew .

248/13 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Sarohi substituted for Councillor Anson and Councillor Sears substituted for Councillor Flower for the duration of the meeting.

249 /13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

250 /13 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 April, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

251/13 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The Panel considered a number of items that officers had proposed as work programme items for the coming municipal year. The following is a summary of the discussion:

- Following a Panel query it was explained that the Green agenda item could include consideration of issues such as energy efficiency grants, as well as the selection process for sub-contractors. A Member suggested that Whg be invited to a future meeting to explain the work they have undertaken in this area;
- In response to a Member question it was explained that The Way We Work roll out related to the activity that is being undertaken as part of the improvement programme. This work has been focused on the First Stop Shop and

managing the requirements of customers receiving a range of services, including Housing and Welfare Rights. This work utilises the Working Smarter approach which will see the learning from this relatively small piece of work applied across all three hundred staff who work within these service areas. This includes providing customers with a specific point of contact and reducing bureaucracy;

- In relation to Sustainable Energy procurement it was explained that the council purchases its energy through a consortium which is much more cost effective than through spot purchasing. It was also explained that the most meaningful step the council had taken in terms of energy efficiency was to move from twenty-six offices to two. This was prompted by budget constraints in the first instance and so opportunities for energy saving, such as photovoltaic panels or rainwater harvesting were not fully explored at that time. However, waterless urinals have been introduced and millions of gallons of water saved;
- In relation to Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and affordable housing it was explained that the SPD formed part of the suite of documents that set out the local development framework. It is proposed to review the current policy and consider removal of the requirement to provide affordable housing on the same site as the rest of the development. This change to the policy has been implemented elsewhere in the region and has proved attractive to developers. Officers would like to consider pooling the developer funding to create one affordable housing development. Given the very mixed housing tenure that exists in Walsall it is the view of officers that such a development would be comfortably integrated. In response to a Panel query it was explained that the definition of affordable housing was not fixed. For example, for some it might be low cost housing, while for others it might be the use of certain mortgage products, renting or a shared ownership arrangement;
- In relation to Traveller's pitches it was explained that all councils are obliged to provide such pitches as part of housing provision. It was further explained that in addition to the current provision an additional thirty-five pitches would have to be provided by 2018. If the council did not make this provision it was possible that the Strategic Allocation Document (SAD) would be rejected. However, identifying suitable sites would be challenging as such proposals often meet with strong opposition from local residents. The Panel agreed that this would be an important issue for them to consider during the municipal year;
- In relation to the City Deal it was explained that this was a key programme in the region incorporating economic regeneration, together with skills and training of the local workforce;
- Following a Member query it was agreed that the Panel should receive regular updates on Planning and Enforcement issues. This should incorporate significant issues within individual wards, such as the withdrawal of redevelopment proposals by Tesco at its site in Brownhills. It was agreed that the updates should also include information on the number of empty properties within wards, as well as pubs and shop;
- It was also agreed that the Panel should receive updates on work being undertaken to support regeneration in district centres. It was explained that both District Centre Managers and Area Partnership Managers had been proactive in this type of work;
- The Chair highlighted the importance of the Panel continuing to consider issues in relation the Chase Line, particularly given recent significant developments.

- It was agreed that the Panel would seek to consider all of the items proposed in the report in some form over the course of the municipal year. It was noted that these items covered much of the breadth of the portfolio as they incorporated housing, property, planning and economic development.
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RESOLVED:

That, in addition to those items the Panel has previously identified for consideration during the municipal year, the following items form part of the work programme:

- **Walsall Works Apprenticeship Programme – Including the wider issues being faced by our young people in finding employment. Also, the related issues of youth homelessness and youth unemployment- wider issues around helping young people find a home and a job;**
- **The Local Economy Assessment for 2013 – Key messages and Challenges for Walsall;**
- **Supporting Employment Sustainability and Growth – The issues and opportunities, including the work of the new Employment Growth Team etc;**
- **Continued working Group for the Strategic Allocation Document (SAD) and AAP (Area Action Plan) – town planning policy;**
- **Green agenda: domestic side of tackling fuel poverty ie maximising Energy Company Obligations (ECO) , the Green Deal , collective fuel switching;**
- **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on affordable housing (proposed departure from on site to off- site);**
- **Town Centre and Enterprise Zone issues**
- **Traveller pitch funding;**
- **The Way We Work roll out;**
- **Corporate Asset Management Plan;**
- **Sustainable Energy procurement;**
- **City Deal/Black Country working on economic development; &**

The report was noted.

252/13 FORWARD PLAN

In response to a Panel query it was confirmed that following the death of Councillor Ansell there had been a reallocation of Portfolio Holder areas of responsibility.

RESOLVED:

That all Members of the Panel would be invited to participate in the continuing activity of the working group which was considering the SAD and Area Action Plan (AAP); &

That the forward plan be noted

253/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be 18 July at 6:00pm

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Chair:

Date: