

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 26 MARCH 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Mary Martin (Chair), Kevin Parry, Nicky Sewell and Steve Wakefield

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Junab Ali, Roderick Bluh, Wayne Crabbe (Vice-Chair), Mark Dempsey and Mary Friend.

26. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. There were no declarations.

27. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2015, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

29. Localities - Devolved Decision Making

The Committee received a verbal update from the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering (HLCIV), Patrick Weir, about the devolution of budgets to localities by the Council and examples of best practice within local government.

Members were reminded of how the Locality fund was established and its aims to deliver local priorities and enable community action at a local level. The Locality Fund's three elements included (i) the Highways Improvement Fund, (ii) Streetsmart operational hours and (iii) Grassroots, Administration and Neighbourhood Grants, with Locality Chairs and Ward Members considering and prioritising suggestions from the community for works in those areas.

The HLCIV explained that members were concerned about the pace of delivery for a number of projects and that the quarterly Locality meetings did not encourage new members of the community to attend and become involved. Therefore, a report was considered by Cabinet, at its meeting held on 18th March, which set out a more focused and targeted approach to encouraging and supporting community action and changing the way Delivery and Localities teams worked in support of Cabinet, Ward Members and communities. In particular, the report highlighted measures to improve officer support in the Highways Team and the reorganisation of resources within the Localities Team.

Following the update the HLCIV responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following:

- Concern about the pace of delivery, the tracking and the priority given to agreed schemes
- The additional support role in the Highways Team and how this would aid the process
- The role of the local community and how to encourage greater participation in locality issues
- The need to sometimes synchronise the Parish and Locality budgets on specific projects

The HLCIV then referred to a number of other Councils, including Gloucestershire County Council, Sunderland City Council, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London Borough of Lewisham and Durham County Council and how they structured and resourced their locality teams.

The Chair thanked the HLCIV for his very interesting and informative report update.

Resolved:

That the update report from the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering be noted.

30. Work Programme - End of year Report 2014/15

The Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Officer setting out the work undertaken by the Committee over the past municipal year.

Resolved:

That the end of year report 2014/15 be noted.