

## **ECONOMY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 14 October 2021  
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Oliver Johnstone (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Colin MacAlister (Vice-Chair); Councillors Grace Baynham, Kate Butler, Becky Crawford, Will Dawson, Roy Driver, Steve Gribbon and Mike Hurleston.

### **1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meetings held on 14 August and 9 September 2021 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors and Officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the agenda items for the meeting.

The following interests were declared:-

#### **Personal and Prejudicial Interest**

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Mike Hurleston	Agenda item 9 'Weir Mill' as a member of the Board of the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation.

It was noted that the Standards Committee had approved a dispensation to enable those councillors who were members of the Board of the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation and who would otherwise have a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter being discussed to take part in the debate and vote at the meeting.

#### **Personal Interest**

##### Officer

Paul Richards	Agenda item 9 'Weir Mill' as the Chief Executive of the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation.
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### **3. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

#### **4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt information in the ‘not for publication’ appendices for agenda item 9 – ‘Weir Mill’.

#### **5. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the Cabinet’s proposed approach to responding to the opportunities, challenges and uncertainty outlined within the review of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which had been presented to the Cabinet Meeting held on 21 September 2021.

The report included an update on the previous reports to scrutiny and Cabinet providing the latest considerations on how the Council intended to address financial and demand challenges, enable longer term transformation and shared ambitions.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration (Councillor David Meller) attended the meeting to respond to Members’ questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that consideration should be given to reconsidering proposals to cut the highways discretionary budgets available to local area committees. Although it was acknowledged that some wards had not spent their budgets, it could be that they were accruing monies for a large scheme in the next few years.
- Consider was expressed with regard to the proposed increase in the cost of residents’ parking permits.
- With regard to the deletion of some of the school crossing patrols, it was pointed out that the Council was experiencing difficulties in recruiting to some of the posts. Reference was made to the motion which had been approved at the Council Meeting on 15 July 2021 which included agreement to explore and identify where school crossing patrols could be reintroduced outside schools to further address road safety issues.
- Further clarity was requested on the assumptions factored into the report such as inflation, and it was suggested that this be examined in more detail by Officers.
- Reference was made to the ‘increased income target charge uplift across a number of areas’ and in particular the proposals to lease electronic billboard sites on major routes and in the town centre, and increased income potential with school ‘buy back’. These proposals were welcomed.
- With regard to the examination of managed vacancies, the impact on the morale of staff needed to be examined.
- With regard to the proposed increase in planning fees, a Member expressed concern that he had received a number of complaints from residents who had had no response to their pre-planning application questions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **6. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH WORK ON THE STOCKPORT ECONOMIC PLAN**

The Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) on progress which had been made with work to develop and produce a new economic plan for Stockport, and how it related to the Local Plan and the Borough Plan. The report was intended to be part of the early stage engagement in developing the Economic Plan, particularly focusing on emerging issues, and was part of a wider programme of engagement with stakeholders.

Patrick Gulliver from the consultants, Hatch, attended the meeting to update the Scrutiny Committee on the work which had been undertaken.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration (Councillor David Meller) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- Reference was made in the 'People Summary' to the comment that Stockport's ageing population was a multi-faceted challenge. Overall Stockport had a paucity of young professionals and this would have significant implications for the role and functions of Stockport's town and neighbourhood centres. In effect, the economically active population was becoming smaller.
- Males, early career, and older workers had been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. More data was required on why men had been more affected by job losses during the pandemic. Hatch consultants agreed to provide a fuller, evidence-based analysis of the situation. This would tie in with the Committee's Scrutiny Review on Stockport's District Centres post Covid-19 Pandemic.
- District Centres had to part of any economic plan. The propensity of young people to move out of the district centres and the number of vacant sites and brownfield sites in economic decline were significant. The Covid-19 pandemic had alerted people more prominently to the condition of their local neighbourhoods.
- The question could be asked how the Economic Plan could be used to support the borough's most deprived neighbourhoods. The socio-economic inequality in Stockport had been a significant problem for a long time. Housing was one way of addressing those inequalities, but it was not solely by having more affordable housing in the northern part of the borough.
- The feedback from micro-businesses who were not members of any 'umbrella' organisation was important.
- Engagement with businesses had taken place through the Stockport Economic Alliance, an advertisement in the Business Bulletin and 1:1 discussions and business focus groups through the existing business 'umbrella' groups.
- It would be difficult to produce a definitive Stockport Economic Plan because there so many component parts in a constant state of flux and volatility, and therefore it would need to be updated on a regular basis.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **7. RE-DESIGNATION OF MARPLE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

The Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) in connection with the re-designation of Marple Neighbourhood Forum (MNF). The MNF had been designated on 1 December 2016 for a period of five years and therefore the current designation would expire on 1 December 2021. The MNF had submitted information to support its re-designation and the recent public consultation had not raised any objections or introduced significant issues.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration (Councillor David Meller) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the outcome of the consultation be noted.

(2) That support be given to the re-designation of Marple Neighbourhood Forum, prior to its consideration by the Cabinet on 2 November 2021 and the Council Meeting on 18 November 2021.

## **8. AGENDA PLANNING**

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and any Forward Plan items.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **9. WEIR MILL**

The Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting a proposal to seek approval from the Cabinet to provide debt finance to fund the construction work to deliver the proposed redevelopment at Weir Mill and to dispose of land holding to facilitate the delivery of the scheme.

(NOTE: This item included 'not for publication' appendices that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm