

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2018

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GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2018

Present:

Councillor J Windle	(Chair)
Councillor S Cornwell	Councillor C Smith
“ A Powell	“ K Tait
“ B Rice	

Also Present

Karen Hanson – Strategic Director – Place
Jane Weston – Employment and Skills Officer (for Min No 630)
Karl Apps – Housing Strategy and Growth Manager (for Min No 630)
Sue Veerman – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Richard Gadsby – Governance Officer

626 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Boyle, C Cupitt, R Smith and Julian Cosgrove, Economic Development and Growth Manager.

627 Declarations of Interest

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

628 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 8 February 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

629 Draft Scrutiny Review Report – Growth and Tourism

The Committee considered its draft report on the Scrutiny Review of Growth and Tourism which had been prepared by the Overview and Scrutiny Manager. The report set out a number of recommendations as well as the key findings from the Scrutiny Review.

Members were pleased with the content of the report and thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Manager for her assistance in the review process.

RESOLVED – That the Growth Scrutiny Committee approve the draft Scrutiny Review Report – Growth and Tourism for submission to Cabinet.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

630 Economic Development and Housing Strategy Update (including Empty Properties Action Plan Update and Employment Skills Update)

Empty Properties Action Plan Update

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager gave an update on the Empty Properties Action Plan. The Committee were advised that the target to bring 20 empty properties back into use by March 2019 was unlikely to be achieved. The Council were looking to engage with different organisations and individuals to address this, including holding annual landlord events in conjunction with Bolsover District Council and Chesterfield Borough Council, writing out to every long term empty property owner, referring some empty property owners to Action Housing and offering a property matching service on the Council's website.

A procedure for enforced sales had been drafted and a purchase and repair scheme was currently being scoped using Council 1-4-1 Right to Buy receipts to help fund the acquisition and cost of development. The Council were looking at working with a Utility Company to bring around 100 properties back into economical use. This approach would be cost neutral to the Council. It was noted that there were currently 400 empty properties within the District and two empty properties had been brought back into use in the last 12 months through Action Housing.

The Committee were advised that the majority of work undertaken by Action Housing had been in the District of Bolsover. This was due in part to Sports Direct. It was noted that private landlords were looking to expand their portfolio in North East Derbyshire and the Council were looking to encourage Action Housing to undertake work in the District. Empty properties owned by the Council were being looked at through the Asset Management Group and it was noted that the Asset Management Strategy was being reviewed which would be of interest to Scrutiny.

The Committee were advised that there had been success in turning empty pubs and shops into flats in Bolsover District and this could be replicated in North East Derbyshire. The Council were currently looking at developing a business case for the potential to charge 200% Council Tax on properties that had been empty for over two years. It was noted that empty properties can have a negative impact on Community Safety and the District had a large number of non-traditional housing stock which presented a number of challenges.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Housing Strategy and Growth Manager for his contribution to the meeting.

Economic Development and Housing Strategy Update

The Employment and Skills Officer presented a report on behalf of the Economic Development Growth Manager on the Economic Development and Housing Strategy update.

The Committee were advised that the Council were supporting the delivery of Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hubs. These had been promoted in Council publications The News and Business News.

Fifty local businesses had been engaged through the KAM process and a Customer Service Management system was being developed to produce improved data around business support.

The Council was supporting businesses to export goods and services through business events held with the Department of International Trade. Two events at the District Council Offices had taken place and one was scheduled for May 2018. It was noted however that take-up from business had been slow. A Made in North East Derbyshire event supported by a number of partners had also taken place in January 2018.

Members suggested the Council look to provide breakfast events as it was believed the time would be more suitable to the business community.

The Committee were advised that the Council were working to develop relevant and targeted business support mechanisms, including strengthening links with Higher and Further Education Institutes and Universities. Four innovation events had taken place in 2017 and three were scheduled to take place in 2018.

The Council were working to unlock the potential of major employment and housing sites across the district. These include the Avenue, Biwater and Coalite sites. It was noted that a revised Key Performance Indicator (KPI) would stipulate that employment conditions were attached to all new planning consents. The Council were also looking to improve the marketing of major sites to developers and a successful Developer Forum Network had been established for commercial developers.

The Council were working to realise the vitality and viability of its town centres through regeneration frameworks including Dronfield and Killamarsh which had been adopted by the Local Plan. Town Teams had been recommended in both frameworks. Town Centre Health Checks were taking place and a Citizens' Panel questionnaire had been carried out, with the analysis of the results taking place.

The Committee were advised that work to regenerate and support village centres had been paused because of other priorities.

It was noted that a planning application had been received for the roundabout at the top of Mill Lane which would unlock the southern part of the Avenue site.

The Chesterfield Area Cycle Ways Improvement Project was in progress. Derbyshire County Council were looking at a range of projects along the A61 to improve infrastructure. Work was being undertaken to ensure routes into the Avenue are accessible and improvement works to the cycle/footpath network in Dronfield were planned to take place.

