

Dear Members

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside Stafford** on **Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 6.30pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Governance

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 24 August 2023 as previously published on the Council's website.
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Public Question Time - Nil
- 4 Councillor Session - Nil
- 5 Members' Items - Nil
- 6 Called In Items - Nil

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HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Membership

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

J A Barron	D M McNaughton
F Beatty	M Phillips
B M Cross	J S Powell
P C Edgeller	J P Read
A R McNaughton	D P Rouxel

Agenda Item 7(a)**Stafford Town Centre Transformation**

Committee:	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny
Date of Meeting:	14 November 2023
Report of:	Head of Economic Development and Planning
Portfolio:	Economic Development and Planning

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Committee on progress across a number of key development and regeneration projects within Stafford town centre.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report is noted.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 This report sets out the main updates that have occurred since Committee was last updated in August. Work continues across the full programme of projects even where individual projects are not contained within this update.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The development and regeneration programme currently underway in Stafford town centre supports delivery of all four Business Objectives in the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2021-2024. It also delivers against the five Growth Priorities in the Economic Growth Strategy for Stafford Borough 2020-2025.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 On 26 December 2020 it was announced that Stafford Borough Council had been successful in receiving a provisional Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) award of £14,377,723. The final award was confirmed and Council approval was sought in February 2021 for inclusion in the capital programme and also to secure the necessary co-funding from the Council. With Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County Council contributions the total programme budget was set at £21.5m.

- 5.2 The bidding process required a Green Book Five Case Model business case submission which ultimately linked the funding award to specific projects. The first of those projects to get underway on site was the refurbishment of Stafford's Market Square.
- 5.3 One of the main aims of the FHSF programme is to create an environment in which people are encouraged back into our town centres. The full renovation of the Market Square was intended to bring improved infrastructure to support events and create an attractive focal point at the heart of the County town. Following a detailed design process that involved a number of partners and stakeholders contractors McPhillips started on site in January 2023 and the Square was officially re-opened with a very well attended Celebration Event on Saturday 28 October 2023.
- 5.4 The Square is a main meeting point and community space within the town centre whereas the approach to Stafford Railway Station provides important connectivity through to the high street. As such the second project to start on site will be the refurbishment of the concourse, road resurfacing, a new public short stay car park and increased disabled parking close to the station. The main aim of this project is to improve the pedestrian and cycle routes into the town with a stronger link through Victoria Park and create an attractive welcome to the town to those visiting via train. Contractors Eric Wright Engineering Ltd have been appointed for the onsite works which will begin in the new year.
- 5.5 The remaining projects within the FHSF programme relate to mixed use development dependent on the Council using FHSF monies to acquire land within the town centre. Members will be aware that in October 2023 a report was presented to Cabinet seeking authority to purchase the former Co-Op department store on Gaolgate Street, subject to approval from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This is because the Co-Op wasn't one of the schemes forming part of the original FHSF bid.
- 5.6 Proposals for the former Co-Op site, which has been empty for more than a decade, include a mixture of retail, food court, market and residential use. Increasing the residential offer within the town centre creates increased footfall supporting the existing retailers in the town.
- 5.7 Confidential discussions are still taking place around other changes to the town centre which form part of the FHSF programme.
- 5.8 The County Council are also leading on two further significant developments within the town centre at Eastgate and the Staffordshire History Centre. The Eastgate regeneration project is focused around the former Magistrates Court site and the Wedgwood Building. The County Council are currently seeking a Development Partner to bring this scheme forward.

- 5.9 The first stage of the procurement process (Selection Questionnaire) was launched in May 2023, following a soft launch at the UKREiiF property and investment event in Leeds. This successfully highlighted the opportunity to potential bidders and culminated in the selection of 3 potential bidders to enter the 'Competitive Dialogue' procurement phase. All three bidders were able to demonstrate a track record of delivery of high quality town centre regeneration, including within locations such as Stafford. The Competitive Dialogue stage has been live since 7th July 2023 with final bids due to be received by 22nd December 2023. Following the recommendation of a preferred bidder to SCC Cabinet it is intended to appoint the preferred Development Partner during April 2024.
- 5.10 The Staffordshire History Centre project brings together collections from the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service, the County Museum and the William Salt Library and will create a county wide programme of outreach activities for schools, families, community groups and the public. The project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 5.11 Work underway onsite includes an extension to the existing Staffordshire Record Office on Eastgate Street in Stafford which will incorporate the William Salt Library buildings. The Library buildings will be restored and a modern glazed link between the Library and the record office will create a new entrance and permanent exhibition space to showcase the collections. Extra strong rooms will provide space for a further 55 years of collections and a new learning space for schools and courses for adult learners.
- 5.12 As the range of projects set out here demonstrates there is significant investment focussed on transforming the County Town that will create a town centre that is welcoming to residents, businesses and visitors and support the growth of the local economy.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

