

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 7th November, 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Christian Chapman in the Chair;

Councillors Tony Brewer, Dale Grounds,
Phil Rostance and David Walters.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Rachel Madden and Caroline Wilkinson.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Theresa Hodgkinson, Mike Joy and
Shane Wright.

SB.7 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SB.8 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 19th September, 2019, be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.9 Scrutiny Review: Town Centre Regeneration

The Chairman introduced the topic and advised the Panel that 'Town Centre Regeneration' had been added to the Scrutiny Workplan in July 2019 and was further endorsed by the Leader at the Council's State of Ashfield Debate in October 2019.

It had been recognised that economic growth was a key priority for the Council and the report, as presented, set out some of the funding opportunities available to Ashfield including the partners the Council currently worked with in relation to its growth and regeneration ambitions for the District.

The Director of Place and Communities took the opportunity to address the Panel and circulated a briefing note regarding the Towns Fund Prospectus.

The objective of the Towns Fund was to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth. Thirty places within the Midlands had been selected for investment with both Kirkby in Ashfield and Sutton in Ashfield being chosen to develop Town Deals with up to £25m being made available for each town.

The timeframe and requirements for accessing the funding were as follows:

1. To establish a Board led by a representative from the local business community;
2. Capacity funding to be received in November 2019 (£324,038 for both towns);
3. Readiness checklist to be submitted by 19th November 2019 to gauge how quickly the Council can prepare for a Town Deal;
4. Town Deal Board to be convened (including publication of town boundary) by end of January 2020;
5. Further guidance published early 2020;
6. Town Investment Plan produced by end of Summer 2020;
7. Town Deal agreed for 2020-21.

It was envisaged that a Member of Scrutiny Panel B would be invited to sit on the Town Deal Board, once established, comprising various other representatives including 'Discover Ashfield' ambassadors from the local business community.

Once the financial framework was in place, it was anticipated that 'project visioning' would commence through workshops with the scrutiny review running alongside and contributing towards the business and public sector consultation processes. It was acknowledged that the Sutton Town Centre Masterplan would also be an effective tool to help inform the planning and decision-making processes.

The other funding opportunity had been made available through the Future High Streets Fund, which had been set up by Government to support the renewal and reshaping of high streets and town centres. Following the selection of Sutton in Ashfield following completion of phase 1, the Council had recently received some funding from Government to support the phase 2 development of high street strategies and business cases for the proposed projects. It was a competitive funding process and the Council were hoping to secure funding for heritage and renewal projects around the Market Place area of Sutton.

At this point Members considered the scope for the review and discussed, amongst other things:-

- the likeliness of the Council securing the Future High Street funding and acknowledging that the submitted bids would be aimed at securing between a £5 to £10 million investment, if successful;
- the progress the Council has already made in relation to the Towns Fund initiative and the timeframes for commencement of consultation which would commence once the feasibility study had been completed (with the next few weeks);

- the content of the Sutton Town Centre Masterplan;
- the benefits (and pitfalls) of pedestrianisation within town centres including the success of the Hucknall High Street redevelopment;
- a Member concern that they would not wish to see a town centre modelled around Mansfield Town Centre that had seemingly forced traffic and accessibility for customers too far away from the main area and shopping facilities;
- the importance of retaining some of Kirkby and especially Sutton's historical features within any new designs and ensuring the protection of any buildings of interest through designated conservation areas;
- the requirement for Sutton and Kirkby to find more of an identity and be clear as to what it has to offer its customers acknowledging that provision of a suitable café culture and night-time economy would be a priority;
- the importance of attracting young people into the town centres and offering them facilities that would engage and interest them;
- acknowledgement that shopping habits have changed and that town centres needed to offer alternatives to traditional retail outlets;
- the rise in popularity of unique selling spots i.e. virtually reality cafes and their potential for revitalising a town centre by creating a focal point;
- Members to encourage public involvement in the Towns Fund consultation process through their work with local residents and community groups;
- the benefits of a targeted PR campaign through all social media outlets to ensure that the Council engages with a wide range of local residents and businesses to help shape the future prosperity of its town centres.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information in the report, as presented, be received and noted;
- b) the Service Manager, Democratic & Scrutiny Services, in consultation with the Director of Place and Communities, be requested to compile and agree an appropriate terms of reference for the Town Centre Regeneration review taking into account all the Panel's comments and suggestions as outlined at the meeting.

(During consideration of the report, Councillors Tony Brewer and Dale Grounds left the room at 7.27pm and 7.36pm and returned to the meeting at 7.29pm and 7.39pm respectively.)

The meeting closed at 7.42 pm

Chairman.