



## **Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel**

**Date:** Thursday, 09 September 2021

**Time:** 16:00

**Venue:** Flensburg Room

**Chair:** Councillor Lisa Brown

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Marilyn Bowman, Councillor Lisa Brown, Councillor Ms Jo Ellis-Williams, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Keith Meller  
Councillor Peter Sunter (for Councillor Mrs Anne Glendinning), Councillor David Shepherd (for Councillor Michael Mitchelson)

**Also Present:** Councillor J Mallinson - Leader  
Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder  
Councillor Nedved - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

**Officers:** Regeneration Manager  
Policy and Performance Officer  
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

### **EGSP.50/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf Councillor Mrs Glendinning, Councillor Mitchelson and Councillor Paton.

### **EGSP.51/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

### **EGSP.52/21 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

### **EGSP.53/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

RESOLVED – It was noted that Council, on 20 July 2021, received and adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 12 April and 17 June 2021. The Chair signed the minutes.

### **EGSP.54/21 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

## **EGSP.55/21 CITY CENTRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACTION PLAN**

The Regeneration Manager submitted the Economic Action Plan which contributed to Carlisle's recovery from the challenges presented as Carlisle moved towards economic recovery and renewal post the Covid-19 pandemic. (ED.32/21).

The Regeneration Manager reported that the City Centre Economic Recovery Action Plan set out an Investment Framework which would support Carlisle city centre to successfully recover from the economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Plan was grounded in a strong evidence base built on existing Council strategies, stakeholder consultation and an understanding of the economic status of Carlisle city centre and to create transformative change in the city centre.

In considering the Plan Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The Panel had concerns that one of the priority key actions was the exploration for an independent / community run cinema in the city. The Panel highlighted an independent cinema which had operated in Carlisle and had closed, they questioned whether there was a market for a replacement.

The Regeneration Manager explained that the next steps had been identified by the consultants as a priority due to changing markets, should the Council agree the matter was a priority then a feasibility study would be required to confirm operational and commercial demand.

- A Member asked for an update on the strategic marketing of Carlisle especially the work of the Carlisle Ambassadors.

The Regeneration Manager outlined the role of the Carlisle Ambassadors and detailed the work being undertaken to promote Carlisle at a national expo taking place in Leeds in 2022. The expo would be an opportunity to promote Carlisle and all the major projects being undertaken in the area. Carlisle was part of various groups and consortiums' that provided the opportunity to promote Carlisle as a place to live, work and visit. The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum would take a significant amount of work but would promote Carlisle nationally and internationally. He agreed to circulate further information to the Panel.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder added that over £200m of investment was taking place in Carlisle, this reflected that Carlisle was being recognised nationally.

- How easy would it be to liaise with property owners to identify appetite for vacant unit development and had consideration been given to the Council purchasing empty units?

The Regeneration Manager confirmed that other authorities did purchase property and real estate in city centres to direct how they would be used. Any work such as this would require significant budget to cover the purchase and the ongoing maintenance liability as well as landlord liability. A similar project had been included in the Town Deal Funding; the Council was working to acquire the head lease for the Market Hall as it was felt that more proactive action could be taken to promote and utilise the Market Hall.

- The Panel asked for detailed monitoring reports to be subject to scrutiny as each project moved forward.

The Regeneration Manager confirmed that monitoring reports would be subject to scrutiny as more detail was added to each project. He reminded the Panel that the Economic Action Plan was part of a suite of documents and plans which needed to be considered together. This Action Plan mapped out the commitment and projects which directly linked to economic recovery in Carlisle following the Covid-19 pandemic.

- A Member noted that the issues highlighted in the report had been ongoing for many years; how would the Council ensure that they were addressed and that the projects would be delivered in five years?

The Regeneration Manager explained that the funding was in place to deliver the projects, if they were not delivered within the timescale then the funding would be returned. The programme was prepared to deliver the projects on time and much of the funding had already been released. He added that there was an evidence report which supported the findings in this report and included details of stakeholders and partners. He agreed to circulate it to the Panel.

- It was recommended that the Regeneration Manager attend an Informal Council meeting to go through the report and supporting documentation in more detail.

- The Market Hall held a lot of potential as a possible food and event space, was there a possibility of coordinating the Market Hall work with the Old Fire Station to regenerate that area of the city?

The Regeneration Manager acknowledged the potential in the Market Hall as a key project in the Town Deal work. The Old Fire Station had new operators and it was hoped that they would work with the Council in regenerating the evening and night economy in that area of the city along with the Market Hall.

- A Member commented that the timeline in the report had been extremely useful and asked where the Levelling Up Fund fell within the timeline.

The Regeneration Manager responded that should it be approved the projects under the Levelling Up Fund would need to begin in the current financial year.

- The key findings highlighted the end of furlough and the possible increase to unemployment, had this information been updated and how accurate had the report been?

The Regeneration Manager explained that the most up to date information would be published soon and he would circulate it to Members. He confirmed that unemployment had risen but it had not been as high as predicted.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio added that Carlisle had a high rate of vacancies especially within the leisure / hospitality sector along with the highest number of start ups in the County.

- A Member commented that although some work had been carried out on the bus station he felt that it still did not have the facilities expected for a traveller or visitor to the City.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the area required more work. He explained the ongoing work with regard to the Borderlands Project and the discussions that had taken place to connect the railway station with the bus station.