None

8 Previous Consideration

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee, September 2022 to date

Cabinet 5 October 2023

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Michelle Smith

Telephone Number: 01785 619 335

Ward Interest: Forebridge

Report Track: Economic Development and Planning 14/11/23 only

Key Decision: No

The Economy - Delivery Plan for 2023 - 2024

Business Objective 1: To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
2	8	3			13

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

Good progress is being made in reducing the backlog of applications in Development Management. As at the end of quarter 2, there has been a 33% reduction in the number of applications 'on-hand'.

The Stafford town centre transformation programme is progressing well, with the completion of works to Market Square due to complete at the end of October 2023. A contractor has been appointed to undertake the works at Station Approach with work expected to start on site during October and will complete by the end of March 2024.

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

The Local Plan timetable has slipped and is currently being reviewed.

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.1	Assess the economic implications for the Borough over the medium and long term							
1.1.1	Review and assess all key programmes and major projects	Review of key projects and delivery plans	X				Key projects reviewed and delivery plans prepared for 2023/24. Details of key projects are referred to through the actions set out below	
1.2	To facilitate the delivery of 500 new homes in the Borough per year including 210 affordable homes							
1.2.1	Complete five year land supply statement	Data extract Site visits complete Publication of statement	X				Statement completed and published – July 2023	
1.2.2	Improve and maintain performance of development management	Develop Recovery Plan to tackle current backlogs of applications Produce quarterly updates setting out progress in reducing the backlog.	X		X		Recovery Plan actions are being implemented. Task & Finish Group set up and meets weekly to review performance, processes and resource allocation. Quarterly updates being produced. Number of applications on hand at end of Q2 stands at 638; a 33% reduction since 31 March 2023.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.3	Deliver key projects and infrastructure proposals that will promote economic growth and investment for the Borough							
1.3.1	Delivery of the Stafford Town Centre Transformation Programme	<p>Completion of Market Square renovation</p> <p>Appointment of onsite contractors for Station Approach project</p> <p>Completion of Station Approach project</p> <p>Conclusion of discussions with third party landowners to progress commercial projects</p>			X		<p>On track for completion October 2023, with an official opening event on 28.10.23</p> <p>Tender process completed and initial meeting with the successful bidder took place on 26.09.23.</p> <p>This is scheduled for end of March 2024.</p> <p>Acquisition of former Co-Op building approved at Cabinet 5 October 23 and commercial negotiations are completed, subject to Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities approval. A further update will be provided at the Cabinet Meeting in December 2023</p>	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.3.2	Delivery of the Stafford Station Gateway	<p>Completion of station access feasibility study</p> <p>Completion of delivery programme scoping exercise</p>		X			The station feasibility study work, being led by Staffordshire County Council is reaching a conclusion.	
1.3.3	Supporting the development of proposed Meecebrook Garden Community	Completion of Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the railway station		X			<p>Following the announcement of HS2 and the publication by Network Rail of their Strategic Plan for the West Coast Main Line final completion of the SOBC is continuing, inclusion and reflection of these strategic actions/documents will ensure the robustness of the completed SOBC.</p> <p>Brief completed procurement route agreed - Programme Board approval required.</p>	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		Completion of remaining technical studies (excluding transport modelling)				X		
		Completion of detailed master planning and viability studies Completion of collaboration agreement				X X	Commission in place - work understanding strategic direction on overall direction commenced. Relationships with agent and major landowners now supported via completed call for sites submission which indicate land availability.	
1.3.4	Stone Leisure	Delivery phase for Westbridge Park initiated				X	Following the granting of planning consent and appointment of a contractor, works to Westbridge Park have commenced and are on track for completion in autumn 2023.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		Planning consent granted.	X				Woodland Play Trail opened to the public. Works on the main Play Area and Multi Use Games Area nearing completion. Ongoing works to the car park, building, sunken garden, entrances and pathways.	
		Work on site commences	X				Following the granting of planning consent and appointment of a contractor, works to Westbridge Park have commenced and are on track for completion in autumn 2023.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.4	Work in partnership to generate economic and sustainable growth for the long-term prosperity of our residents, visitors and businesses							
1.4.1	Develop Stafford as a hub of productivity to help businesses develop, grow and thrive	New and existing businesses supported to grow and build confidence in Stafford as a hub of productivity with a balanced economy.		X	X	X	Identification of 800 growth businesses in the Borough underway. Healthy pipeline of enquiries for business support. 200 new businesses in Stafford were registered at Companies House during July/Aug/Sept. The challenge is identifying those that are ready to grow.	
1.4.2	Promote our visitor economy to demonstrate the offer in the Borough	Relaunch Our Beautiful Borough visitor economy campaign Development of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council	X			X	Over 1 million sightings of new promotional activities across the Borough and wider West Midlands area. Working with LVEP steering group providing input from Borough perspective to help shape LVEP.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.4.3	Unlock economic opportunities in our rural areas	<p>Launch of Rural England Prosperity Fund grant programme</p> <p>Grant awards made under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund rural business to business grant programme</p> <p>Completion of UK Shared Prosperity Funded rural hub feasibility study</p>		X			<p>Applications received from communities, now closed and operating waiting list.</p> <p>Healthy pipeline of expressions of interest received which will be reviewed in November. Funding due to be received in April/May 2024</p> <p>Feasibility Study nearly complete ready for sharing in November with stakeholders with next steps to be agreed.</p>	
1.4.4	Support the facilitation of lifelong learning to create a local workforce with specialist skills that can respond to growth ambitions	Delivery of grants to support apprenticeships and training via UK Shared Prosperity Fund business to business rural grant scheme		X	X		Business to Business grant scheme launched with applications being received and processed.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.5	Develop a new Local Plan that reflects our Corporate ambitions for growth							
1.5.1	Revise and refresh the Local Plan	Appropriate sites for future development for housing, employment and open space identified		X	X		The approved Local Development Scheme sets out the key stages leading to the adoption of new Local Plan (2023/24)	
		Updated evidence base completed that includes infrastructure, viability and economic recovery issues					New Local Plan Preferred Option assessment of key issues completed and implications on subsequent stages of the Local Plan 2020-2040 progressing.	
1.5.2	Embed high quality design into Planning Policy to ensure that Stafford is an attractive place that people want to live in, promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting future investment.	Local design codes linked to New Local Plan progressed	X				Consideration of Government's proposals through NPPF for local design codes following Local Plan preferred options responses during Autumn 2023	

