

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 24th February, 2020.

Present: Cllr Chris Barlow (Chair), Cllr Louise Baldock (Vice-Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Alan Watson and Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE.

Officers: Jamie McCann, Craig Willows (CS); Richard McGuckin, Mark Rowell, Tony Wrigglesworth (EGDS); Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, Gary Woods (MD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Bob Cook (Leader of the Council); Mike Russell (Tees Valley Combined Authority); Shak Asghar (Tees Valley Business Compass); Julie Underwood, Rachel Anderson (North East England Chamber of Commerce / Department of International Trade); Laura Woods (Teesside University).

Apologies: Cllr Julia Cherrett.

PLA 36/19 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

PLA 37/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

PLA 38/19 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meeting held on 27th January 2020.

AGREED that the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PLA 39/19 Scrutiny Review of Business Support and Engagement

Members received information from the Council's wider business support partners including Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Business Compass, North East England Chamber of Commerce / Department of International Trade, and Teesside University.

Consideration was given to the presentation from the Business Finance Manager and the Growth Service Manager of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Business Compass. The key topics of the presentation were as follows:

- The TVCA Business Compass has been a three-year programme which has operated as a 'front door' for businesses to access the right support to grow.
- Local SME businesses are assisted through the TVCA Business Compass 'Growth Hub' advisory service and via grants.
- There have been 787 expressions of interest in TVCA Business Compass (408 from Stockton-based businesses) since its inception. Stockton also has around a 35% share of the grant programme (a fair share considering the number of SMEs across the Borough) and 200 new jobs have been created to date.
- TVCA Business Compass have one point of contact for each Local

Authority within the Tees Valley. Partnership working is consistent across the Tees Valley. This is facilitated through a real time data portal and joint events.

- TVCA Business Compass has complemented the work of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) to unlock barriers for businesses so they can access programmes and funding across the Tees Valley and beyond.
- Funding for the TVCA Business Compass has been extended to 30 June 2020.
- The next stage of the project will be a new in-house gateway model, entitled Tees Valley Business.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members were informed that businesses can access support from the growth hub free-of-charge.
- Members were informed that the skills support for workforce contract is still valid for a number of years. A similar, though enhanced, scheme is also expected to begin once this contract has ended. The TVCA are trying to streamline services so that businesses can send their enquiries to one point of contact.
- Members questioned if there was a duplication of support services for businesses in Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Tees Valley area. Members were informed that the TVCA is funded and commissioned to operate as a holistic front door for business enquiries. Once the TVCA has helped a business to achieve its aims, their interaction with the business ends. In contrast, the Council's Business Support and Enterprise Team has an ongoing relationship with businesses.
- Members were informed that European Regional Development Fund (EDRF) funding was guaranteed by the government until the middle of 2023. After this, a new source of funding will be secured (Shared Prosperity Fund).

Consideration was given to a joint presentation from the International Trade Director and the Assistant Director of Policy of the North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC) and Department of International Trade (DIT). The key topics of the presentation were as follows:

- The DIT Tees Valley Team (a government contracted-out service delivered via the NEECC) has assisted businesses to export for the first time and maximised the opportunities for those businesses who are already exporting.
- The Team continued to provide one-to-one support (what businesses value most), funding opportunities, events / workshops and trade missions. Partnership-working with SBC was also highlighted, including joint meetings with the Council's Business and Enterprise Team, and the hosting of the 'Exporting is Great' Hub on Stockton High Street.
- The Borough is one of the leading areas within the Tees Valley for funding applications, and has secured the majority of 'business wins' in comparison to its neighbouring Local Authorities.
- Businesses in the Borough have been recognised as 'Export Champions' (a programme promoted throughout the UK), and have been used in national marketing campaigns.
- The role and remit of the NEECC was explained. Established in 1815, it is the only regional Chamber of Commerce (funded by member subscriptions), and is apolitical.

- The Stockton Business Forum has been formed as a partnership between SBC and the NEECC.
- A good working relationship is established between the NEECC and SBC, including quarterly meetings with the SBC Managing Director, and support offered on specific projects (e.g. Hampton by Hilton Hotel) – the NEECC are also statutory consultees on the Council's annual budget process.
- Increased collaboration at the beginning of a project would be beneficial and further opportunities to collaborate on inward investment in the future would be welcomed.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members were informed about the types of companies which export from this region, including SME creative companies who have provided education and digital healthcare overseas. The 'British brand' is still highly valued overseas.
- Joint working and information-sharing with other organisations has formed a crucial part of the work of DIT.
- The NEECC will be supporting businesses ahead of any changes to the UK's trade policy following Brexit. Some overseas trade will inevitably become more challenging.
- Businesses do not always know what they want when they contact the NEECC.
- The Committee asked for views on the main barriers to local businesses, and queried how they would know where to go for support and guidance as there appears to be a myriad of support partners. It was noted that businesses have a vast range of needs, and that there is no 'wrong door' for them to approach – what is key is for support partners to work together so businesses can be directed to the most appropriate source of help.
- Sometimes Local Authority departments can work in silos – businesses can be affected by issues covered by Council directorates that do not have an economic-focus, and may need access to advice or support from other areas of Council activity.

Consideration was given to a presentation from the Director of Academic Enterprise of Teesside University. The key topics of the presentation were as follows:

- Teesside University has a role in attracting businesses to the region and establishing international partnerships.
- Each academic school within the university has business-related performance indicators.
- There are three key sections to the Department of Academic Enterprises business-focused services. These are business-facing, student-facing, and back office. These are underpinned by stakeholder relationships.
- Fusion Hive in Stockton is one of the University's three physical locations.
- Teesside University has its own Business Innovation Team. The University has a programme of higher and degree apprenticeships.
- Digital City was provided as an example of a collaborative partnership with the TVCA. The University was currently working with 158 Stockton organisations (not including those offering student placements).
- Students are supported through careers, employability and enterprise

services.

