

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2016****I N D E X**

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GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2016

Present:

Councillor J Windle (Chair)
Councillor W Lilleyman(Vice-Chair)
Councillor S Boyle Councillor A Powell
“ C Cupit “ B Rice

Also Present

James Arnold – Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health (Min No 520)
Adrian Kirkham – Planning Manager – Development Management (Min No 520)
Alison Westray-Chapman – Assistant Director – Economic Growth (Min No 523)
Julian Cosgrove – Economic Development and Growth Manager (Min No 522)
Carl Griffiths – Private Sector and Housing Options Manager (Min No 522)
Sue Broadhead – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Sarah Cottam – Governance Officer

517 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Tait and C Tite.

518 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.

519 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 24 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

520 Scrutiny Review – Vacant Land – Interviews

The Committee carried out several interviews as part of its review into vacant land.

James Arnold – Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health

(1) What long term objectives do we have for effective asset management within the Authority?

The Committee were advised that Helen Fairfax was the Planning Policy Officer. It was important to consider how planning processes and systems can support the asset management strategy within the Authority. Have to consider how to make the link between the services and take opportunities that benefit the Council and Communities but don't cause problems with planning requirements. Planning was all about identifying housing and employment land to meet the Local Plan requirements.

- (2) How do land assets support our wider corporate objectives and strategies including for Urban extension?

The Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health was aware of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy. The Council needed to have a Local Plan in place by 2017 otherwise the Council would not be eligible under possible new guidelines for the New Homes Bonus. Planning was cross cutting so needed to be embodied with the Growth Strategy . Services needed to link up. The Council would work alongside developers and also Rykneld Homes on planning applications coming in. The Asset Management Group would also be made aware of any Planning applications coming through.

- (3) How do we measure progress and performance against the asset management plan?

The Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health advised the Committee that the Council measured its performance through Housing delivery, however, changes in the Planning and Housing Regulations would present challenges for the Council.

- (4) Is there an integrated departmental and corporate approach to the management of land assets?

Yes there was an integrated departmental and corporate approach to the management of land assets. The Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health did not sit on the Asset Management Group unless specific issue being discussed but did have regular meetings with Alison Westray-Chapman, Assistant Director – Economic Growth and Grant Galloway, Assistant Director – Property and Estates.

- (5) What other information systems do we have to help informed decision making and planning?

Consultation on planning applications through the Asset Management Group helped the council make more informed decisions. Larger sites needed to be tracked and monitored regarding what was needed to bring these forward for use.

- (6) What progress has been made on the production of an Up to Date Asset Management database?

This question was not applicable.

- (7) How do we determine whether land we own is for disposal, development or retention?

The Asset Management Group would consider sites for disposal, development or retention. The Council needed to ensure it maximised any opportunities coming through.

- (8) How are our decisions on use of land linked to our corporate plan?

Planning had a corporate target linked to the Council's Corporate Plan. Progress on the Local Plan would be monitored through the Local Plan Steering Group who reported direct to Cabinet.

- (9) Do we involve local members or Parish Councils in identifying land that could be used by the Council say for housing?

Local members would be involved in Planning applications and also in Planning Policy terms for identifying land for the Local Plan. Additionally have District/Parish Liaison Group.

- (10) What are the main barriers in the Authority to the identifying available land and/or disposal of land?

The Council needed to ensure its officers had the skills to identify opportunities. The Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health felt that the Council had wide ranging skills and expertise and where necessary would seek external expertise and advice from consultants.

- (11) How well is the Disposals and Acquisitions policy working?

This question was not applicable.

- (12) If we dispose, develop or retain land how is this linked to the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy?

This question was not applicable.

- (13) What costs are involved in keeping land we own, do any generate income?

Income was generated from land that the Council owned. The Council had currently dealt with planning applications for an Aldi/Lidl at Clay Cross and officers had to discuss this at Asset Management Group to ascertain the best use of land.

- (14) What is the net cost of our garages after rental and other costs have been deducted?

This question was not applicable.

- (15) How do we avoid the mass sell-off of land assets to private developers and are there alternative ways to generate income?

The Council needed to ensure the correct expertise was in place when dealing with assets and to look at possible long term use of land. The Committee were advised that the council should consider keeping assets to grow and generate income from.

- (16) How can new social housing be locked into a new local plan in light of the planning legislation changes?

Legislation was changing quickly. Rykneld Homes would be consulted on any policy developments taking place. Alison Westray-Chapman, Assistant Director – Economic Growth was the link officer between Rykneld Homes and the Council.

- (17) How can we benefit from the example of other Councils' provision of affordable housing and the information systems they use for asset management?

The current Local Plan has an affordable Housing Policy. The need for affordable housing across the District was high and this could not currently be met at market value. Developers would bring forward sites but these were found not to be viable. The Council needed to be delivering 300 affordable homes per year, but at present were only delivering 100 per year.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Assistant Director – Planning and Environmental Health for contributing to the review.

Adrian Kirkham – Planning Manager – Development Management

- (1) What long term objectives do we have for effective asset management within the Authority?

The Planning Services Manager was not involved in Asset Management but from a development point of view, we determine planning applications, so deal with proposals for our own land. With regards to the Council owned land, the Council were not often pro-active enough to get the best value for ourselves by getting the planning application before selling land off.

- (2) How do land assets support our wider corporate objectives and strategies including for Urban extension?

The Council had an advantage over land it owned; having full control could assist in working more pro-actively alongside colleagues to achieve the best solution for that land.

- (3) How do we measure progress and performance against the asset management plan?

This question was not applicable.

- (4) Is there an integrated departmental and corporate approach to the management of land assets?

The Council needed to be pro-active in bringing sites forward. Competing officer site priorities could potentially cause barriers. If the Council were keen on developing its own assets, the resources should be made available to help and an interdepartmental space be provided for officers to talk together.

- (5) What other information systems do we have to help informed decision making and planning?

The Committee were advised that Housing Strategy had compiled a list of sites, but he felt the issue was how to refine and use this list. To help make informed decisions officers needed to understand at what stage each site was at.

- (6) What progress has been made on the production of an Up to Date Asset Management database?

This question was not applicable.

- (7) How do we determine whether land we own is for disposal, development or retention?

The Planning Services Manager was not sure how the Council determined whether land was for disposal, development or retention. The Council needed to make conscious decisions on use of land, gaining planning consent for developing the land and if not why retaining. Timescales for reviewing decisions were also needed.

- (8) How are our decisions on use of land linked to our corporate plan?

The Planning Services Manager was unsure, but thought the link would be through the Estates department.

- (9) Do we involve local members or Parish Councils in identifying land that could be used by the Council say for housing?

Local members were consulted through the processing of planning applications and also through the Local Plan consultations. The Planning Services Manager was unsure if members were involved at the pre-application stage. The Planning Manager – Development Management advised that the Council needed to be more pro-active and bullish with bringing land forward.

Councillor S Boyle left the meeting at this point.

- (10) What are the main barriers in the Authority to the identifying available land and/or disposal of land?

A main barrier to the Council identifying available land was that an element of knowledge was not there and this raised questions on how the Council was progressing land, was there planning consent? There needed to be a proactive follow up approach. The Planning Services Manager advised the Committee that Parish Councils owned land and may be willing to work alongside the District in bringing forward sites.

- (11) How well is the Disposals and Acquisitions policy working?

This question was not applicable.

- (12) If we dispose, develop or retain land how is this linked to the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy?

This question was not applicable.

- (13) What costs are involved in keeping land we own, do any generate income?

The Planning Manager – Development Management presumed that there would be rates charges in place that would need to be met when keeping land. Income could be generated on land through using it for other purposes like allowing car boot sales to trade.

- (14) What is the net cost of our garages after rental and other costs have been deducted?

This question was not applicable.

- (15) How do we avoid the mass sell-off of land assets to private developers and are there alternative ways to generate income?

The Council needed to push for better value on land. but more value. Our profit can be less, but provide more value to meeting our aims and objectives. Need corporate will.

- (16) How can new social housing be locked into a new local plan in light of the planning legislation changes?

Social housing was now changing through a new Bill that was currently going through Parliament making significant changes to the Planning and Housing Legislation.

- (17) How can we benefit from the example of other Councils' provision of affordable housing and the information systems they use for asset management?

The Planning Services Manager had no experience in this, so could not offer the committee any examples.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Planning Manager – Development Management for contributing to the review.

521 Change of Order of Agenda Items

It was agreed with the Chair, to hear Agenda Item 5, before carrying out the final Scrutiny Review interview with Allison Westray-Chapman, Assistant Director – Economic Growth.

522 Economic Development Housing Strategy

Julian Cosgrove – Economic Development and Growth Manager, and Carl Griffiths – Private Sector and Housing Options Manager attended the meeting on behalf of Allison Westray-Chapman, Assistant Director – Economic Growth to update on progress of the Strategy and Action Plan.

