

## **REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Thursday, 6 September, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. at the Council House

**Panel Members Present:** Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)  
Councillor I. Azam (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor D. Barker  
Councillor C. Creaney  
Councillor M. Longhi  
Councillor L. Jeavons  
Councillor S. Wade

**Officers Present:** Simon Tranter - Head of Regeneration Development and Delivery  
Mike Titchford – Assistant Director (Regeneration and Housing)  
Norman Hickson - Development Management Manager  
Daniel Carins - Regeneration Officer  
Chris Knowles – Lead Accountant  
Philip Wears - Senior Planning Officer (Enforcement)  
Steve Law - Asset Manager  
Jacqueline Hodgson - Team Manager - Asset Management  
Neil Picken - Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **184/12 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **185/12 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **186/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **187/12 MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July, 2012, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the inclusion of Chris Knowles, Lead Accountant into the list of officers present at the meeting.**

## **188/12 COUNCIL POLICY AND POWERS REGARDING EMPTY PROPERTIES, DERELICT PROPERTIES AND LISTED BUILDINGS**

Members considered a briefing note which advised on empty properties, derelict properties and listed buildings.

A presentation was provided setting out types of powers available to address issues of dereliction, use of the void property group, the implementation of a shared database to identify and initiate action and setting out examples of direct action and pro-active measures.

Officers advised that often the threat of direct action (the process whereby the Council undertake the work and recover the cost from the owner, or in the case of the owner being unable to pay, place a charge on the land to recover costs when the property is sold) was effective as owners would often step in and undertake works required. Members enquired as to why certain cases of enforcement took a considerable period of time to resolve. Officers advised that some cases were more complicated than others and, as such, required considerable resource. As resources were limited, a balanced approach was required to take into account other cases. In addition, enforcement action relied upon identifying owners of properties which, in certain cases, could be an arduous task.

In relation to recovering costs, it was suggested that debt recovery agencies be utilised. Officers provided assurances that all methods were being considered which included a more aggressive approach such as appointing debt recovery agencies. A budget of £100k had also been allocated to adopt a more pro-active response to derelict properties and support direct action as a more viable option. A joint database is to be established within the Council so that issues can be identified and addressed quickly.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

## **189/12 REVIEW OF 'MAKE MY BUSINESS YOUR BUSINESS'**

The Panel received a summary of the key points arising from the 'Make My Business Your Business' report written by Lord Young. Officers updated Members on:-

- Enterprise for all ages;
- New ways for new time;
- Accessing finance;
- Guidance and support;
- Business to business support;
- Supplying the public sector.

Officers advised that Cabinet had approved the development of an economic growth programme in April, 2012 which utilised existing resources in support of job and business creation. This would support the re-modelling of the strategic regeneration service area and also change the way in which other service areas engaged and support businesses.

Questions ensued on the use of local businesses within the Borough. Officers advised that 75% of the refurbishment works within the Council had been undertaken by local businesses.

Officers advised that Members of Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel had expressed an interest in the overall working smarter initiative which included 'Help My Business Grow and Be Successful'. Members of that Panel were due to shadow the work being undertaken by officers to gain a further insight into Vanguard methods and establish how services would be remodelled to suit customer demands whilst eradicating waste. The Panel were asked if they wished to nominate a representative who could also shadow the work being undertaken. Councillor S. Wade indicated that he would like to take up the opportunity.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) the Councillor Ilmann - Walker be contacted by Paul Milmore with a view to shadowing the work of the Help My Business Grow and Be Successful workstream;**
- (2) that the report be noted;**
- (3) that officers be requested to further develop initiatives in support of new and existing businesses, especially in the provision of incubated space and premises etc, and continue to report on progress;**
- (4) that officers continue to work in partnership with the private sector to provide support and report on progress once the revised structure and appropriate staff are in place within the regeneration directorate;**
- (5) that officers continue to work with partners to develop further advice, guidance and support provision for new businesses within Walsall;**  
**and;**
- (6) that procurement officers be requested to maximise the amount of Council goods and services which are available and open for local procurement through the Think Walsall approach.**

**190/12 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING 2012/13**

Members were informed that the predicted revenue and capital position for the year ending 2012/13 based on the performance for Quarter 1 (to end of June, 2012) for services within the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the 2012/13 forecasted year end position for services under the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel which includes a revenue variant (under spend) against budget of £0.269 million (net the use of earmarked reserves) and a capital under spend of £0.130 million be noted.**

## **191/12 MARKETS WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Markets Working Group.

### **RESOLVED**

- (1) That the Terms of Reference be approved;
- (2) That Councillor Carl Creaney be appointed Lead Member of the Working Group

## **192/12 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13 AND FORWARD PLAN**

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Work Programme and Forward Plan be noted.**

## **193/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 6.00 p.m. on 16 October, 2012.

## **194/12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT, 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

### **RESOLVED**

**That the following item be considered in private as the item under consideration requires discussion of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding the information) as described in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).**

*Please note that whilst the item was considered in private, the below minute is a full and open account of the discussion that took place.*

## **195/12 PUBLIC SECTOR PROPERTY MAPPING**

Members of the Panel considered maps which had been produced by the Property Services Asset Management Team following the assembly of core information about property assets held by partners in the Borough of Walsall.

### **RESOLVED**

That the initial outcomes from the mapping exercise be noted.

(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

*The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.*

Signed:

Date: