

REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL
Wednesday, 24th November, 2010

Present:- Councillor Whysall (in the Chair); Councillors Ellis, Foden, Gilding, Gosling and Turner; Councillors R. S. Russell (Cabinet Member, Town Centres) and Smith (Cabinet Member, Regeneration and Environment) (at the invitation of the Chair); together with Co-opted Members:- Councillor C. Jepson and Mr. B. Walker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors St. John, Slade, Swift, S. Wright and Co-optee Parish Councillor Brennan

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

76. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from the public or the press.

77. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 20TH OCTOBER, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel held on 20th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

78. COMMUNICATIONS

The following updates were provided:-

(i) Street lighting

Allan Lewis, Engineer, reported that further to the Sustainable Energy Action Plan and a report relating to energy savings from the use of white lighting, there were 25,000 light capable of being replaced. 8,000 had already been upgraded over the last 4 years. A further 12,000 would be replaced over the next 8 years along with 9,000 columns, leaving 5,000 old units still in services which would cost £500,000 to replace. This would save the Council £50,000 per year in energy and also reduce CO2 emissions. Unfortunately the budget requirement would create an additional financial pressure of £5,680 per annum for 15 years.

Nichola Stretton, Finance Manager Environment and Development Services, provided a detailed explanation of the budget process and situation in respect of this item.

Members present referred to:-

- some roads appearing darker than others e.g. Meadowhall

gateway

- concern from elderly residents relating to safety and fear of crime
- dimming of street lights
- switching off street lights in some parts of the country

It was explained that the dimming of lights depended on (i) the category of the road; (ii) size of the columns; (iii) speed limit on the road.

In respect of switching lights off it was explained that as part of the Sustainable Energy Action Plan some trials were taking place before the end of the next financial year but consultation with residents and emergency services was needed.

It was hoped to fit dimming equipment to 300 units per year to address the growing energy problem.

The Panel acknowledged the budget pressure and encouraged the exploration of further alternatives.

(ii) New Cultural Accommodation/Community Stadium

New Cultural Accommodation:-

Paul Woodcock, Director of Planning and Regeneration, reported that the design for the library was now underway and had been sent to the contractor for costing. Asset Management was looking at ancillary services and accommodation for the Archives.

In addition, a meeting had taken place with Rawmarsh Ward Members to look at the Customer Service Centre and the vacant Rawmarsh library as part of the future use of assets and also how the Council would maintain public access to the archives.

Reference was made to the contract for the fit out of Riverside House and its costs. The Director of Planning and Regeneration agreed to provide this requested information.

Community Stadium

It was reported that the Council had now acquired the site Guest and Chrimes site from Evans. Heads of Terms had been agreed and were being worked through by Legal. An overview of the options being looked at was given. Members of the Panel were referred to a recent report to Cabinet which set out further details including costs, borrowing and listed building status.

It was confirmed that the football club had submitted a planning application and this was being considered by the Planning Board on 25th November, 2010.

(iii) Local Economic Partnership

Paul Woodcock, Director of Planning and Regeneration, presented a briefing note in respect of the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships and in particular the Sheffield City Region LEP.

Particular reference was made to the following:-

- the Government's Growth White Paper
- establishment of the Board for the Sheffield City Region LEP and appointment of a Chairman and board members.
- involvement of officers in working up a Business Plan for the LEP
- the transition from the Regional Development Agencies and disposal of their assets
- reform of the planning system – Localism Bill
- Regional Growth Fund:- objectives and application criteria; noting that public sector only bids will not be accepted
- Finance: introduction of the New Homes Bonus in 2011

Members of the Panel raised and discussed the following:-

- opportunities to redevelop the town centre bid
- Council's information intelligence and expertise in submitting bids that could be offered to the private sector
- Apportionment between Local Authorities of the running costs of the LEP and its Board
- awareness of the business sector of their responsibilities and involvement in the work of the LEP; they need to contribute as well as benefit from the structure;
- the DCLG's asset review, noting: (i) that the Council had made representations but currently there was no agreement for any RDA asset in Rotherham to transfer to the Council; (ii) the need for a list of assets and proposals to be drawn up quickly;
- a period of 12 months where the RDA & the LEP would exist simultaneously; members were concerned that the presence of 2 governance structures could present issues around communication and focus.

Information was shared regarding an LEP Breakfast meeting, being hosted by the private sector on 2nd December, 2010. The Scrutiny Adviser offered to email the information to Panel Members and to book places if required.

79. ROTHERHAM 2012 LEGACY

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Jackie Thornhill, Manager Sports & Physical Activity, highlighting the contribution of partnership working with local organisations toward the 'Rotherham 2012 Olympic Celebration and Legacy'.