The Council were also working with Derbyshire County Council to improve awareness of the Digital Derbyshire project. The project included a proposal to install free wi-fi hotspots and superfast broadband. Members expressed concern over the success of the project.

Cllr K Tait left the meeting.

Members of the Committee felt that the report did not contain enough measured results or impacts. For future reports they requested this information be provided to the Scrutiny Committee. The Strategic Director – Place noted the concerns and agreed to raise this with the relevant officer.

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager left the meeting.

Employment and Skills Update

The Employment and Skills Officer outlined the progress made on the objective for maximising employment, skills and training opportunities. The Council were working with partners to upskill both local residents and the local workforce, working with partners to reduce unemployment as well as improving access to and support for apprenticeships.

The Committee were advised that a Skills Needs Analysis was undertaken in 2016 and a Labour Market Review by the Sheffield City Region had been carried out the previous year. It was identified that there were clear skills gaps at Level 4 (HND and Degree level). A new Key Performance Indicator had been introduced to address these findings. There were increases in the number of higher and degree level apprenticeships in the District and a higher and degree level apprenticeship market place event would take place in April 2018. It was noted that North East Derbyshire has had the largest percentage in apprenticeship starts in the whole of Derbyshire.

The Working Communities Project provided 1-to-1 support for residents who were facing redundancy or are unemployed. Two KPIs measure the success of the project and both targets had been exceeded:-

- **20 people into work** – as at December 2017, 57 people were supported into work;
- **60 people with pre-employment activities** – 270 people had been supported.

It was noted that the Community Employment Advisor worked in various locations within the District and had a current caseload of 45 clients. A number of changes

had been made to accommodate the closure of Clay Cross job centre. The Working Communities Project was working in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions to support employees who are facing redundancy. The project was being developed further as part of a transformation review.

The Committee were advised that the Ambition Project supported 18-24 year old Job Seekers Allowance claimants into employment. The project ended in 2017 and an underspend had enabled a smaller project known as Project X to continue until September 2018.

It was noted that the Ambition Project had exceeded all original targets including starts and placements. The 5-year Talent Match Project was a Sheffield City Region project ending in December 2018 with funding from the Big Lottery. This project supported 18-24 year olds who were unemployed for over 12 months including activities such as coaching and mentoring. The project was delivered by Derbyshire County Council on behalf of Bolsover, North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield and Bassetlaw and most targets had been exceeded.

The Strategic Director – Place suggested the need to track those supported to monitor how long they stay in work, although it was recognised this could be difficult and time consuming.

It was noted that the Derbyshire Local Integration Board is to play a key role in creating sustainable work opportunities. The LIB is being developed in partnership with North East Derbyshire District Council, Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council, with Derbyshire County Council leading on the project.

Members asked what opportunities were available to help upskill older people. It was noted that job centres provide support in this area and the Council were working with the Sheffield City Region to promote opportunities when they are informed of companies that are closing. The Working Communities Project would also support people with training opportunities.

Members suggested the need for more Community Employment Advisors and that areas of work could be expanded to other parts of the District such as Killamarsh.

Concern was also raised about various projects coming to an end resulting in the loss of officers at North East Derbyshire and at Derbyshire County Council. It was noted that projects would be subject to funding moving forward.

The Committee were advised that the Council were working with Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce to promote the Economic Survey and were due to hold a public procurement event in partnership with the Chamber as well as supporting businesses through the Growth Hub.

It was noted that whilst the Council do not work with Sports Direct as this is in the District of Bolsover, a £1.26m investment from the Government's Controlling Migration Fund had been secured by Bolsover District Council.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Employment and Skills Officer for providing the both updates. Members also noted their appreciation for the detail in the Officer's report.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the updates be noted.
- (2) That the Employment and Skills Officer be invited to a future meeting to provide the Committee with a progress update.
- (3) That the Growth Scrutiny Committee flag their interest in the Asset Management Strategy.
- (4) That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager request responses for the various questions raised at the meeting.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

The Strategic Director – Place left the meeting.

631 Monitoring of Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager outlined the list of recommendations by Scrutiny for 2017/18. It was noted that all actions were on track apart from actions from the Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Committee note the Scrutiny Recommendations 2017/18.

632 List of Key Decisions – Issue No 71

The Committee considered Issue No 71 of the List of Key Decisions which set out the major decisions being taken over the next few months.

RESOLVED – That the List of Key Decisions Issue No 71 be noted.

633 Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its Work Programme for 2017/18 as this was the last committee of the Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – That the Growth Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2017/18 be noted.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

634 Additional Urgent Items

There was no urgent business to be discussed at this meeting.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked Scrutiny Members for their input over the year and the support provided by the Overview and Scrutiny Manager and the Governance Team.

635 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on Thursday 14 June 2018 at 1.00 pm.
