

Nottingham City Council

The City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee

Minutes of the meeting held remotely and streamed to Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube on 29 September 2020 from 10.32 am - 11.59 am

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams
Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Councillor David J Lloyd
Councillor Richard Robinson
Councillor Simon Robinson
Councillor Jo White
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor John Clarke

Also in attendance: Councillor Milan Radulovic MBE (Broxtowe Borough Council)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Carol Cooper-Smith	- Chief Executive, Ashfield District Council
Neil Taylor	- Chief Executive, Bassetlaw District Council
Ruth Hyde OBE	- Chief Executive, Broxtowe Borough Council
Mike Hill	- Chief Executive, Gedling Borough Council
Haley Barsby	- Chief Executive, Mansfield District Council
John Robinson	- Chief Executive, Newark and Sherwood District Council
Anthony May	- Chief Executive, Nottinghamshire County Council
Katherine Marriott	- Chief Executive, Rushcliffe Borough Council
Chris Henning	- Corporate Director for Development and Growth, Nottingham City Council
Peter Davies-Bright	- Economic Programmes Manager, Nottingham City Council
Emma Richardson	- Personal Assistant to Katherine Marriott, Rushcliffe Borough Council
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council

Call-in

None of the following items include any decisions which are subject to call-in.

1 Welcome and apologies for absence

Councillor John Clarke - other Council business

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved for Broxtowe Borough Council to hold the Vice-Chair role for the municipal year 2020/21 with Councillor Milan Radulovic appointed for this meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Minutes

Subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020, were confirmed as a true record and will be signed by the Chair:

- a) Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams is to be referred to as such, and not Councillor;
- b) Councillor Simon Greaves is removed from the membership and Councillor Jo White is referred to as Vice-Chair as the member representing Bassetlaw District Council.

5 Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Recovery Plans

Anthony May, Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council, delivered a presentation which is circulated with the initial publication of the minutes and included the following points:

- a) The County Council has already published its Economic Recovery Action Plan with 11 actions, but a few months ago a new committee was commissioned 'Resilience, Recovery and Renewal Committee' at which all matters related to COVID-19 are discussed. An Economic Recovery Plan has been approved, based on 2017 Council Plan aims, with the addition of a response to COVID-19, and with consideration and inclusion of the national economic headwind;
- b) COVID-19 has slowed our town and shopping centre activity and whilst Central Government has responded with support schemes, this funding is soon to be reduced, and local action will also be necessary;
- c) The Economic Recovery Plan is proposed to be effective between now and March 2021. The three key focuses have been established as:
 - i. Supporting people with job support schemes, job creation programmes, and advancing workforce skill development. This includes employability programs and a focus, via the joint City and County company 'Futures', for young people under the age of 25;
 - ii. Develop and support inward business investment, including building resilience into town centres, focusing on Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and working with universities, whilst also managing carbon reduction opportunities;
 - iii. Promote Nottinghamshire as a place, both as a visitor destination and as an attractive place to live and work with good infrastructure, logistics and digital accessibility. The market strategy is being reviewed but existing brands and heritage sites will be further promoted. (Nottinghamshire citizens now have 98.22% access to 5G broadband with gigabyte coverage up to 14%);

- d) Data provided by the Midlands Engine Economic Observatory is proving invaluable in understanding, tracking and monitoring up-to-date information on the impact and influence on the local economy. This is helping to direct and support the local recovery plan and provide statistical evidence which may be utilised in grant funding applications;
- e) With the decommissioning of the power stations, work continues with partners to provide viable future options and is progressing well with the aims of the recovery plan influencing other residential developments;
- f) Travel solutions are being considered within the County including the '20 minute neighbourhood', particularly for new and evolving residential developments, whereby the main local facilities are within 20 minute's sustainable travel from citizens' homes;

Questions from the Committee were responded to as follows by Anthony May and Councillor Kay Cutts:

- g) Nationally, business grant fraud is becoming apparent, where grants have been submitted in the name of businesses without their knowledge. The County Council's Trading Standards Team have been doing a lot of work during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on related fraud and scams, but for more specific details, a response can be provided to members following the meeting;
- h) The '20 minute town /city' concept is gaining support across the world and the County Council is working with District Councils to promote it for new developments such as at Lindhurst, and the hubs on the sites of the soon to be decommissioned power stations. Wherever the Council can influence development with this concept, it will, including with Universities and the spaces between the development corporation sites;

Top Wighay is a development site for a new village with facilities in the centre of the village, surrounded by 805 dwellings. To discourage traffic through the village, traffic calming measures are included from the planning stage rather than retro-fitted. The school will be sited on the edge of the village, in walking distance of village properties and ensuring that parents bringing children from further away do not need to drive into village. Also, in line with Central Governments' aim to reduce the use of gas boilers by 2025, none will be installed, which will further minimise carbon emissions.

The aim with Toton development includes enhancing blue and green infrastructure and encouraging access to the countryside, whilst supporting the ability to work from home with accessible digital connections. With an emphasis on reducing the carbon footprint, the concept is to establish the framework for a community which encourages connection, reduces carbon emissions and provides a safe, healthy and attractive environment with good sustainable transport links, including to HS2, M1 and East Midlands' airport.

- i) With regard to the end of the furlough scheme in October, and the forthcoming Brexit, consideration within the recovery plan has included focus on SMEs so the launch of the Gigabyte Programme and gigabyte vouchers has been brought forward to support recovery. Both are funded by the County Council and to date 86 SMEs have been helped to get the broadband speeds they need to run their businesses;

Many of the County and City businesses are small and rely on the Councils to provide infrastructure. Discussions are taking place with regard to junction improvements along the A614, improving physical connectivity and upgrade improvements to the A1. Further details are included in the recovery action plan;

- j) The Economic Recovery Plan does, as much as is possible to take into account the potential for a second spike of the corona virus, despite the hard work within the County and City to protect communities. The Local Resilience Forum has worked very well on infection control and with Local Outbreak Management Boards, as is evident by the recent heavy fine issued to a house party and the closure of a public house, both of which refused to comply with the social distancing requirements. Joint working with good communications has proved vital to the successful work to date. It is possible that as students return, there may be an impact on infection rates as seen in other areas of the country, but Universities are working hard to carefully manage this. It is vital that advice and support to students is maintained to keep students and communities safe and keep infection rates low, particularly during the first few weeks of their return to university;
- k) With regard to HS2, even in the light of the financial impact and broader implications of COVID-19, it is still presumed that HS2 will proceed, as all enabling legislation and preparatory work has been completed. Central Government may change its mind at any point, so alternative options to progress existing planning around the key sites has been considered. The Hub station at Toton would still be a marketable site without HS2, but of course is far more attractive with HS2, which is dependent on the East Coast rail line and will provide a valuable link with the Leeds, Chesterfield and Sheffield areas. It is possible that the scheme may be slightly delayed but a public virtual exhibition will shortly be launched promoting the route the line will take, and having had such a long lead in time, a substantial delay is unlikely as the line will provide significant economic benefit.

Chris Henning, Corporate Director of Development and Growth, Nottingham City Council, delivered a presentation summarising the City Council's draft Economic Renewal Plan which is to be considered by the City Council's Executive Board in October. The presentation is to be circulated with the initial publication of the minutes. The following points were highlighted:

- l) The draft plan was developed jointly with Nottingham Growth Board which consists of major institutions including businesses and Universities, and One Nottingham;
- m) Earlier in the year, there was a positive outlook for the City with steady growth, major redevelopments progressing, including the Broadmarsh gateway to the City, investment opportunities of £2 billion available and historically low unemployment. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact and the financial outlook now is very different. Longer term analysis predicts that unemployment is projected to rise to as much as 17% by the end of 2020 with the greatest impact on low paid and unskilled workers and younger citizens, particularly within the retail and hospitality sectors;
- n) The changes in the way in which business and communities operate now provides new opportunities with a greater reliance on digital technology and resurgence of neighbourhood and sustainable living, all of which need to be built on when planning for the future;

- o) Following the financial crash in 2012, Central Government offered 'City Deal' funding to support regeneration. The City is now preparing to respond in the language of deals within the vision of a better creative, green, digital future for Nottingham;
- p) We need to build on the existing partnership bases and organisations. To date the vision is to continue to regenerate an improved City which offers opportunities for everyone, with investment support to accelerate viable private investment as part of an economic growth eco-system;
- q) The physical re-imagining of the City is also important. The former intu Broadmarsh development is now owned by the City Council and it will be re-imagined for alternative viable use, but still as a significant gateway into the City. Progress on the Broadmarsh Centre is being watched closely by many Councils across the country with similar challenge of now vacant retail space.
- r) 6 themes have been prioritised, each with a strategy and plan for investment which are outlined in the presentation:
 - i. City of creativity and culture;
 - ii. Reimagining the City;
 - iii. Carbon neutral City;
 - iv. Digital enterprise;
 - v. Entrepreneurship and innovation;
 - vi. Skills and employment;

Comments by members and responses to questions from the committee included:

- s) Discussions are ongoing with intu administrators and partners, with regard to the future of the Victoria Shopping Centre. As a profitable operating site, it appears likely that it will be sold to a consortium and will continue to operate;
- t) Public perception is vital for both City and County recovery plans and it is necessary to engage with local people and groups and ensure that they are willing to buy-into the vision which gives them hope and aspirations for an economic recovery. These plans don't appear to be providing a strong enough message to citizens. People need to see that there is hope and opportunities are emerging along with investment potential. There needs to be a clear message that these and future plans will be more resilient to change. We've had 2 economic crashes in the past 12 years with a huge negative impact on citizens. We need to assure citizens that we have a resilient workable plan from which we can build a better future and the impact of any future crashes can be negated;
- u) Resilience was demonstrated in the plan which followed the 2012 crash. It did take 5-6 years of action to build back many sectors of the economy, to lower unemployment, and regenerate and promote the creative sector, hospitality and digital industries. This was achieved via regeneration investment from the City Deal with the City Council and support from partners. It would have been incredibly difficult to have predicted what has happened with regard to COVID-19, but importantly, the past and future investment in infrastructure has been, and will be vital to support economies and encourage business to reinvest;

