

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the sub-committee scheduled to be held on 10 July 2018.)

Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee

27 March 2018

Present: Councillor Janet Hunter (Chair)
Councillors J Cassidy, S Cox, S Day, P Earley,
P McIntyre and J Walker

EP34/03/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Lee.

EP35/03/18 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

EP36/03/18 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations reported.

EP37/03/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 14 February 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

EP38/03/18 Coastal Regeneration Update

Graham Sword, Senior Manager, Regeneration, and Julie Bews, Regeneration Project Manager, attended the meeting to present details of coastal regeneration projects, which was preceded by a tour of the Spanish City Dome jointly with Members of the Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee, provided by Andrew Coleman, Site Manager, Robertson Construction.

Steve Bishop, Senior Manager, Cultural Services, outlined the background to the redevelopment of the Playhouse, Whitley Bay explaining that it was now into year 9 of the contract with SMG Europe. The last year had been the most successful to date with over 75,000 visits to the theatre. The pantomime alone attracted over 22,000 visits. The theatre re-launch in 2009 was very much a starting point for the ongoing regeneration of Whitley Bay. The Playhouse continued to support a diverse programme of theatre and music.

It was reported that exceptionally good progress had been made during the last six years to undertake a series of improvements along the length of the North Tyneside coastline. Work was continuing to improve the offer along the coastline.

In 2015, Whitley Bay was named the most improved retail centre over the past five years in the country, with a drop in the number of empty shops. The Authority would continue to work with and support the private sector to enhance the coastline through potential development opportunities.

The Whitley Bay Seafront Master Plan sets out the Authority's ambitious plans to regenerate the coastline between St Mary's Lighthouse and Cullercoats Bay. In presenting the progress on projects delivery, officers highlighted the positive economic impact of the investment in the Whitley Bay Seafront Masterplan in relation to tourism and business.

Northern Promenade phase 1 extensive works to replace the surface, provide new lighting, seats, bins and shelters was now complete between Watts Slope to Rendezvous Cafe. Watts Slope toilets and promontory were completed and opened to the public in 2016 and included the return of the ice cream kiosk which operated by local family business Di Meo's.

Reconstruction of the Central Lower Promenade was progressing well and was due to be completed in the next few weeks.

The Southern Promenade had suffered recently due to increased levels of storm activity which had caused extensive damage to the structure and walkways which resulted in the promenade being closed off to public access. An outline bid for external funding to undertake the restorative works to stabilise the area had been submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

In 2016, an operator was appointed to run a Land Train along the coastline. The Land Train began operating between Whitley Bay seafront/Playhouse and St Marys Island in early August 2017 and had been a popular addition to the coastal offer, in addition to the events they hosted.

The new Premier Inn and Beefeater Restaurant opened in mid July 2017 on the site next to the Spanish City Dome. The build had brought over £4.5 million of private sector investment into Whitley Bay. Local people had benefited from a scheme through Jobcentre Plus and had secured employment with Premier Inn and Beefeater which provided over 70 new jobs in this facility.

Approximately 6 million people already visited the coast every year, bringing £270 million into the local economy and supporting over 3,500 jobs. The coastal improvements would provide an extra attraction for passengers coming off cruise ships at the Port of Tyne, which already contributed millions of pounds to the local economy.

The Spanish City restoration which was due to be completed in Spring 2018 would strengthen the positive impact that the regeneration of the coast was having and lead to further interest and investment. The restoration and wider coastal regeneration was already having a positive impact on the economy with millions of pounds being invested by the private sector. The latest figures showed that 33 new ventures had launched in Whitley Bay in the last 24 months. Whitley Bay Chamber of Trade membership had risen from 20 to 275 and it had seen 46 new businesses start up in the last year or so.

Key areas of note included the submission of a stage 2 bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for £2.1 million towards the restoration of St Mary's Lighthouse in June 2018.

Coastal Property Developments included the former High Point Hotel, where 14 town houses were under construction on the site and were due to be completed in May 2018. The show house which would be utilised in the launch of a new marketing campaign would be open for viewing during the May Day bank holiday.

The Council was granted planning permission to develop 12 new, high quality executive family homes on the site of the former Avenue pub in Whitley Bay. Improved site conditions had resulted in the foundations potentially changing from pile foundations to raft, which were a cheaper option. However, any alterations in the foundations would require a change to the planning approval. The site would be sold to Aurora Properties to take forward the development of the site.

Planning permission to demolish the empty Whisky Bends pub was granted and work was underway to clear the site and expected to be demolished by the end of March 2018. The cleared site would be marketed as a development opportunity.

Members sought clarification on business investment with regard to supporting the local economy and new coastal developments. Members were assured that although the coastal development work was still ongoing, the regeneration of the coastal area was having a positive impact, which in turn would lead to further interest and investment by local businesses and the private sector in general.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and attendance at the meeting, and representatives from Robertson Construction for the tour of the Spanish City Dome.

It was **agreed** that the presentation in relation to the update on Coastal Regeneration be noted.