

Report of the Director of Place
To Economy and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee
Overview of Work Programme 19/20

17th September 2020

1.0 Introduction

The work plan of the Economy and Infrastructure PDC followed through from the previous municipal year and identified a range of key areas to concentrate on its work plan for 19/20 year with the main areas as follows:

1. River Corridor Draft Strategy.
2. Transportation Strategy (including City Centre Parking). Active travel?
3. Homes as Power Stations.
4. Green Infrastructure Strategy (economic implications).
5. Swansea's Economy.

These areas were progressed during the year with the main aspects summarised within this report.

2.0 Main areas

2.1 Green Infrastructure

The Committee was provided with background to the strategy and were able to input over a number of sessions into its development prior to and post the public consultation that was carried out. The main themes being:

The consultation and subsequent feedback which focussed on the social, economic and environmental benefits of Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Members noted that work is ongoing in terms of increasing the understanding and visibility of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, especially in terms of future projects (Council Policy/Supplementary Planning Guidance/Green Fleet Strategy).

One session covered the national policy context, the vision, the overarching objectives, the green space tool and its application.

Members also considered maintenance implications (both for the Council and developers), technical concerns, ensuring developers promote bio-diversity via Section 106 Agreements, costs associated with the removal of Ash trees, identifying target areas, prioritising the City Centre (due to the amount of immediate development currently taking place), encouraging community and school based ownership for the environment and the climate change emergency.

This input assisted the shaping of the strategy for the public consultation and also the final documents which is due to be presented to planning committee in the Autumn for adoption as supplementary planning guidance.

2.2 Swansea's Economy (Tourism)

At these sessions the Tourism and Marketing Manager, accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism, Head of Cultural Services and the Strategic Manager, Tourism, Marketing and Events, provided a presentation on the positive impacts of the tourism industry to Swansea's economy.

The presentation included:

- STEAM Figures (2018) indicated that tourism was worth £447.7m to the local economy.
- 4.78m Visitors in 2018.
- Types of Advertising (Stand Up Paddle Boarding).
- Methods of Advertising (Twitter/Youtube/transport hubs/shopping malls)
- The value of public relations and hosting journalists (bloggers and vloggers).
- Destination Management Plan for Swansea Bay 2017-2020.
- Business support to tourism opportunities.
- Number of website views.
- Investment and development of the website.

The Strategic Manager Tourism Marketing and Events detailed the two brands used to promote Swansea; Enjoy Swansea Bay and Visit Swansea Bay.

In response to Members' questions, Officers stated that:

- Whilst there is no direct link with travel companies, they are targeted for the large events such as the Air Show, Christmas Parade.
- Hotels within Swansea do offer packages when large events are taking place within the City.
- Retaining visitors within the Swansea area is a challenge.
- Efforts have previously been made to work with transport partners.
- Officers work closely with Taxi Licensing Officers prior to large scale events (concerts etc.).
- Whilst it is important that Council departments work together when devising policies that may impact on other service areas, when budgets are restricted this becomes more of a challenge.

The Strategic Manager Tourism Marketing and Events stated that a visitors survey is undertaken every 3-4 years. The information is interrogated to determine whether any trends appear in people's perceptions (e.g., reoccurring visitors complaining about a specific issue). The City generates 37-40% repeat annual visits.

It was agreed that further work would be carried out and linked into the revision of the current destination management plan as part of the forward work programme.

2.3 River Corridor Strategy

Members were taken through the current draft strategy and were provided the opportunity to input into a drop in session to review the draft and provide comments to assist its development over the following weeks and months. The new strategy is due to be completed at the end of 2020 or early in 2021.

2.4 Swansea Economy (implications of Brexit)

The Committee was taken through a presentation outlining the current situation and the impact that Brexit may have on funding streams and provided their input and comments accordingly.

2.5 High Street Empty Properties

The Committee were taken through the current situation with High Street and the input the Council has been having in relation to bringing empty properties back into use by leveraging in grant opportunities and working with owners and developers to improve the High street offer and public realm. Further updates will be brought back at strategic points in the future.

2.6 Homes as Power Stations

Members had previously been taken through the HaPS city deal project and how this may impact on the authorities housing stock and delivery of new homes to a high energy efficient standard. Members also took the opportunity to visit one of the pilot projects and provided feedback into the development of the Council's future approach. This has been input into the development of the regional business case for the City deal project.

2.7 Leader attendance

In addition to the various officer reports the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rob Stewart also attended the Committee to give an overview of the policy area and feedback to the Committee of various developments linked to its terms of reference.

3.0 Covid Implications

The impact Covid resulted to some of the meeting at the end of the year being postponed resulting in a slightly reduced programme for the 19/20 municipal year.

4.0 Work Plan 20/21

The Covid outbreak has also impacted on the 20/21 programme but the following are policy areas that the Committee may be minded to consider in the remaining time available:

- Economic impact of Covid and how this may shape the Council recovery policy going forward.
- Impact of Brexit due at the end of 2020 and at time of writing a lack of clarity over any potential trade deal and how this may impact on the Council and region.
- Inputting into the development of the Council active travel policy.
- Input into the finalisation of the Homes as power stations business case as part of the city deal programme.

5.0 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6.0 Financial Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.0 Equality Implications.

There are no equality implications associated with this report.