

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 February 2023 at 6.00pm held at Walsall Council House, Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW.

Committee Members

Councillor M. Follows (Chair)
Councillor B. Allen
Councillor P. Bott
Councillor P. Kaur
Councillor R. Larden
Councillor A. Nazir
Councillor R. Worrall
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor V. Waters

Portfolio Holders

Councillor M. Bird	Leader of the Council
Councillor A. Andrew	Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor G. Flint	Health and Wellbeing

Officers Present:

Simon Neilson	Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Communities
Dave Brown	Director, Place and Environment
Joel Maybury	Team Leader – Borough Wide Development
Nick Ford	Head of Property
Liz Stuffins	PHP – Service Development Manager
Sian Lloyd	Democratic Services Officer

52/22 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Creaney, Garcha, I. Hussain and Whitehouse.

53/22 Substitutions

Councillor Harrison substituted for Councillor Garcha and Councillor Waters substituted for Councillor Whitehouse.

54/22 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

55/22 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

56/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2022, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

57/22 Willenhall Framework Plan

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration presented a report providing an update of work undertaken to date in relation to the Willenhall Framework Plan which focused on the delivery of Phase 1, Moat Street and Villiers Street. He acknowledged that this represented a plan that was a long time in the making and that the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders in the Willenhall area was designed to bring landowners around the table to discuss and negotiate over derelict sites. The Leader of the Council commented that regeneration of an area can take a substantial amount of time but it was positive to see progress in this regard.

Members of the Committee praised the work of the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities stating that the Willenhall Framework Plan would form part of his legacy in Walsall. They also voiced their appreciation for the quality of the successful bid submitted for the Levelling Up Fund and the opportunities this created for the Walsall North constituency.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2. A further report be considered by the Committee in due course.**

58/22 Public Toilets across the Borough

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration introduced the item on public toilets across the borough, acknowledging that there was significant demand from residents for public toilets to be re-instated but that it was of paramount importance that this was done in such a way that ensured that they were not subject to anti-social behaviour as had been the case in the past. He expressed that the pilot scheme would also be involving local residents and businesses to seek their views and try to make sure that any concerns can be managed appropriately.

Following questions from Members of the Committee the Head of Property clarified that the funding for this pilot scheme was to be available in the 2023/2024 financial year and currently work was ongoing with Procurement to source providers, the details of which could be reported to a future meeting of the Committee. He also underlined the importance of ensuring that all disabilities were covered and the guidelines of Changing Places were adhered to.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2. A further report be considered by the Committee in due course.**

59/22 Play Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing introduced the report on the borough's play strategy, noting that a large amount of investment had been made into green spaces across the borough in the hopes of modernising them. He drew the Committee's attention to the fact that there was still a live public consultation on this topic.

The Committee asked a number of questions in relation to the accessibility of the play equipment for all and the methods being used for the public consultation. The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing responded that the consultation was being conducted using a new platform called Commonplace and leaflets had been posted in areas close to green spaces to encourage local residents to have their say. He also commented that the aim was to ensure that the play equipment was as accessible as possible to all children, including those with disabilities.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

60/22 Derelict Properties Taskforce

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration provided details in relation to the derelict properties taskforce, which had been established within the council to bring together different departments who had responsibilities in relation to derelict properties to work in a united effort to tackle sites that had been left derelict for several years. He stated that it was important that the council take this issue seriously to assist with regeneration.

The Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities emphasised that there was a formal legal process to be followed that must be applied consistently and fairly.

Following questions from Members of the Committee it was clarified that the taskforce was an internal operational group and locations and ownership details of such sites could be shared with Members but could not be shared in the public domain, so as not to prejudice commercial negotiations.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The Committee notes the report; and**
- 2. An update on the works of the taskforce to be received in due course.**

61/22 Areas of focus – 2022/23

The Committee noted the proposed areas of focus for the remaining meetings of the municipal year.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The areas of focus 2022/23 and forward plans be noted; and**
- 2. CCTV provision in housing estates be added to the list of items to be considered.**

62/22 Recommendation Tracker

The Democratic Services Officer updated the Committee on the recommendations from previous meetings of the Committee. She advised that the item on Willenhall, Darlaston and Aldridge railway stations would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee on 13 April.

Resolved:

That the progress on recommendations from the previous meeting be noted.

63/22 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 13 April 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated 7.05pm.

Signed:

Date: