

## Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 25th April, 2022.

**Present:** Cllr Chris Barlow (Chair), Cllr Mohammed Javed (Vice-Chair), Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Hilary Vickers and Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE.

**Officers:** John Angus, Joanne Roberts, Tony Wrigglesworth (CS&T); Sarah Robinson (HR,L&C); Julie Marsden (FD&BS); Rachel Harrison, Gary Woods (MD)

**Also in attendance:** None.

**Apologies:** None.

### **PLA      Declarations of Interest**

**45/21**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PLA      Minutes**

**46/21**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Place Select Committee meeting which was held on the 21st February 2022 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **PLA      Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations**

**47/21**

The Select Committee considered a progress update, including assessments of progress and supplementary photographs, following implementation of the recommendations from the Review of Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish).

- The project was promoted using the Council's various social media pages.
- Work was completed on damaged planters to repair them for the safety of the local residents.
- In relation to recommendation 5 (Local businesses are encouraged to sponsor planters or provide materials or funding), progress of this action had slipped. The intention was for businesses to be contacted following the planters being improved as part of a long-term exit strategy – this was likely to happen in summer 2022.
- £50,000 had been secured from the Queens Platinum Jubilee Grant by the Community Partnerships, Cultivate and Sprouts. Part of the grant was to work on 70 planters across the borough.
- Members were informed the Platinum Jubilee Planters were going to have a QR code on them which could be scanned to find out more information about the Jubilee.
- Members commented that the funding had come at a good time enabling a difference to be made across the community (concerns had been raised during the review itself about a lack of available funding).
- Members queried if the planters had been planted for the year and if so, had the local residents been consulted. Officers commented that they had not been planted yet (timescales were in the process of being established with

Cultivate) and residents will be consulted when the time came – Members will also be kept updated on developments.

- Members spoke of the enthusiasm from local people about the improvements being made to the Borough's planters – not only did this create a better look, it also helped rid an area of littering, including drug paraphernalia that was evident.
- A further progress update was to be brought to Committee on the 21st November 2022 regarding an update on recommendation 5.

AGREED that the Progress Updates be noted and the assessments for progress be confirmed.

**PLA  
48/21**

### **Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations**

The Select Committee considered a progress update, including assessments of progress and several supplementary appendices, following implementation of the recommendations from the Review of Business Support and Engagement. Highlights included:

#### Recommendation 1

- The intended microsite was completed, but the Land and Property search is a feature that was to be included on the full site which was due to be completed in May 2022. The Council has worked with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to increase information-sharing.
- Research showed that websites promoting privately owned land and property were not updated regularly enough to reflect the recent demand in the market.
- Economic Development encouraged all property enquiries to come directly to the team to ensure that the business got the most effective and up-to-date service, as the team linked directly with agents that operated across the borough.

#### Recommendation 2

- The invest Stockton-on-Tees branding was used in all promotion to businesses and currently had accounts on Twitter and LinkedIn as they were the two most popular social media channels used by businesses.

#### Recommendation 3

- Moving out of the pandemic businesses experienced an increase in the number of events taking place online and in-person. Work continued to explore the effectiveness of these networks and where there were still gaps that supported specific sectors or those groups with protected characteristics.
- Officers from the SBC Economic Development Team were trying to get around live events which were happening more now following previous COVID limitations.

#### Recommendation 4

- An internal and external redecoration of Digital House was carried out to make way for the new co-working space. Discussions were taking place with 2Work, who had developed a co-working model that was based in Leeds and were keen to expand into the Tees Valley, with Stockton being the preferred option.

#### Recommendation 5

- The team had been collaborating with Licensing who identified a 30% reduction in the numbers of taxi drivers due to covid. They were looking at developing a scheme which would attract new drivers into the sector. The scheme would include a recruitment drive, reduced fees and possible incentives to attract people.
- A hospitality recruitment event was held to fill 150 vacancies with 120 attending.

#### Recommendation 7

- The Stockton-on-Tees Employment & Training Hub (aiming to support both residents and businesses) was relocating again in early June 2022 into a purpose-built facility (the temporary Hub was currently sited within Wellington Square).
- A key focus of the Hub is to help businesses sustain its existing workforce via upskilling, training, etc. A presentation regarding the Hub would be presented to the Children and Young People Select Committee at the most appropriate time (likely to be late-2022).

Committee comments and questions were recorded as follows:

- Members questioned how those people paying the bedroom tax would be impacted when working from home. Officers responded that this was an issue which was getting looked into, specifically around raising awareness of available grants.
- Members commented that Digital House should be advertised in places where it can reach the right people. Officers replied that there was a social media strategy in place for promotion, and that work on the external view had been undertaken (a challenging situation given it was a listed building).
- Members commented that some taxi drivers felt as though there was not enough trade to sustain an income and queried what was being done to support existing drivers and get new drivers into the industry. Officers responded to this by saying they had received comments from residents saying they were unable to book a taxi, and were looking at understanding any issues, unpicking mixed messages, and seeing how local businesses can create demand for taxis.
- Members questioned if the 'Made In Stockton' branding was still in use, with officers responding that it was still used and that a focus piece is included in each edition of Stockton News.
- Members asked for clarity around the Employment and Training Hub's target audience and purpose so the right people were being encouraged to access and engage with it. The Committee heard that the Hub has a range of offers from a business, resident, and educational perspective, and it was acknowledged that this message needed to be communicated well. It was effectively for everyone, and the new Hub frontage will be clearer once it moves to the new premises.

AGREED that the Progress Updates be noted and the assessments for progress be confirmed.

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next Committee meeting would be held on Monday 23 May 2022 and was scheduled to include consideration of the draft final report for the Residents Parking Zones review.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

**PLA  
50/21**

**Chair's Update**

The Chair had no further updates.