- Longstanding and good relationship with SBC, and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, a framework for managing and increasing collaboration. Teesside University also works with other Local Authorities.
- The University's main focus is to help businesses to grow, graduate talent and employee development, innovation services that change business processes and products, and putting the customer journey front and centre.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Challenges around nursing apprenticeships were raised – the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is particular about what needs to be undertaken before they accredit anything.
- Members were informed of the long-running enterprise programme which has been developed to provide in-house training. Support for start-up businesses is also provided from external organisations. Launchpad and other services for young people are also available for SBC to take part in through Teesside University.
- Members were informed that Teesside University's model for business is focused on quality and sustainability rather than quantity. This approach has attracted interest from other Universities and organisations.
- Being responsive to what businesses want as opposed to what support partners think they need was vital.

In bringing this agenda item to a close, the Chair asked all those providing evidence at this meeting if there was a risk that others Local Authorities do not have a similar Business and Enterprise Team to SBC, yet still benefit from the services available from support partners such as themselves. The Committee was informed that local need can necessitate different approaches, and that partners are not there to duplicate Council support activity. Most are clear on what they can or cannot do, and the greater scale of activity in Stockton may demonstrate the positives in the Council's support resource allied to that offered by partners.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**PLA
40/19**

Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations

Consideration was given to the assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Disabled Parking (Task & Finish).

The Committee commended the audit that had now been completed regarding the disabled parking provision across the whole Borough (included within the meeting papers), and felt that although it had taken time to get to this point, the information collected, once acted upon, would greatly benefit those requiring the use of disabled parking spaces.

Members asked if a costing plan for the identified improvements had been confirmed and if there were any priority areas. Members were informed that costings were yet to be finalised. There are a number of dropped kerbs in the areas concerned and this issue would probably be resolved first. Members

were also informed that Town Centre areas may be prioritised because these car parks are used the most in the Borough.

The Committee suggested that, as the audit covered a number of areas across the Borough, consideration should be given to circulating the findings to all Councillors. It was also important that now the issues had been identified, work to address these is progressed.

AGREED that:

- 1) the Progress Updates be noted and the assessments for progress be confirmed.
- 2) an update on developments following completion of the audit of disabled bays across the Borough be provided to the Committee in approximately 12 months.

PLA 41/19 Overview Reports 2020

Members were presented with overview reports from the Community Services and Economic Growth and Development Services directorates.

The Community Services report reflected on emerging issues in relation to the following themes:

- Waste Collection and Disposal
- Recycling Collection
- Street Cleansing
- Grounds Maintenance
- Registration and Bereavement Services
- Catering and Cleaning

The following points were raised by the Committee:

- Members questioned if the Council would be charging for wheeled bins per household in new housing developments. Members were informed that charging for wheeled bins has been considered, particularly in light of an ever-expanding Borough, but this would require a significant policy change. The current practice, one wheeled bin free of charge per new household, would continue for the foreseeable future.
- Members questioned if lower maintenance planting would be implemented in new housing developments. Members were informed that in any new housing development the Council aim to balance lower maintenance planting with providing sufficient green spaces and habitats for wildlife.
- Members asked if the Council could provide recycling facilities for commercial businesses. Members were informed that the Council are unable to finance this service, but information of a third-party service is available for any interested businesses in the Borough.
- Members questioned if the charge for a waste disposal permit was a 'false economy' due to increased fly tipping. Members were informed that the charge for permits may be reviewed in future. It was highlighted that others authorities have offered a free service and were unable to cope with the level of

demand. It was also noted that there is no evidence to suggest that fly tipping has increased in the ten years where fees have applied. Whether or not a charge is made, it is completely unacceptable to fly tip.

- The Committee requested clarity around the recycling arrangement, specifically around the larger capacity white bag. Officers confirmed that only glass needs to be separated, with everything else able to go into the white bag – for residents who still have the old style white and blue bags, they may now be used interchangeably. This will be further re-iterated to residents via the Council's Communications Team.
- Members discussed the potential topics (burial space and school meal provision) that had been proposed for next year's scrutiny work programme, and agreed that these should be put forward for consideration – Officers would complete and submit the required proforma ahead of the 5th March 2020 deadline.

The Economic Growth and Development Services report reflected on emerging issues in relation a number of themes including:

- Government's commitment to eradicating rough sleeping
- Targeted Action Areas (North Thornaby and Central Stockton)
- Depreciation of Highway Assets
- Town Centres Development
- Climate Change
- Warm Homes Fund
- Business Support

Subsequent discussions were noted as follows:

- In relation to the targeted action areas, the selective licensing scheme would be reviewed to see if the approach being undertaken remains appropriate.
- Discussion around CCTV camera monitoring in targeted action zones was had. Members were informed that a report on the costs of CCTV camera monitoring across the Borough has been produced and will be shared with the Committee.
- The Committee supported the suggested topics for next year's scrutiny work programme involving Disabled Facilities Grants, Highway Asset Management, and Sustainability.

AGREED that

- 1) the information be noted.
- 2) the further information be provided as requested.

PLA 42/19 Work Programme 2019-2020

Consideration was given to the Work Programme. The next Place Select Committee Meeting will take place on 23rd March 2020.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

PLA
43/19

Chairs Update

The Chair had no further update.