

Minutes

of the Meeting of the

Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel Wednesday, 25th November 2020

held in the Virtual Meeting.

Meeting Commenced: 14:30 Meeting Concluded: 16:05

Councillors:

P John Crockford-Hawley (Chairman)

P Peter Crew
P Richard Tucker
A Steve Bridger
A Gill Bute
P Sarah Codling
P Mark Crosby
P Karin Haverson
P Steve Hogg
P Huw James
P Patrick Keating

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Also in attendance: Councillor Geoff Richardson.

Officers in attendance: Jenny Ford, Jane Harrison, Alastair Shankland (Place);
Mike Rigall, Leo Taylor, Brent Cross (Corporate Services)

SPR Election of the Vice-Chairman (Agenda Item 1)

10

Resolved: that Councillor Peter Crew be elected Vice-Chairman.

SPR Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37)

11

None.

SPR Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2020 (Agenda Item 5)

12

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

SPR 13 Urban renewal activity across North Somerset (Agenda Item 7)

13

The Head of Development presented an overview of the report, which provided an update on urban renewal activity across North Somerset. This included placemaking strategies, economic development and business support, and Local Plan allocations and the delivery of brownfield sites.

Queries for clarification and comments were received from Members as follows (officer replies in italics):

- What was happening with the Weston College land in Nailsea? *Officers were in discussion with the various parties about the potential options.*
- Members were happy to see that the partnership working with town councils was in place, and felt that the approach to treating town councils as equals would provide successful results. It was also important for the Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Panel (SPEDR) to be made aware of how town councils were responding to the participation events.
- What would be needed to start off the placemaking strategy in Clevedon? *The Head of the Place Directorate had regular meetings with town councils, and this would be put on the agenda for her next meeting with Clevedon Town Council.*
- What was the route to starting similar conversations with Weston Town Council? *There was to be a Weston Placemaking digital event the week after the present meeting, to which Weston Town Council had been invited.*

Concluded: that the report be received, and Members' comments provided to officers in the form of minutes.

SPR 14 Junction 21 Enterprise Area new vision (Agenda Item 8)

14

The Head of Economy presented the report, and asked SPEDR Members for input into the key questions that officers were researching about the future for the Junction 21 Enterprise Area.

The following questions and comments were received from Members:

- Members sought clarification on what was meant by 'quality jobs', what 'hybrid space' referred to, and more detail on the Foodworks food and drink innovation centre. *Quality jobs would be provided by engaging with businesses on upskilling their work forces, and by providing support to employers on e.g. the living wage. Hybrid space referred to a mixed use site and the site at Worle Station was used as an example – it had spaces for a high-tech data centre, a furniture supply company and a T-shirt company, among others. Foodworks had workspace units for food and drink businesses as well as space for them to grow into; it had four test kitchens for rent in the innovation centre; an update including more detail could be brought to SPEDR.*
- Members requested more detail on what had been happening at the Avoncrest site, and suggested an alternative use as an urban woodland. *Although the land was owned by North Somerset Council, Homes England had bought out the previous leaseholder and was*

working with North Somerset Council on technical studies etc. As the land was heavily contaminated from its former use as a landfill site, remediation would be required. It was emphasised that any alternative use would require the relocation of the 700 houses that had been allocated to the site under the Local Plan. In addition, even use as a woodland, if including public access, would be likely to require remediation.

- It was suggested that it would be useful if the new vision included links to south-east Wales, particularly Monmouthshire, instead of focusing solely on building links to the west and south. *The strengthening of links to south-east Wales would be investigated.*
- Some Members were concerned about the mention of Free Ports, as they were concerned that these carried a lot of risk and could lead to a reduction in social and planning standards. *Any Free Port would be private sector led, and the idea was still in the research phase.*
- What was unique about the Gravity enterprise zone at Bridgwater? *It was very large – over 600 acres, and was being constructed on the previous BA ordinance centre. It was being purpose-built to include high levels of green infrastructure. Because of its size, it would be beneficial for businesses at the Junction 21 Enterprise Area to work with companies based at the site.*
- Could job creation be linked to the need to retrofit houses in Weston-super-Mare for energy efficiency, and the green economy more generally? *The Employment and Skills Strategy had a theme around green skills. This was being actively worked on in conjunction with Weston College.*
- Were funds for development and employment accessible now that the Council would not be able to join the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) in the next few years? *There were various funds available, but there was less control by the Council over how the funds could be spent. All relevant funds were being applied for.*

Concluded: that the report be received, and Members' comments provided to officers in the form of minutes.

SPR 15 The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda Item 9)

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Panel's Work Plan and asked for Members' input into areas to focus on.

It was suggested that the ASH Housing Issues Group, who were interested in examining social housing in North Somerset, should work jointly with SPEDR. The Head of Development informed Members that the affordable housing enabling team was now part of her team and would be able to provide reports as needed.

In the light of the request for more information about Foodworks, it was suggested that the Head of Economy could provide a written briefing to the Panel, with a site visit and a possible formal SPEDR meeting at the centre to follow in due course.

Concluded: that the work plan be updated, picking up actions and discussion outcomes from the present meeting.

Chairman
