

Economic Prosperity Sub Committee

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Present: Councillor M Wilson (Chair)
Councillors L Bones, M Hall, V Jamieson, L Marshall,
J Montague, B Pickard and J Walker

In attendance:
Councillors

Apologies: Councillors M Murphy and G Westwater

EP23/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

EP24/22 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

EP25/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 January 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

EP26/22 An Ambition for Wallsend

The sub-committee met to examine the Cabinet's policy priorities for Wallsend Town Centre and the projects included within the draft Wallsend Masterplan to deliver those priorities.

In March 2022, Cabinet had agreed a set of policy priorities for Wallsend Town Centre. These were to:

- a) Improve the quality of the housing offer in Wallsend; in particular making the area a focus of the Mayor and Cabinet's plans for 5000 affordable homes and tackling some of the poor quality privately rented housing in the Masterplan area;
- b) Make the town centre and the nearby neighbourhoods great places to visit and live; improving the street scene, public spaces and working with partners to make sure people feel safe; and
- c) Make sure Wallsend residents are connected to good jobs; using the full range of tools, including adult education, apprenticeships and the capabilities plus the transport infrastructure around the town to make sure people in the community, who need it, are supported to improve their life chances.

In November 2022, Cabinet had agreed the contents of a draft Wallsend Masterplan to be used as a basis for consultation and engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders. The draft Masterplan contained a series of projects designed to deliver the Cabinet's policy priorities. The Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, John

Sparkes, presented details of the draft Masterplan, the consultation and engagement activities undertaken and an overview of the preliminary findings to emerge from these conversations.

The sub-committee gave consideration to the Cabinet's policy priorities for Wallsend Town Centre, it assessed the projects contained within the draft Masterplan in terms of delivering the Cabinet's priorities and considered the emerging feedback from residents, businesses and other stakeholders from the consultation.

Members expressed support for the ambition for Wallsend and the detailed projects contained within the Masterplan.

The sub-committee queried what provision would be contained within the plan for the maintenance of the improvements to ensure that the condition of the new facilities did not quickly deteriorate. It was stated that the design of the improvements would have to have regard to suitable and affordable materials which would be easy to maintain and that the designs should be signed off by a range of stakeholders to ensure that they promoted the Council's wider ambitions in terms of the environment, community safety and health and wellbeing. It was stated that recent works in North Shields had demonstrated that the first 12 months were critical in securing and safeguarding any improvements, when investment in planting was particularly vulnerable.

The sub-committee discussed the potential of Segedunum Roman Fort to enhance its offer and to attract visitors to Wallsend. It was confirmed that there was scope for improved car parking and space for outdoor events at the site. Reference was made to the growing market for campervan and motorhome sites and whether such a facility could be developed at or near Segedunum. Such a facility would be particularly attractive if it included access to the River Tyne. The sub-committee discussed the limited public access to the north bank of the River Tyne in the borough for leisure purposes and the potential benefits of creating new green space on the riverbank. It was acknowledged however that this would be at a cost of losing land allocated for employment use and with a very high economic value to the region.

Members referred to problems associated with commercial bin storage in Wallsend town centre and they asked whether consideration could be given to improvements to the storage facilities as part of the Masterplan. It was stated that the Authority initially sought to work with businesses and waste collection operators to address the problems associated with storage but ultimately it could use enforcement powers to intervene.

Councillor Marshall offered to share with officers the outcome of her own surveys and engagement with residents in relation to the Masterplan.

It was suggested that the plan may benefit from having a clear mission or vision statement to capture the history and community spirit of the town.

A report was to be presented to the Cabinet setting out the outcome of the public consultation exercise and seeking approval for the Wallsend Masterplan. The Director of Regeneration and Economic Development undertook to include within the report a record of the sub-committee's comments set out above to help shape the final Masterplan.

It was **agreed** that the sub-committee's comments on the Wallsend Masterplan as set out above be referred to the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development so that they may be incorporated into a report to Cabinet setting out the outcome of the consultation

exercise and help shape the final Wallsend Masterplan.