- v) It is noted that half of the City's workforce live in the County so success in the City is also vital to those in and around the conurbation;
- w) It is acknowledged that there are difficulties in the City that have been beyond the impact of COVID-19, but there are positive opportunities imminent such as the re-opening of Nottingham Castle, the completion and opening of Nottingham College and the launch of consultation on the future of the former Broadmarsh shopping Centre. We know it is really important to give people hope for the future, especially after lockdown. County and City need to ensure we can rebuild and attract investment. There is still much for this committee to do;
- x) The 2012 post economic recovery was responsive and reactive, instead of part of the resilience plan. Citizens need to be convinced that these recovery and resilience plans won't be based on an unsustainable mountains of debt that will impact on generations to come. We need a vibrant and robust economy which can react to circumstances. It took 5-6 years to recover from the 2012 crash, but for citizens now, tomorrow is important and they are not necessarily as optimistic as some members of the Committee;
- y) There is no underestimation of the scale of challenge ahead. There needs to be benefit for all but it won't be instantaneous and it is possible that the current situation may become worse depending on the ongoing severity of COVID-19. No-one has all the answers and progress won't be easy, but it's up to us to plan for a better future and recognise the challenges.
- z) The reason recovery from the 2012 crash took 5-6 years was due to austerity. We have to invest to accelerate recovery. Yes there will be debt, but financial and skill investment is necessary.

Resolved to note the development of:

- (a) the Nottinghamshire COVID-19 crisis Economic Recovery Action Plan,**
- (b) the Nottingham Economic Renewal Plan.**

6 Verbal updates by Katherine Marriott and Anthony May

a N2 Environmental Project

Katherine Marriott, Chief Executive of Rushcliffe Borough Council, provided a brief verbal update on the N2 Environmental Projects, highlighting the following points:

- a) A workshop is held every six weeks, which is attended by all local authorities throughout the County and including the City and some voluntary sector and non-profit organisations. Work has continued but is being reshaped due to COVID-19;
- b) Areas of focus:

- i. Solar PV panels on leisure centres. Feasibility studies have been completed but there is now some uncertainty of the future shape of leisure facilities which are struggling with the impact of COVID-19;
- ii. Low carbon retro fitting of social housing continues with further funding identified;
- iii. A low carbon check list for Planners has been developed with support to help Planners and Developers, including training events for sustainable new build properties. Also a County wide low carbon Supplementary Planning Framework draft document has been developed. However, further refinement is needed now that Central Government is due to respond to future homes standards consultations;
- iv. A bid has been submitted for LGA 'Design In The Public Sector' grant funding to develop a communications platform to ensure consistent messages are issued across the county;
- v. 3 sites potential sites have initially been identification for low energy and low carbon vehicle depot sites within the wider EM region;
- vi. Reviews are being undertaken for the decarbonisation of fleet vehicles and the options for electrification of LA Depots, including changing fuel sources;
- vii. Work continues to connect with larger business to lead on carbon neutral mentoring with smaller business and encouraging 'shop local, shop safe' to support the local economy and lower fuel usage;
- viii. Re-evaluation is taking place on the approach to home working which will lower organisational carbon footprints and travel costs. This will also provide opportunities to use Council buildings more creatively in future.

b Brexit

Anthony May, Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council, updated the Committee with regard to Brexit, as follows:

- a) The country is in a transition period until the end on 31 Dec 2020. Central Government is currently trying to negotiate departure terms so there is a limit to how much we can prepare with so much still unknown, but it is anticipated that a meeting on EU Summit on 15 October 2020 will be a decisive point. In the transition period so far, work has been less intense as activity has been focused on COVID-19 related matters, but the pace is quickening and effectively there are two potential directions; to leave with new terms or no terms. Locally business is preparing for these;
- b) Up to and beyond 15 October 2020, Local Authorities can expect an acceleration of Government requests for local business data.

c East Midlands Development Corporation

Anthony May, Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council, updated the Committee with regard to the Development Corporation, as follows:

- a) Central Government asked the East Midlands Engine to investigate the potential for a single integrated vision and delivery vehicle to identify key sites along the HS2 line, mainly around the airport, the Ratcliffe on Soar power station and Toton hub area;
- b) The Corporation has been working with Government for 18 months and is well advanced in producing a business case, which has proved that working with an integrated approach is more beneficial than marketing sites individually;
- c) The final business case is to be submitted to Government in the spring. The 5 most effected Councils will come together and collaborate on an interim integrated vehicle and move forward while Government determines the shape and form of the final Development Corporation;
- d) There has been a lot of momentum and support across all partners, with the next key meeting in October. Progress has been positive and Central Government is encouraging and endorses the implementation of the interim stage.