

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 19 January 2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Lyndsey Berry, Kevin Dicks, Chris Forrester, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley and Ostap Paparega

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

66. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

68. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the Redditch Town's Deal Investment Plan at a meeting held on Monday, 18th January 2021. The Committee had concluded their discussions by requesting a biannual update on progress with respect to the plan. However, the Committee had not made any recommendations on the subject for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were asked to note that three agenda packs had been issued for consideration at the Executive Committee meeting. Due to the date of the publication of the Additional Papers 2 pack, it had not been possible to provide paper copies of this supplementary pack for Members' consideration. However, the pack was available to view on the Council's website and using the modern.gov app.

69. MINUTES

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Chair

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 12th January 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

70. REDDITCH TOWN DEAL INVESTMENT PLAN

The Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development (NWEDR) presented the Redditch Town Deal – Town Investment Plan. During the presentation of this report the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Town's Investment Plan had been circulated in draft form for Members' consideration. The final version of the plan would be available in time for Members to consider at the meeting of Council on Monday, 25th January 2021.
- The main challenge in drafting the final version of the Town's Investment Plan was in respect of condensing the length from 20,000 to 10,000 words.
- The Government had issued guidance in respect of expenditure of the Towns' Fund when the project had first been announced. This had provided useful information, including in respect of eligibility criteria.
- The purpose of the Towns' Fund was to provide financial support to facilitate a long-term vision for a town that would contribute to economic growth.
- There were three key areas of focus including urban development, enterprise and the digital economy.
- The proposals put forward in a Town Investment Plan needed to be based on local data, to have an evidence basis and to demonstrate that they would have a noticeable impact on economic development in that location.
- The Government had provided specific guidance on the governance requirements in respect of Town Boards. This included guidance in respect of membership as well as the requirement for the Chair of the Town Board to be a representative of the private sector.
- The Town's Investment Plan had to be submitted to the lead local authority, as the accountable body, as well as the Government for approval.
- In developing the Redditch Town's Investment Plan, the Redditch Town Board had utilised a number of consultants to help with the development of the plan, assessment of the spatial strategy and public consultation.
- The objective of the proposals for Redditch was to unlock Redditch and to enable the town's transformation from a

traditional new town to a town suitable for the twenty first century.

- The consultants that had undertaken public consultation as part of the project were experienced in market research. This organisation had attempted to engage with a cross-section of the local community.
- Consultation would continue to take place following approval of the Town's Investment Plan.
- Moving forward, there would be two key consultation documents forming the future engagement strategy, both at a programme level and detailed consultation plans for each of the proposed projects included in the plan.
- Approximately 700 responses had been received during the consultation process. This compared favourably with consultation feedback in other parts of the country where towns were eligible to apply for the Government's Town's Funding.
- The Town's Board had taken into account information provided by the public in response to previous consultation exercises, such as the State of the Area debates, and every attempt had been made to reflect the feedback from the public in the proposals within the plan. The exception to this had been the request from the public to make improvements to the Alexandra Hospital, as this was outside the remit of the Town's Deal Fund.
- The Town's Investment Plan was proposing a budget of £25 million, including £200,000 which would be allocated to a revenue budget to fund a Programme Manager who could deliver the project.
- The Government required Town Boards to demonstrate that projects would impact at a regional or national level if more than £25 million funding was to be provided. Only one location, Blackpool, out of 101 eligible towns, had been able to demonstrate this to date.
- In those towns where the Town Investment Plan had already been submitted, the Government had not always agreed to provide the full amount of funding that had been requested. There was the possibility that this could occur for Redditch.
- It was possible that in future there would be further opportunities to apply for funding, in addition to the £25 million that had been requested to fund the projects in Redditch in accordance with the Town's Investment Plan.
- A Check and Challenge session had been held with representatives of the Government on Wednesday, 6th January 2021 when the town's proposals had been discussed.
- Should the Town's Investment Plan for Redditch be approved, there would be two months available in which negotiations would be held with representatives of the Government on heads of terms.

- Following this stage, there would be twelve months available in which to develop detailed business cases for each of the projects included within the plan.
- The final stage of the process would be dependent on the strength of the business cases that were submitted.

Following the presentation of the report, Members thanked the Head of NWEDR and the Regeneration and Implementation Manager for their hard work in preparing the Town's Investment Plan. Thanks were also extended to the members of the Redditch Town's Board, particularly the Chair and Vice Chair, for their work.

