

**SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)**

**MONDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor P Truswell in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, L Cunningham,  
N Dawson, A Hussain, J Lennox,  
K Renshaw, K Ritchie, M Shahzad,  
J Taylor and P Wadsworth

**77 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection documents.

**78 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no items on the agenda requiring the exemption of the public.

**79 Late Items**

There were no late items.

**80 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No declarations of pecuniary interests were made.

**81 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Maqsood, Dye and Goddard.

Cllrs Lennox, Ritchie and Renshaw attended as substitutes.

**82 Call In Briefing Paper**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report in relation to the procedural aspects of the call in process.

Members were advised that the options available to the Scrutiny Board in respect of this particular called in decision were as follows:

**Option 1- Release the decision for implementation**

Having reviewed this decision, the Scrutiny Board may decide to release it for implementation. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option, the decision will be immediately released for implementation and the decision may not be called in again.

**Option 2 - Recommend that the decision be reconsidered**

The Scrutiny Board may decide to recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option a report will be submitted to the decision maker.

In the case of an Executive Board decision, the report of the Scrutiny Board will be prepared within three working days of the Scrutiny Board meeting and submitted to the Executive Board. Any report of the Scrutiny Board will be referred to the next Executive Board meeting for consideration.

In reconsidering the decision and associated Scrutiny Board report, the Executive Board may vary the decision or confirm its original decision. In either case, this will form the basis of the final decision and will not be subject to any further call in.

### **Failure to agree one of the above options**

If the Scrutiny Board, for any reason, does not agree one of the above courses of action at this meeting, then Option 1 will be adopted by default, i.e. the decision will be released for implementation with no further recourse to call in.

### **83 RESOLVED – That the report outlining the call in procedures be noted. Local Centres Programme**

Those present for this item were:

- Cllr Matthew Robinson - Nominated Signatory for the Call In
- Cllr Helen Hayden - Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development
- Martin Farrington - Director, City Development
- Adam Brannen - Head of Regeneration
- Angela Barnicle - Chief Officer, Asset Management & Regeneration

The Chair invited Cllr Matthew Robinson as the nominated signatory to the Call In to outline the reasons for calling in the decision and the outcome he wished to secure through the call-in process.

It was noted that the background to the decision under discussion relates to the Capital Programme Update 2021 – 2025, which was discussed by full Council on 24 February 2021.

The Board was reminded that the call-in related only to the specific decision regarding the Local Centres Programme taken by the Executive Board on 10 February 2021 and the determination of the outcome of a call-in cannot be based upon wider consideration of related items.

While acknowledging the constraints of the call in process, Cllr Robinson noted that he remained concerned about the impact of an overall £2.7m

reduction in the funding for the Local Centres Programme. He further outlined a number of concerns about the decision including:

- **Timing:** The decision reduces investment at a time when it is acutely required by town and district centres to support a strong post pandemic recovery.
- **Inclusive growth:** Reducing the investment available through the programme risks exacerbating inequalities that are increasing as a result of the pandemic and its associated response. The reduction in the investment in the Local Centres Programme is contrary to activity elsewhere in the council which aims to tackle inequalities through the delivery of inclusive economic growth.
- **Inconsistency:** Schemes have been progressed at different rates in different areas of the city with employers being asked to make varying contributions towards local schemes.
- **Advanced schemes:** Those schemes at the most advanced stages of development are now being prioritised at the expense of schemes which had been anticipating inclusion in phase two of the programme.
- **Communication:** There has not been sufficient engagement with ward members and local stakeholders to enable the progression of schemes in wards that were not identified as phase one schemes.
- **Learning:** Good practice from successful schemes has not been shared more widely to enable the impact of council investment via this programme to be maximised.

Cllr Robinson suggested a reconsideration of the decision and its assessment criteria should seek to ensure the programme is proportionate, fair and able to effectively support post-pandemic economic recovery.

Members of the Board were invited to ask questions of Cllr Robinson. Issues raised included:

- **Timing of the call in:** Members noted that the decision had been called in once the outcome of consultation had enabled final recommendations to be made to the Executive Board on 10 February. Members noted that as a result any reconsideration of the decision would be constrained by the budget subsequently agreed by Council on 24 February.
- **Impact of a reassessment:** Noting the comments above, members highlighted that should a reconsideration of the decision result in a further revision of the assessment criteria, the limitations of working within the existing cost envelope would inevitably deliver 'winners and losers,' albeit potentially in different wards.
- **Phased delivery:** Members explored the need for phased delivery of schemes.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Particular concern was expressed about the impact of the revised programme on wards facing acute social and economic challenges.
- **External Funding:** Members explored examples of wards where LCP funding had enabled localities to leverage additional resources from other

sources including HRA, and CIL in order to progress schemes. It was noted that advice on potential funding sources available to members may need to be more widely disseminated.

- **Proportionality:** Members suggested that the inclusion of a funding floor indicated proportionality had been a factor in determining the revised criteria.

Cllr Hayden acknowledged the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council and highlighted the significant additional pressures created as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. She noted that members had been involved in extensive consultation on the budget proposals for 2021/22 and that very difficult decisions have had to be taken across the organisation.

The Executive Member noted that the revised Local Centres Programme still represented a significant investment in town and district centres, and that it should not be viewed in isolation from wider support. Cllr Hayden went on to suggest that Town and District Centres may also receive increased patronage in future months as a result of changes in behaviour driven by the response to the covid-19 pandemic and a reluctance to travel into the city centre.

Martin Farrington, Director of City Development, set out the background to the decision including the points at which members had been formally consulted on the proposals for the Local Centres Programme. He highlighted the revision sought to preserve a proportion of the programme which initially risked being removed entirely from the capital programme as part of efforts to deliver savings from across the organisation.

The Director outlined the objective assessment process that led to the development of the criteria included in the final proposals that were subsequently endorsed by the Executive Board on 10 February 2021. He noted that the inclusion of a funding floor was intended to deliver fairness and proportionality.

Adam Brannen, Head of Regeneration, outlined the support provided for members and stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of phase one schemes and noted that 'light touch' support had also been provided to those looking to develop schemes ahead of phase two of the programme. He acknowledged that schemes had been delayed as a result of staffing constraints and the impact of covid-19.

The Board sought clarity on a number of further issues including:

- **Revenue expenditure:** The amount of revenue savings delivered as a result of reduced capital expenditure.
- **Economic recovery:** The predicted trends in local economic recovery assuming the Government's roadmap can be delivered in the anticipated timeframes.
- **Officer support:** Levels of officer support allocated to the revised Local Centres Programme including arrangements for the new programme board.

- **Future cuts:** The likelihood of the revised scheme being subject to future funding reductions and the impact that may have on the delivery of schemes in the early stages of development.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report and the information provided at the meeting should inform the conclusions of the Board as it determines the outcome of the Call-in.

**84 Outcome of the Call In**

The Scrutiny Board considered whether or not to release the decision for implementation. A vote was subsequently held and the Scrutiny Board agreed (by majority decision) that the decision be released.

**RESOLVED** – That the decision be released for implementation.

**85 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next public Board meeting will take place remotely at 10.30am on 7 April 2021.