The Regeneration Manager highlighted the projects within the Town Deal work that looked to

improve connectivity and public realm. Discussions were taking place with Stagecoach to consider how bus routes and bus stops could be improved to enhance transportation within the city.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Panel had considered the contents of the report and contributed to emerging thinking regarding economic recovery and renewal of Carlisle city centre.  
(ED.32/21)

2) The Panel asked that the suggested action to explore the opportunity for an independent / community-run cinema be reconsidered given the closure of a previous independent cinema in Carlisle.

3) That the Regeneration Manager provide the Panel with the following:

- (i) the supporting evidence report to the Economic Action Plan - responding to Covid-19 in Carlisle city centre report;
- (ii) information regarding the unemployment figures following the end of the furlough period;
- (iii) information regarding the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in Leeds 2022

4) That an Informal Council be arranged to receive a presentation from the Regeneration Manager on the Economic Action Plan - responding to Covid-19 in Carlisle city centre and the supporting evidence.

## **EGSP.56/21 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT OFFICE**

The Regeneration Manager provided an update on key regeneration projects and the work programme and activities to be undertaken for 2021-22. (ED.30/21)

The Regeneration Manager reported that in order to be able to undertake the role of Accountable Body for the major projects and programmes effectively, the report set out the proposal for the creation of an Economic Development Programme Management Office, and also to increase the capacity of the Regeneration Team to support the development and delivery of the projects.

At its meeting on 20 July 2021, Council resolved (C.115/21 referred):

"That the Council:

1. Note the progress on the development and delivery of the key regeneration projects led by the City Council – Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal and Caldew Riverside.
2. Approved an additional revenue budget of £91,545 for this financial year 2021/22 to fund the Programme Management Office and the regeneration team and an additional £82,560 for the following two years 2022-23 and 2023-24, as set out in Table 3 of report ED.22/21 and funded from Revenue Reserves.
3. Approved a budget of £6,742,839 (in addition to the Greenmarket scheme already included in the Council's capital programme) be added to the Council's Capital Programme, in accordance with the financial profile for the Future High Street Fund programme for the years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 as set out in Table 2 of report ED.22/21."

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- How confident was the Council that houses could be built at the Caldew Riverside site once the remediation works had been completed?

The Regeneration Manager explained that the remediation work had to be carried out to a very high level to allow for housing to be built, because of this the Council was working closely with the Environment Agency to meet that requirement.

- How were the figures for the Lighting Up Carlisle event calculated?

The Regeneration Manager responded that the figures had been prepared by New Skills Consultants using a number of complex metrics. He confirmed that the figures were projected and he offered to provide the supporting information to Members should they so wish.

- There was some concern that existing stall holders in the Market Hall would be pushed out by the proposed changes and the Panel questioned how they would be consulted with on the proposed plans.

The Regeneration Manager reassured the Panel that the matter would be dealt with sensitively. Work would be carried out with existing traders to improve the offer and hopefully improve the business of all traders.

- How would a clear vision for the projects be retained during the Local Government Reorganisation as staff and Members change?

The Regeneration Manager reminded the Panel that the funding and projects had been agreed, he acknowledged that there may be changes to the delivery teams but felt the delivery of the projects would continue as planned.

The Leader commented that the funding could not be spent on any other projects and it was in the city's best interest to complete the projects.

- How would performance be monitored and reported to Scrutiny?

The Policy and Performance Officer responded that performance monitoring would be included in the Panel's quarterly performance monitoring reports.

RESOLVED - That the Panel:

1. Noted the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) Memorandum of Understanding included in Appendix A, the provisions contained therein;
2. Noted the Remediation Road Map for the Caldew Riverside site and the key decision points as set out in Table 5 of report ED.30/21;
3. Noted the progress on the development of the Carlisle Town Deal, the agreement of Heads of Terms (included in Appendix B), the agreed programme of projects as set out in Table 6 of report ED.30/21 and the programme of activity over the next twelve months to progress towards agreeing the Town Deal;
4. Noted the additional resources required to deliver City Council's major economic development projects and the associated costs, and that the costs would be offset using grant funding that had been secured;
5. Noted the establishment of an Economic Development Programme Management Office for an initial 3 year period (subject to review) and increasing the capacity of the regeneration team.

6. Requested an update on the Regeneration Programme and Economic Development Management Office in six months time.

### **EGSP.57/21 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2021/22**

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted the Quarter 1 2021/22 performance against the current Service Standards and a baseline position for the Carlisle Plan 2021-23 actions as defined in the draft Plan (PC.35/21). Performance against the Panel's 2021/22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were included as a dashboard.

The Policy and Performance Officer highlighted the changes to the report as a result of the Performance Reporting Task and Finish Group and drew the Panel's attention to the summary of exceptions and the explanation for the missed target.

The Panel discussed the low response to the online customer satisfaction survey and how this could be improved, a Member suggested utilising social media adverts.

The Policy and Performance Officer explained that the response rate had been lower than expected as the survey had been 100% online. Prior to Covid-19 the survey would have been available in hard copy to increase response rates. He agreed to investigate social media advertisements further with the Media and Communications Officer.

RESOLVED -That the Panel had scrutinised the performance of the City Council with a view to seeking continuous improvement in how the Council delivers its priorities (PC.35/21).

### **EGSP.58/21 OVERVIEW REPORT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.23/21 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel agreed to the following changes to their Work Programme:

- Delivering St Cuthbert's Garden Village to move from October to December
- Add the Regeneration Programme update to March 2022

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating Key Decision items relevant to the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.23/21).

2) That the following changes be made to the Work Programme:

- Delivering St Cuthbert's Garden Village to move from October to December
- Add the Regeneration Programme update to March 2022

The Meeting ended at: 18:00