

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2020

A MEETING of the REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2020 at 1.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor David Nevett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Duncan Anderson, Iris Beech, Steve Cox, Charlie Hogarth, Eva Hughes and John Mounsey

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director, Development
Chris Dungworth, Interim Head of Service, Business Doncaster

APOLOGY:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Majid Khan

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items where the public and press would be excluded from the meeting.	
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
3	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH MARCH 2020</u>	
	RESOLVED:- that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 th March, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.	
4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS - [A PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING 20 MINUTES FOR STATEMENTS FROM UP TO 5 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEES REMIT, PROPOSING ACTION(S) WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED OR CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMITTEES WORK PROGRAMME].</u>	

	There were no public statements made.	
5	<u>ECONOMIC IMPACT ARISING FROM COVID-19</u>	
	<p>A report was presented for consideration outlining the economic impact arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, how it has affected Doncaster and the effective distribution of business support grants.</p> <p>The Chair outlined that he appreciated the report had only just been written, and circumstances with regard to how the Country was responding to the virus was ever changing due to the increase in cases in the preceding weeks. The following areas were then addressed by Members:</p> <p><u>Safeguarding businesses</u> – in response to a question relating to whether the Government would provide further action, it was noted that until announcements were made it was difficult to outline what further support the Government would provide, and that this uncertainty continued to create increased concern amongst the business community in respect to moving their business forward.</p> <p>In response to the initial Corona virus pandemic, a number of “Response Cells” were established as part of the Control Board. The “Business Cell” included Doncaster Chamber and the Department of Work and Pensions, and has ensured that all support and required forms for future grant assistance were available should they be needed in the near future.</p> <p><u>Business Grants</u> – The Panel’s attention was drawn to the number of grants made available in response to the pandemic. It was noted that as the virus continued there could be additional Government business grants and support made available, which would continue to be facilitated through the Business Support Team.</p> <p>Members were informed that £12.3bn had been made available across the Country with £11bn already distributed. The Local Authority had received £64m for Doncaster’s business community. This figure had been calculated by the Government based on the number of businesses in Doncaster. A total of £59m had already been allocated to over 90% of businesses. It was confirmed that in relation to the last round of business grants Central Government released additional funding specifically for charitable organisations.</p> <p>The proactive work undertaken by Team Doncaster and Business Rates in assisting people across the Borough, was recognised by the Panel.</p> <p><u>Rapid funds available from Central Government in response to Covid</u> – it was acknowledged that any funds would be used to support Doncaster’s towns and were being matched with, for example, future</p>	

high street fund to maximise impact.

Accelerated funding – the Panel noted that £1m had been secured for Doncaster town centre with £500,000 available for Stainforth as part of the “Town Deal”.

Business recovery and apprenticeships – It was reported that a project team, working with job centre plus, Doncaster Chamber and Doncaster’s Advanced programme responsible for skills and training, was being established to assist companies mitigating against redundancies, finding job vacancies for staff that were facing redundancy and looking at new training opportunities. For example, it was explained that a Doncaster company was looking to make two thirds of its workforce redundant but through this project team jobs had been secured for 80% of the staff affected.

With regard to the number of available apprenticeships, it was noted that the Apprenticeships team was working hard to secure placements for young people.

Relief available if further Covid restrictions were implemented – it was accepted that further announcements were awaited but in the meantime, the Local Authority continued to work alongside Sheffield City Region on the recovery support plan. The Sheffield City Region Mayor had applied for £1.7bn for the region to provide business intervention schemes. It was noted that this money had not yet been approved or received from Central Government at the date of the meeting. If the bid was successful it would be used and split across three core areas, business support, employment and skills and changes to the environment, for example, place shaping schemes.

Economic recovery in Doncaster – It was reported that the Centre for Cities was monitoring footfall across the country, with Doncaster at number 6 in terms of recovery, achieving a good footfall in comparison to other local authorities. In comparison to figures prior to Covid, current footfall figures were just below for the Frenchgate, town centre and Market areas.

With regard to Business Doncaster’s enquiries for property and support, the local authority was still above target and companies were showing genuine interest in Doncaster.

Savoy Cinema and Restaurants – the Panel was aware that the new development was nearing completion and acknowledged that the lockdown period had caused a slight delay with the construction and filling restaurant premises.

It was noted that the cinema’s intention was to launch around the time of a major movie release, however it was now scheduled to open in November, 2020. With regard to restaurant occupancy, two had been

	<p>reserved and discussions were ongoing with possible future occupiers. It was accepted that food and drink sector were being very cautious at this time due to the pandemic uncertainties.</p> <p><u>Waterdale</u> – it was explained that the Local Authority did not own the Waterdale area and therefore had no say in the decision to demolish the shop premises. However it was noted that the units were all vacant and unfit to use. The Panel was informed that a bid had been submitted for Government funding from the Future High Street Fund, to provide a enhanced gateway from the Railway Station to the Civic and Cultural Quarter.</p> <p><u>University Technical College (UTC)</u> – this development had continued to be developed throughout the Covid pandemic and was nearing completion.</p> <p><u>Police Station</u> – in response to a Member outlining that a new police station was planned in a different location to the existing building, it was explained that it would be the responsibility of South Yorkshire Police to agree future plans for the site. However, it was recognised that in recent years this area had been transformed and there would be potential to also develop this plot.</p> <p><u>Wayfaring Scheme</u> – in response to concern expressed by a Member, it was explained that the maps available from the Tourist Information Centre were up to date. It was noted that signage replacement (finger pointing signs) was due to commence as the lockdown period was imposed. These works were now due to be undertaken later this year.</p> <p><u>Redundancy support</u> – it was outlined to the Panel that the Local Authority, Job Centre Plus, Doncaster Chamber and the College were supporting businesses, when assistance was requested, in relation to human resources, upskilling and retraining for staff to secure future employment. The Panel noted that the Economic Recovery Board had recently met with the Department for Work and Pensions specifically addressing how many furloughed staff would transfer onto unemployment. It was stressed however, that some companies had seen growth during this period.</p> <p>Members were reminded that if businesses within their wards were seeking support, they should be directed to the Business Doncaster Website.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the discussion, be noted</p>	
6	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel discussed development of the work plan for future meetings and it was suggested that town centre car parking, in relation to future</p>	

	developments be addressed. Resolved: that the discussion and work plan, be noted.	
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