The following issues were highlighted:-

- use of the Lighting the Flame logo
- meetings of the South Yorkshire 2012 Legacy Group
- South Yorkshire Police Operations Liaison Group:- noting any political or potential safety issues linked to the pre games training camps and liaison with the London Metropolitan force regarding the Torch Relay
- Rotherham MBC Lighting the Flame for Sport – creation of a web page
- Development of an activities programme including:- 4th Annual Rotherham Sports Awards; on 10th March a Sporting Questions event in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University; Mega Active Summer and Rotherham Summer Games;
- the national Torch Relay
- Get Set Programme involving over 60 Rotherham schools
- award of the national “Inspire” mark for 4 Rotherham projects
- the new Sport England programme “Places people Play” aimed at increasing the number of people volunteering in sport
- continued work to look at ways of obtaining funding

Members commented on:-

- the enormous amount of work done and planned
- concerns about the effect of cuts to the Schools Sports Partnership
- the Sporting Questions and Hallam Audience Evenings
- the need to attract the BBC to cover these local events
- identification of any new young sports people to take part in the Olympics
- involvement of the transport operators in moving teams between locations
- liaison with emergency planning and health and safety services

Resolved:- That officers be thanked for their report and on-going work and they continue to investigate funding options to support 2012 legacy activities.

80. DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN CENTRE RETAIL

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Tim O’Connell, Business and Investment Team Manager, detailing activity undertaken in the town centre during 2010 to attract investment and improve the vitality and viability of retailing in Rotherham town centre. Additional information was provided by way of a PowerPoint presentation.

The following issues were highlighted:-

- statistics for Rotherham re: shopping centre spend noting the challenges to bring the level of spend up and to encourage

- Rotherham residents to shop in the town centre
- the strength of out of town retail centres
- performance of Rotherham town centre compared with neighbouring centres
- current encouraging performance of Rotherham markets
- customer feedback indicating most shoppers in Rotherham were “value shoppers”. Shoppers also indicated they wanted more choice and for Rotherham to be more welcoming
- success of the Business Vitality Grant Scheme in 2009 and 2010 with a total of 35 businesses now being supported
- Shop Local initiative – participation by businesses and up take by customers
- success of events e.g. Garden Lovers’ Fayre and Rotherham by the Sea. However it was pointed out that future events would need to be lead by businesses with support from the Town Centre team.
- efforts to improve the appearance of the town centre by the formation of “Here to Help Team”
- reducing the negative impact of vacant units with art works e.g. High Street
- input from Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance programme of events, workshops and community activities
- success of the Townscape Heritage Initiative re: properties on High Street

Details were also provided on the physical development of the Renaissance Programme, e.g. Keppel’s Wharf, development of the Community Stadium.

Key actions for 2011/2012 included:-

- targeting the national offer and their key agents – taking a pro-active approach to inward investment noting The Works and Toymaster had already moved in.
- supporting the independent offer particularly through the Vitality Grant scheme
- further work with Streetpride to welcome customers
- improved information from the retail trading index and about footfall alongside town centre events

Members of the Panel raised and discussed the following:-

- Town centre street lighting
- the need for a visible and reassuring police presence to encourage families into the Town Centre
- signage for the Imperial building artists
- Essoldo Chambers – Vitality Grant to improve the appearance of the building
- remaining vacant buildings on High Street
- excellent work of the Town Centre Team
- diversity of the market stalls and the street market, noting the availability of the grants to market traders

- the positive impact of the street market on the footfall for national retailers
- the potential of a large supermarket to attract increased spending in the town centre
- the changing dynamics of the town centre
- future of the Riverside precinct and Forge island
- the varying success of town centre initiatives;
- funding via the LAA grant, LABGI and Yorkshire Forward is no longer available
- Proposals for the entrance to the indoor market and the area outside retailer Boots the Chemist

Resolved:- (1) That the actions taken to develop retailing in the town centre be noted.

(2) That the Panel supports the approach outlined in the submitted report and presentation.

(3) That, subject to there being no cost, information on comparative spend between South Yorkshire towns, be provided for the Panel.

81. ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE CHRISTMAS EVENTS 2010

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Dawn Campbell, Events and Promotions Officer, summarising the key Christmas activities and potential benefits together with the impact on the proposals in the Town Centre.

Reference was made to:-

- Christmas being the critical trading period for businesses
- Shop Local
- Christmas Craft Market with the addition of the Festivals Around the World event
- Winter Lantern Parade
- Ghosts of Christmas Past walk (3rd ghost walk)
- Santa's Run and Frosty's Fun
- Victorian Christmas Market
- Mediaeval Babes
- Age Concern Concert and Rudston Preparatory School Christmas Carol Service

Appendix A to the submitted report set out a comprehensive list of events and promotions.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed events programme, outlined in Appendix A to the submitted report, be noted.

(2) That the excellent work of the Events and Promotions Service be commended.

82. WASTE COLLECTION VEHICLE ISSUES

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Adrian Gabriel, Waste Manager, outlining the vehicle issues Waste Management had encountered following the procurement of the new Dennis Eagle Olympus waste fleet via Translinc (the Council's Transport Partner) in April 2010, and the actions taken to rectify identified issues.

Details were given about the procurement of the fleet and the Council's specific requirements.

