

Droitwich Spa Town Council

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Project – Report on Progress (5) April to June 2023.

Agenda Item 13 of the Meeting of Full Council – 19th June 2023.

Positive momentum has been maintained since the last update at Full Council on 24th April 2023. This is despite the Local Election period restrictions from March to May. Key points include the following.

1. **Grant Funding** - Finalisation of the Locality Funding position for the Grant Period up to 31st March 2023. An End of Grant Period Report for 2022/2023 has been submitted to Locality for the Year End on 29th March 2023. This was presented at Council in April 2023 and confirmed expenditure of the eligible grant funding total of £3150 for professional fees during the period. To accord with the process the balance of any unspent funds from the original £9k Grant awarded in mid- September 2022 has to be returned to Locality. Going Forwards the total grant available will be 18K - £3150 spent to date = **£14,850**

The original 18K eligibility comprises the basic grant of £10K and £8K for the expected housing site allocation/s.

It is expected that Locality will confirm the funding application process and timeframe details for the 2023/2024 period allocations soon. This is anticipated during April each year but as at mid -June 2023 no further update has been announced by the Central Government DHLUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities). When announced a funding application can be submitted for the 2023/2024 which would maintain the anticipated cost neutral position for the professional consultant fees. Alternatively Council will need to consider the fees to be paid from the budgeted working Business contingency for operations and/or Reserves.

2. **Design Codes** - AECOM have assigned their Regional Design Director (Urban Design) based in Manchester to support taking Design Codes within Technical Support forward. The contacts have experience with this area having undertaken similar work in Kidderminster and Bromsgrove recently. AECOM officers attended on 28th March 2023 to undertake specific Design Code mapping discussions and a full Town sites visit with the Consultant and Clerk.

The work has progressed and a questionnaire study is currently being considered with the Consultant and cross referencing with Evidence Base material. Further input is anticipated through the Steering Group for engagement to help the AECOM Team determine more local information and a full understanding of priorities for baseline analysis. This will enable an informed and consensus reference point. A draft Design Codes document is anticipated for consideration and approval shortly.

3. **Potential Site Allocations for Development** – The Consultant is progressing site analysis work and options for various potential allocations. These are in addition to allocated sites within the SWDPR and the WDC Town Centre Prospectus. The study is currently subject to further discussions with the local Planning Authority and includes aspects such as site ownership status, feasibility, emerging plans and flood risk evaluation. A full draft report will be produced in due course.

4. **Steering Group Meeting (4) and Membership** – Since the Public Launch Event date on 13th March 2023 there has been positive engagement, interest and impetus for the NDP project. This is characterised by ,
- Good interest and levels of responses for the initial short public questionnaire – March to April. This comprised written and digital responses for consultation data & evidence gathering.
 - Positive contributions and interest in the Steering/ Working Group. This momentum is welcome and ensures that membership, contributions and attendance numbers have all risen for the meetings. In turn this enables more constructive engagement within the Community and a wider cross section of input.
 - The positive commitment through the WDC Droitwich Spa Place Board to help take forward consultation within the business community for the business, trade and commerce questionnaire that is anticipated to be rolled out later in the summer (September 2023 onwards).

The fourth Steering Group Meeting took place last week on the 14th June 2023 at St Richards House and covered the following agenda points.

Agenda for Droitwich Spa - Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group Meeting (4) – Wednesday 14th June 2023 at 10.30am

Venue – Council Chamber, St Richards House.

1. Any Apologies for Absence.
2. Welcome and Introductions (*All*).
3. A general introduction and overview of the NDP process and the project work & stages completed so far – for the benefit of all including New Members. – (*David Nicholson and Town Clerk*).
4. To note and accept the Minutes of the last Steering Group Meeting (3) – 26.01.2023 (attached).
5. To note the Steering Group Terms of Reference accepted by the Town Council in December 2022 (attached). To be considered for acceptance for attachment to DSTC Web Site (*All*).
6. To note the Communication and Consultation Strategy draft produced in November 2022 (attached). To be considered for acceptance for attachment to DSTC Web Site. Section 4.3 requires full completion for the list of Groups & Local Organisations before publication online (*All*).
7. A general review of the Initial Short Consultation responses received from the Public Launch Event on 13th March 2023. The full raw data received and taken from the Digital replies is attached and there will be other written and “post it note” responses available to see at the meeting. These responses will be categorised, and tabulated further into a summary report in due course. This will then form part of the evidence of public consultation being undertaken (*All*).
8. General discussion on the proposed Community Questionnaire content being prepared for later in the summer 2023. In addition to consider the Business & Commerce Questionnaire to be taken forward with the support of the Wychavon District Council – Droitwich Spa Place Board forum (*All*) .
9. Project Costs Update – (*Town Clerk*)

- (a) To forecast the costs for the Community Questionnaire and the Business & Commerce Questionnaire components for later Summer 2023.
- (b) To confirm the position regarding Locality Grant Funding to Year End 31.03.2023 and thereafter for the new period from 01.04.2023. To note that as at 7TH June 2023, Central Government DHLUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) have not yet confirmed grant availability for 2023/24 and there is no indication of when this might be released.

10. Outline of next steps for the project, timelines and agree next Steering Group Meeting date/s (*All*).

The next Steering Group meeting is now confirmed for 27th in July and will mainly focus on the draft of the main residents and Business/commerce questionnaires for launch later in the summer. These are substantially more comprehensive documents than the initial short public questionnaire undertaken in March and they will derive the main content for public consultation and evidence gathering as part of the NDP draft final submission for the Examiner.

5. **Project Cost Provision**

The current position regarding Locality Grant Funding for professional fees is fully outlined in Section 1.

Other costs including website enabling, capacity and the survey monkey function for questionnaires has already been absorbed within the general business upgrade for the online capability last December – within the allocated 22/23 IT Budgeted Provision for the Town Council.

Staff and Resources continues to be absorbed within the normal workload arrangements for Town Council business and strategic projects.

An informed & estimated costing has been carried out for the main consultation questionnaires scheduled later in the summer. This is anticipated to be covered from supplementary funding sources and the business contingency (if required). Estimated costs are –

- Information flyer printing (A5 double sized) to publicise questionnaires and link details = £1500 (quantity 30K).
- A smaller quantity of Printed format questionnaires (1000) = £250
- Distribution costs for all households and businesses of flyer =£2000.