Agenda Item 7(c)**Work Programme - Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee**

Committee: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2023

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2 That the report be noted.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The first stage in achieving a Member-led Overview and Scrutiny process is to develop a Work Programme for the Members of the Committee to own.
- 3.2 Accordingly, an up-to-date copy of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme is provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report is most closely associated with the following Corporate Business Objective 1:-

To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Members will recall that one of the fundamental philosophies behind the creation of Overview and Scrutiny is that the process should be Member-led and the first stage in achieving this is to develop a Work Programme that is:-
- Owned by all Members of the Scrutiny Committee
 - Flexible to allow the Committee to react to urgent items
 - Contain aspects of both Overview and Scrutiny
- 5.2 Therefore, at each scheduled meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee, an up-to-date copy of the Work Programme will be provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.
- 5.3 The Work Programme includes provision for the Committee to scrutinise appropriate items delivered through the Council's Service Delivery Plan up to twelve months in advance, whilst maintaining the flexibility to respond to any issues that may arise.
- 5.4 Accordingly, attached at **APPENDIX** is the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's current Work Programme to consider or amend as appropriate.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None.

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Risk Management

None.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

6.6 Health

None.

6.7 Climate Change

None.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1:

8 Previous Consideration

None.

9 Background Papers

File available in Law and Governance.

Contact Officer:	Ian Curran
Telephone Number:	01785 619220
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Economic Development and Planning 2023 (Only)
Key Decision:	N/A

Appendix

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 11 January 2024 at 6.30pm

Report Deadline **Wednesday 20 December 2023**

Officer Reports:

Projects Update

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Meecebrook Garden Community Proposals

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Local Plan

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Work Programme

Head of Law and Governance

Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 6.30pm

Report Deadline **Wednesday 21 February 2024**

Officer Reports:

Biodiversity Net Gain Duty

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Business and Leisure Tourism (Grants)

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Performance Update

Head of Transformation and Assurance

Work Programme

Head of Law and Governance

Future Items:

Task and Finish Review - Events and Activities held in Stafford Town Centre/Parks;
Early 2024

Section 106 Monitoring Update