Members subsequently discussed the following matters in detail:

- The opportunity provided for the regeneration of Redditch town centre by the availability of up to £25 million funding.
- The diversity of the membership of the Redditch Town's Board, which included representatives of the private, public and third sectors.
- The positive impact that the proposals, if approved, could have on the local economic and employment opportunities in the town.
- The consultation that had been held with elected Members in late 2020 and the feedback that had been provided at these sessions. Members noted that the consultants had done an excellent job in this area.
- The number of projects that had been identified by partners during the process and the difficult decisions that had had to be taken by the Board in order to prioritise certain projects for inclusion in the Town's Investment Plan.
- The positive impact that the proposals for the Railway Quarter could have on economic development and regeneration of the town centre.
- The potential for further work to be undertaken with regard to the skills and aspirations of local residents. Members commented on the potential for the Council to work with businesses and HoW College in respect of this matter.
- The need to provide training to young people and to enable connectivity so that young people from deprived backgrounds could access the training they needed.
- The number of residents who had participated in the consultation exercises and how this demonstrated that there was a lot of interest within the community in the regeneration of Redditch town centre.
- The extent to which local residents who did not have access to the internet had been disenfranchised in the consultation process.
- The possibility that, following expenditure on the projects supported by the Town's Fund, Redditch might attract

additional private sector investment that could be used to support other regeneration projects in the town.

- The opportunities that would be available to Redditch businesses following the introduction of 5G in the Borough.
- The potential for projects that had not been included in the Town's Investment Plan to be delivered. Officers explained that there would be a phased approach to the spatial strategy, and this would enable the Board and Council to address the projects that had not been included in the plan moving forward. This approach would also place the town in a strong position to apply for additional funding to support these projects if and when further funding became available.
- The governance arrangements that had been in place in Redditch. Members were advised that the Government representatives who had met with Officers on 6th January 2021 had recognised that this was a strength of the programme in Redditch.
- The potential contribution that the proposed Digital and Manufacturing Centre would make towards enhancing the skills and training opportunities available to local residents.
- The strengths in respect of the IT industry in Redditch, which had been highlighted during work on the Town's Investment Plan.
- The involvement of the Executive Committee and Council in determining the next steps in the process, following the Government's approval of the Town's Investment Plan.
- The need for work to be undertaken to minimise the risks arising from the project to the Council, as the accountable body. Officers advised that the Council would be responsible for what was spent and how the funding was spent.
- The work in respect of the regeneration of the library. Members were informed that this work would be carried out in consultation with Worcestershire County Council.
- The possibility that Redditch would be able to access additional support from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), due to the Council's role as a non-constituent member of the combined authority.
- The availability of support from the West Midlands Growth Company, to enable access to further assistance from the private sector moving forward.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the Redditch Town Deal – Town Investment Plan at a meeting held on Monday, 18th January 2021. Members noted that there had been a detailed debate regarding the content of the plan and a number of valuable points had been raised. Reference had been made during the meeting to concerns regarding the speed with which information about the Board's work had been published on the internet. At first,

This information had been provided on Redditch Borough Council's website. Members had suggested that a bespoke website would have been helpful and could have enhanced public transparency. These points were acknowledged at the Executive Committee meeting and it was noted that lessons could be learned. However, Members commented that website design companies had been affected by Covid-19, like other companies and this had impacted on web design work.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Executive Committee endorses this report and gives delegated authority to the Council's Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Head of NWEDR and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships, to submit the Redditch Town Investment Plan to MHCLG;**
- 2) the Executive Committee agrees that Redditch Borough Council shall be the accountable body for funding secured from MHCLG as part of the Town Deal;**
- 3) delegated authority be granted to the Head of NWEDR and Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services to negotiate the Heads of Terms with MHCLG for Redditch's Town Deal; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) the Executive Committee approve the addition of £1 million Accelerated Funding to the Capital programme and delegated authority is granted to the Council's Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Head of NWEDR and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships, to implement enabling proposals that support the delivery of the Town Deal.**

71. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

The Committee was informed that there were no referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on any other Committee for consideration on this occasion.

72. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members confirmed that there were no updates in respect of any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 19 January 2021

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.26 pm