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SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES - BEST PRACTICE AND BUILDING UPON IT

Meeting: 17 September 2024
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor James Frizzell (Chair) in the chair and Councillor Micheala Meikle.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

No declarations of interest were made.

2 SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL PROCEDURE RULES

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Scrutiny Review Panel Procedure Rules for adoption for the purpose of conducting the review.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Review Panel Procedure Rules for the purpose of conducting the review be adopted.

3 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

RESOLVED – That the appointment of co-opted members to the panel to enable representation from the council's political groups not currently represented on the panel be agreed.

4 SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL: DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES - BEST PRACTICE AND BUILDING UPON IT

The Director of Development & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which outlined the proposed scope for reviewing how the council could build on the best practice from the work carried out in the district centres to help support Stockport's local centres.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Now that work to improve the vibrancy of Stockport's district centres was well underway, it was felt that a review into best practice was timely and that local centres could benefit from the learning.
- It was felt that businesses were integral to district and local centres and so their views should be sought as part of the review.
- It was reported that businesses in Marple were collaborative, and this approach to supporting district centre vibrancy was praised. The importance of collaboration between businesses was stressed.

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- It was also reported that district centres had seen an increase in events being held e.g., ReddFest had been reinstated in Reddish district centre. ReddFest was a free admission family day with live and local community entertainment.
- Members felt that it would be useful to get a sense of how businesses had felt that the cost-of-living crisis had affected them.
- It was noted that each district centre had its own unique appeal, with some centres focussing on e.g., greening, and others on markets.
- It was suggested that questions to district centre business owners could explore what they felt worked well, as well as what they would like to see more of.
- It was noted that the council wanted to deliver events and initiatives that supported district centres and were what they wanted. Member visits to local businesses would likely draw out the priorities in different district centre areas, which would be able to support this work.
- The Clerk would draft some possible questions to support members with their conversations with business owners.
- The need to focus on what information could be drawn out to support local centres was emphasised.
- It was noted that an information portal was being considered for future use by businesses, as District Centre Managers spent a lot of time signposting businesses to information and/or advice needed. It was suggested that a forum could form part of the information portal. A forum would enable businesses to communicate with each other and promote collaborative working between local businesses.
- It was agreed that a watching brief on developments in national policy relating to this area would be a useful in supporting the review as it progressed.
- The Institute of Place Management (IPM) had been asked to provide examples of other local authority areas supporting their district centres, including how they were delivering that support, and those with information portals. Members felt that this research could help to inform the information portal for Stockport.
- It was felt that suggestions around the information portal could form some of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review Panel.

RESOLVED – That the scope of the review, outline review plan and future meeting dates be agreed.

The meeting closed at 6.46 pm