Reference was made to initial teething problems and faults experienced. An explanation was given of the actions taken to modify and upgrade vehicle software. However some issues with load capabilities were yet to be resolved.

It was pointed out that during this period service standards had been upheld and residents had continued to receive a high standard of service.

It was also reported that an initial claim had been submitted for direct costs related to the overtime claims from the breakdowns over the initial integration of the new fleet.

Members of the Panel commented on:-

- the excellent work of the staff during the integration of the new fleet
- concern at the number of faults identified throughout the fleet
- financing of the vehicles and any potential costs to the Council
- vehicle trials prior to acquisition

Resolved:- That the actions taken by officers to rectify the defects encountered on the new waste collection fleet be noted.

83. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2

Consideration was given to a report, presented by John Finnen, Service Development Officer, relating to the Environment and Development Services performance and related issues during the 2nd quarter of 2010-11.

Reference was made to changes to the national indicators and to the interim format of the information now presented. It was expected that the indicators would be aligned to the new Corporate Plan and Council priorities.

It was explained that this was a transition period and the Localism Bill would see the end of statutory reporting of national indicators and a move towards locally set indicators.

Members of the Panel were asked to consider how they would like to receive performance reports relating to Environment and Development Services.

Members of the Panel commented on:-

- confusion around the colour coding used in the spread sheets
- not needing indicators when there was a clear Council policy
- indicators identified as on, or above, target but which were then identified as areas of weakness
- the low level of adult participation in sport
- cleanliness and recycling targets

Members of the Panel were asked by the Scrutiny Adviser to use the spreadsheets contained in the reports pack, to indicate which performance indicators were of particular interest or considered most useful in monitoring a service area. Performance reporting would be included for discussion on the January 2011 Panel Agenda.

Resolved:- That the contents of the report be noted.

84. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - SEPTEMBER, 2010

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Nichola Stretton, Finance Manager, detailing performance against the revenue budget for the Environment and Development Services Directorate as at the end of September 2010, and providing a forecast outturn for the whole of the 2010/11 financial year.

It was reported that the Programme Area was likely to deliver an underspend against its total net revenue.

Reference was made to actions to mitigate in year budget pressures.

Members of the Panel commented on:-

- concern regarding the underpinning of budget reductions through cuts to the Gully cleansing service and the associated flood risk
- green waste charging
- charges for wheeled bin replacement
- agency and consultancy costs
- withdrawal of external funding

Resolved:- That the current forecasted year end outturn position of an under spend of £177,000 for the Environment & Development Services Directorate based on expenditure and income as at September 2010 and forecast expenditure and income to 31st March 2011, be noted.

85. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING QUARTER 2 - 2010/11

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Nichola Stretton, Finance Manager, detailing the current monitoring position at the end of September 2010 for the Environment and Development Services 2010/11 capital programme.

It was explained that as part of its deficit reduction plan the Government reduced grant funding previously announced as being available to fund capital projects. The Environment and Development Services 2010/11 programme had therefore been adjusted to reflect the reduced funding levels. The effect of this was detailed in the submitted report.

The Panel was advised that the Cabinet would shortly be asked to approve a revised capital programme, and for the Environment and Development Services Programme Area the forecasted outturn position in this report would form the basis of the revised programme.

Reference was made to:-

- capitalisation of some of the costs related to the BDR Waste Management scheme
- revision to the Minor Strategic Maintenance programme
- diversion of remaining funding for development projects from the Rotherham Economic Regeneration Fund to fund part of the acquisition of the Community Stadium
- reduction in expenditure on Highways including the deletion of the Waverley Link Road major scheme
- acquisition of the Guest and Chrimes site
- office accommodation strategy
- Customer Service Centres at Aston and Rawmarsh
- prudential borrowing and repayments
- impact of the reductions of Rotherham's economy
- financial details in respect of Riverside House and the Stadium Development

Resolved:- That the forecasted outturn position for the 2010/11 Environment and Development Services Capital programme be noted.

86. THE FORWARD PLAN - 1ST NOVEMBER, 2010 TO 28TH FEBRUARY, 2011

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st November, 2010 to 28th February, 2011.

Resolved:- That the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

87. MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the minutes of meetings of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held as follows:-

- 24th September, 2010

- 8th October, 2010
- 22nd October, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

88. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TOWN CENTRES

Consideration was given to the minutes of meetings of the Cabinet Member for Town Centres held as follows:-

- 20th September, 2010
- 1st October, 2010
- 18th October, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

89. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Consideration was given to the minutes of meetings of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment held as follows:-

- 13th September, 2010
- 20th September, 2010
- 4th October, 2010
- 1st November, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

90. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LIFESTYLE, SPORT AND TOURISM

Consideration was given to the minutes of meetings of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Lifestyle, Sport and Tourism held as follows:-

- 6th October, 2010
- 9th November, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

91. MINUTES OF THE RECYCLING GROUP HELD ON 9TH NOVEMBER, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Recycling Group held on 9th November, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.