

ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
COMMITTEE

10 August 2023

OPEN

PRESENT:

Labour Group

Councillor S Taylor (Chair) and Councillor K Storey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors S Harrison, (substituting for Councillor Archer), I Hudson, J Jackson, V Redfern, B Stuart and A Tilley.

Conservative Group

Councillors M Fitzpatrick (substituting for Councillor J Lowe), K Haines and P Watson.

Liberal Democrats

Councillor G Andrew

Non-Grouped

Councillor A Wheelton

EDS/14 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillor A Archer (Labour Group) and Councillor J Lowe (Conservative Group).

EDS/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of interest had been received.

EDS/16 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Public had been received.

EDS/17 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**EDS/18 CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024: PERFORMANCE REPORT (2023-2024 QUARTER 1 – 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE)**

The Strategic Director (Service Delivery) presented the report and highlighted the planning application figures.

Members enquired regarding appointments to vacant positions in the planning service, numbers of planning applications still to be determined and the timescale to clear the backlog.

The Head of Planning and Strategic Housing confirmed that the vacant posts had been recruited to and that there were currently 400 applications that were out of time. He anticipated that the backlog would be cleared by the end of the year.

Members requested further detail in the planning application figures reported to demonstrate progress made to clear the backlog.

Clarification was also requested regarding the additional funding provided for the planning service. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) confirmed that a total of £400,000 was anticipated from additional funding agreed by the Council and the anticipated income received from the increase in planning fees.

The Head of Planning and Strategic Housing clarified how the Council intended to implement biodiversity net gain and the decision process for planning applications for residential developments on commercial/employment sites.

RESOLVED:

1.1 *The Committee approved progress against performance targets set out in the Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024.*

1.2 *The Committee reviewed the Risk Register(s) for the Committee's services.*

EDS/19 ANNUAL ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE REPORT

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report and highlighted the impact of COVID on the service and the trends in respect of complaints over the last year. The increase in complaints concerning persons with mental health issues were noted.

Members commended the report and the work that had been undertaken.

Members enquired whether air pollution complaints had increased and the Council's actions in relation to dog fouling.

The Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that air pollution complaints were relatively static save for an increase during COVID arising out of complaints regarding bonfires. The Council's powers in relation to dog fouling was further explained.

Members expressed support for the "we are watching you" campaign and noted the success of publicity following successful prosecutions.

Members requested that the Head of Environmental Services review the enforcement of petrol and diesel vehicles parked in electric charging points in the Council's car parks.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee noted the content of the report and approved that the Council used its regulatory power in a way that was proportionate to the demand for all regulatory services it provided.

EDS/20 **SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – VERBAL UPDATE**

The Head of Growth and Economic Development gave the following verbal update-

Shared Prosperity Fund – End of Year 1 Update (31 March 2023)

South Derbyshire had been allocated £2,156,374 through the Shared Prosperity Fund over a three-year period 2022/23-2024/25. The Government delayed the anticipated start of the programme nationally. £236,441 of expenditure was undertaken in Year 1 (2022/23). The capital spend target was met. There was a revenue underspend of £25,255 which the Government agreed could be carried forward to Year 2 (2023/24).

The Investment Plan for South Derbyshire was approved by Government, envisaging a package of measures:

Communities and Place

- Town centre public realm works were underway in Swadlincote. The Delph market square was undergoing refurbishment, including the installation of additional bollards to prevent unwanted vehicle access onto the square and the resurfacing of the main square and restoration of the Town Hall steps. The redevelopment of the vacant/derelict Bank House/Sabine's Yard site was also underway to create additional free public car parking and a pocket park on Belmont Street.

- The planning of additional promotional and community activities, including visitor promotion, events and activities was underway, together with the appointment of an additional Community Safety Enforcement Officer dedicated to addressing environmental crime and anti-social behaviour issues in town centres.
- A community grant fund for third sector organisations, voluntary and community groups had been established to offer grants of between £2,000 and £25,000 (up to 80% of total project costs). Projects that could be supported include property improvements, energy efficiency and generation measures, green space enhancements, or arts, cultural, tourism and heritage initiatives.

Supporting Local Business

- A grant scheme for smaller businesses had been established, open to sole traders, partnerships and limited companies with less than 50 employees. Grants of £1,000 - £50,000 (up to 80% of the total project costs) were available. Projects that could be supported include purchase of equipment, the introduction of new products/services or processes/techniques, starting or growing exports, and initiatives to increase productivity.
- The Derbyshire business start-up programme was to be extended. The scheme was open to people who were starting their own business or had set up a business in the last 12 months. It offered expert advice, together with grants of up to £10,000.
- Proposals were being drawn up to deliver the following programmes:
 - A business support programme, including workshops, events, and specialist advice.
 - Energy audits and a carbon reduction grant scheme for smaller enterprises.

People and Skills

- Proposals were being drawn up to deliver the following programmes:
 - Employability activities to support those furthest from the labour market.
 - Supporting aspirations amongst young people in order to raise social mobility (Year 3 only).
 - Addressing skills gaps through training courses or learning bursaries (Year 3 only).

Rural Economic Prosperity Fund

South Derbyshire had latterly been awarded £400,000 from the Rural Economic Prosperity Fund (REPF), which would operate alongside the Shared Prosperity Fund during Years 2 and 3 (financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25). The Fund would provide grants to organisations located in the Government's designated rural areas of South Derbyshire.

Rural areas often faced specific challenges including lower productivity rates, poorer connectivity and poorer access to key services.

The Rural Fund was integrated into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which supported productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. The Rural Fund was a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations. It would support activities that specifically addressed the particular challenges rural areas face. It would be complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF. The Rural Fund aimed to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

Any organisation with legal status could apply for funding to deliver a Rural Fund intervention. Which may include local authorities; public sector organisations; higher and further education institutions; private sector companies; voluntary organisations; registered charities; and, arms-length bodies of Government.

The Rural Fund provides capital funding to spend on lasting assets such as a building or equipment that:

- support rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that would be of wider benefit to the local economy. This would include farm businesses looking to diversify income streams. (£200,000)
- support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy. (£200,000)

The Rural Fund allocation for third sector organisations would be awarded to projects in the designated rural areas with a maximum grant of £25,000 per project and a limit of one award per organisation/venue during the lifetime of the scheme, plus additional weighting given in the assessment process to projects located in Lower Super Output Areas that have higher Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 scores and/or that had received lesser amounts of Community Partnership Fund monies in the past 3 years.

Members thanked the Head of Growth and Economic Development and commended the update and the work that had been undertaken.

EDS/21 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

EDS/22 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

EXEMPT QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The meeting terminated at 19:10 hours.

COUNCILLOR S TAYLOR

CHAIR