

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Placemaking, Economy and Planning Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Kenn Room - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 2.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.14 pm

Councillors:

John Crockford-Hawley (Chairperson)

Peter Crew (Vice-Chairperson)

Ashley Cartman
Ciaran Cronnelly
Patrick Keating
Bridget Petty
Luke Smith
Helen Thornton
Joe Tristram
Martin Williams

Apologies: None.

Absent: Councillors Marcia Pepperall and Tim Snaden..

Also in attendance: Councillors Peter Burden, Mark Canniford, Terry Porter and Mike Solomon.

Officers in attendance: Jane Harrison (Head of Economy), Jo Jones (Finance Business Partner), Gemma Dando (Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Management), Emma Diakou (Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships), Julia Stuckey (Weston Placemaking Programme Manager) and Brent Cross (Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer).

PEP Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37)

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None.

PEP Minutes

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Minutes of the Placemaking, Economy and Planning Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting of 22 November 2023, to approve as a correct record.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of 22 November 2023 be approved as

a correct record.

PEP 16 **Place Finance Update**

The Finance Business Partner (Place) presented the report which discussed the forecast against budget for the Place directorate and included details on the projected overspend and the contributing factors for this. There was also an update on the details of the progress being made on savings in the 2023/24 budget.

In discussion, officers responded to the following requests for clarification and queries:

- That although the budget pressures faced by all authorities were similar, the differences between authorities were a result of the mitigations put into effect to counteract them, and that some work areas naturally had more opportunities than others.
- The factors behind the underspend in the Planning Service.
- The increases in waste tonnage, that national and international pressures on the sale of recycled waste were affecting sale prices, and that composting was still being supported in the budget. There was also discussion of more education around waste, and what was supposed to go in each bin.
- That charging for replacement bins and recycling boxes was not always an appropriate option.
- That the Transport, Climate and Community and Children and Young People's Services Panels were jointly working on Home to School Transport and that the pilot bringing together the community meals and Home to School Transport services had reduced some of the pressure on both. The main issue was the increase in the number of children requiring transport.
- That deleted posts mentioned in the savings appendix to the report had all undergone a full Equality Impact Assessment.
- That MiPermit transaction costs were no longer charged to the customer since the Covid pandemic, but that these were being looked at in the discussions of the Parking Management Strategy.

Concluded:

That the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the minutes.

PEP 17 **New Economic Plan for North Somerset**

The report, presented by the Head of Economy, provided an overview of the rationale, process, and timelines for the development of a new economic plan for North Somerset as well as providing an opportunity for members of the PEP Scrutiny Panel to provide initial thoughts on the priorities for a new economic plan.

The following topics were discussed:

- The need to understand the uses of proposed and existing sites in the Local Plan.

- It would be necessary to appoint external consultants as there was no staff capacity to develop the Plan, as well as there being no economist on the officer team.
- The use of Weston Business Quarter and South Gate and Central Gate as land for commercial development.
- That the current plan was developed in a different way as there was access to much more economic data when it was developed during the Covid pandemic.
- That sites like Gravity and Hinkley Point would be considered to promote employment out-of-area.
- The criteria that would be used to appoint the consultants.
- That helping micro-businesses expand should be a goal of the Plan.
- That although the land at Junction 20 was on the list of possible sites to be developed for employment in the Local Plan, other sites such as Junction 21 were more appropriate for development.

Concluded: that

- (1) the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the minutes; and that
- (2) there would be an informal meeting of the Panel in March 2024 to further discuss the Economic Plan.

PEP 18 Q3 Performance Update

The Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships presented the Quarter 3 performance update on progress against the transformation commitments and KCPIs that are within the functions of the panel as of end Quarter 3 of the 2023/24 year. The Power BI dashboards for North Somerset Insight: data and statistics could be found at <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/north-somerset-insight-data-statistics>.

In discussion, the following topics were raised:

- How the statistics could be broken down by ward.
- The perception of crime against the reality, and that there would be a residents survey this year to help inform the new corporate plan
- Whether there had been a change to planning enforcement levels over time, and that while the numbers of planning determinations naturally fluctuated, there was not enough emphasis on minor applications. Also, that the performance measure for percentage of planning applications determined were measured against the 8 (minor applications) and 13 (major applications) week target date unless the application had been extended – in which case the extended date was used.
- Whether the Sovereign was as affected as the rest of the Weston town centre by changes in the numbers of vacant retail premises.

Concluded:

That the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the

minutes.

PEP 19 Tropicana Operator Procurement Discussion

The report, presented by the Weston Placemaking Programme Manager, outlined the broad recommendations for the Tropicana Operator procurement requirements. The entertainment venue marketing specialist consultant that had been appointed had a strong track record of working with local authorities.

Members then discussed the following:

- That about £2.4m of the Councils £3m match funding for the Levelling Up Fund projects would be used for the Tropicana project.
- How the Concession Contract Regulations would enable a rigorous process.
- The types of social value that an operator could bring.
- That although the final method of income generation was still to be decided, the current thinking was on profit share for North Somerset Council.
- That there would be breaks written into the lease and that any risks would be in the hands of the operator.
- Whether the reports on the soft marketing and consultant selection would be made available to the Panel, but that the selection criteria would be commercially sensitive.
- What the decision-making process for appointing the operator was, and who would be making the final decision.

Concluded:

That the report be received and the Panel's feedback provided in the form of the minutes.

PEP 20 PEP Panel Work Plan - March 2024

The Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer discussed the Panel's work plan and invited discussion with Members for additional items to add to it, as well as picking up any actions from the meeting.

Members discussed that the working group for the consultation on the Parking Management Strategy would need to be politically balanced and include Members from each town as well as some Members not on the PEP Panel. The idea was for the group to meet in four sessions, and there would be specific feedback to the Executive Member arising from each meeting. The first meeting was hoped to be during the week of 11 March.

Chairman
