

Economic Prosperity Sub Committee

Tuesday, 28 September 2021

Present: Councillor M Wilson (Chair)
Councillors L Bones, T Brady, J Harrison, H Johnson,
J O'Shea, B Pickard, W Samuel, J Stirling, J Walker and
G Westwater

Apologies: Councillors M Hall

8/21 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution the appointment of the following substitute member was reported:

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor M Hall

9/21 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Liam Bones declared a non-registerable personal interest in relation to minute 12/21 because his parents were currently submitting a change of use planning application and a licensing application in relation to premises located in a North Tyneside town centre.

10/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

11/21 Former Swan Hunter Shipyard

The Committee met at the Swans Centre for Innovation in Wallsend to view and consider the ongoing development of the former Swan Hunter shipyard.

Having viewed the Centre and the wider site, the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, John Sparkes, gave a presentation which:

- a) set out the history of the site;
- b) summarised the Council's involvement in the development of the site and its vision and plans for the future having sold much of the site to Shepherd's Offshore;
- c) described the work undertaken to renovate and market the Swans Centre for Innovation;
- d) evaluated the outcomes achieved in return for the investment into the site; and
- e) updated members on work undertaken in conjunction with the North of Tyne Combined Authority and Newcastle City Council to determine a strategy for the development of the North Bank of the Tyne area.

Representatives of Shepherd Offshore had been invited to attend the meeting to discuss the company's plans for the site but they were unfortunately unable to attend. It was hoped that an alternative date could be arranged to enable the sub-committee to meet with the company.

Members of the sub-committee asked questions and discussed the future of the site and the surrounding area. The sub-committee paid particular attention to:

- the progress made by the National Grid in pursuing options for the re-routing or removal of the overhead power transmission cables across the River Tyne which restricted the capacity of the river to accommodate larger vessels;
- the extent to which the Council could maintain control over the development of the former Swan Hunter shipyard following its sale to Shepherd Offshore both under the terms of the sale and in planning law;
- the amount of funding secured for the development of the site which had been reclaimed because the associated projects had not gone ahead;
- the amount and proportion of external funding leveraged into the site by the Council's involvement;
- the reasons for a decline since 2016 in the number of tenants letting property in the Swans Centre for Innovation;
- the collaboration between those authorities operating on the north and south banks of the Tyne to deliver a coherent economic strategy for the river;
- the potential of the site to attract investment from the offshore wind turbine industry; and
- how it could be demonstrated that the economic development of the north bank of the Tyne would generate value and prosperity for the population of North Tyneside.

Resolved that the presentation in relation to the ongoing development of the former Swan Hunter shipyard be noted.

12/21 State of the Economy

The sub-committee was presented with data which provided an indication of the state of the economy in North Tyneside. The data included the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit, the number of employments furloughed, the town centre vacancy rate, numbers of job advertisements and new business start ups.

Comparative data indicated that North Tyneside tended to be performing better than the North East averages but worse than national averages. Consequently, North Tyneside had been placed in Category 2 by the Government for the purposes of assessing bids for the Levelling Up Fund. Neighbouring authorities had been placed in the higher priority Category 1. To overcome this the Council was working with its neighbours and the North of Tyne Combined Authority to prepare joint bids.

It was suggested that the sub-committee should continue to receive updated data on a regular basis but that the data should be compared with the performance in other regions rather than national averages.

The sub-committee asked for clarification of the basis on which the median gross weekly pay for full-time workers had been calculated and examined the reasons for the drop in property vacancy rates.

Resolved that (1) the data relating to the state of the economy in North Tyneside be noted; and
(2) the sub-committee continue to be presented with a dashboard of data on a regular basis.

13/21 Green Skills for Green Jobs

The sub-committee considered whether to appoint a time limited sub-group to consider the Council's approach to adapting to a green industrial revolution and ensuring people have the right skills for the future green jobs. Members agreed that it would be a worthwhile topic to investigate. The Chair of the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee had no objection to the sub-committee undertaking the exercise which crossed over into its remit.

Resolved that a Green Skills Sub-Group be appointed to consider the Council's approach to adapting to a green industrial revolution and ensuring people have the right skills for the future green jobs.