The Economic Development and Growth Manager advised the Committee of a new possible venture into the Export Industry. North East Derbyshire did not presently get involved in Export work, but was felt that this could contribute significantly to the Council's growth agenda.

A plan on Export was currently being put together following a recent meeting with the Sheffield City Region (SCR) and Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (D2N2). The Council wanted to host a Local Network Surgery twice per year in North East Derbyshire and this would be an opportunity for experts in the exporting trade to meet, network and discuss possible grants coming forward.

A business case had been put together to ascertain if Sheffield City Region and D2N2 would attend the seminars. The Committee were advised that there were currently 78 known businesses exporting in the district and the Authority would like to see this increase. North East Derbyshire had a good export infrastructure and it was hoped that the network meeting would be popular. The first event was scheduled for June 2016.

An event would also be taking place on 25 May 2016 called 'Made in North East Derbyshire'. Companies would be attending this event to talk about their own experience in exporting from the District. Ian Harrison of UKTI would also be speaking at this event.

The Committee were advised of the work commencing with Universities on achieving a degree through an apprenticeship scheme. North East Derbyshire had meetings set with Universities to discuss the roll out of apprenticeships in the district. This scheme was fully endorsed by Councillor M Gordon, Cabinet Member for Environment (including Licensing and Sustainable Waste Management, Planning Policy and Economic Growth)

Each apprentice would require a sponsoring employer which would help prevent high student debt. North East Derbyshire were the first district to be speaking to the universities on the new scheme.

Central Government were funding two thirds of the scheme and this made it a great opportunity for people who had commitments, such as childcare responsibilities to be able to gain a degree through an on job apprenticeship. The scheme was due to begin in September 2016.

Members agreed that a written update on the Housing Strategy Action Plan from Carl Griffiths – Private Sector and Housing Options Manager would be acceptable ahead of the next meeting.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Economic Development and Growth Manager and the Private Sector and Housing Options Manager for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Committee note the update from the Economic Development and Growth Manager.
- (2) Members agreed that a written report update on the Housing Strategy action plan be provided from Carl Griffiths – Private Sector and Housing Options Manager.

(Economic Development and Growth Manager/
Private Sector and Housing Options Manager)

523 Scrutiny Review – Vacant Land – Interviews

Alison Westray-Chapman – Assistant Director – Economic Growth

- (1) What long term objectives do we have for effective asset management within the Authority?

The Local Plan was the driver and this set out the Council's aspirations. The extant Local Plan was in place and provided a framework for employment, housing and major sites. The Council was always looking at the wider opportunities for land.

- (2) How do land assets support our wider corporate objectives and strategies including for Urban extension?

The Council had completed regeneration frameworks for Clay Cross and Eckington and were now working on developing frameworks for Dronfield and Killamarsh. The frameworks needed to set out how the Council could get communities to work and integrate together. The wider corporate objectives were set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

- (3) How do we measure progress and performance against the asset management plan?

The Council's progress and performance were measured and assessed at Quarterly Performance meetings.

- (4) Is there an integrated departmental and corporate approach to the management of land assets?

The Asset Management Group was in place to ensure an integrated departmental and corporate approach was taken to the management of land assets within the Council.

- (5) What other information systems do we have to help informed decision making and planning?

The Asset Management Group was key in the Council and this Group discussed potential solutions for land assets. The Committee were advised that several services fed into this group which was chaired by Councillor J Austen. The Asset Management Group would look at the wider opportunities for land coming forward.

- (6) What progress has been made on the production of an Up to Date Asset Management database?

The Committee were advised that Grant Galloway, Assistant Director – Property and Estates would have more details on the production of an up to date Asset Management database. It was advised that a lot of work had gone into the database and this contained information regarding land which the Council owned. ‘MyMaps’ showed sites in the Council’s ownership and this was populated by Kristen O’Gorman in ICT.

- (7) How do we determine whether land we own is for disposal, development or retention?

When determining whether land was for disposal, development or retention, it all depended on the size of the site. For example, Mill Lane was subject to a site brief through Tibbalds and was a strategic piece of work, whereas garage sites would go through the local members and the Asset Management Group.

- (8) How are our decisions on use of land linked to our corporate plan?

Clear growth strategy links were embedded in the Local Plan and there was a clear tie in to prevent contradictions in the Council’s plans and strategies.

- (9) Do we involve local members or Parish Councils in identifying land that could be used by the Council say for housing?

The Committee were advised that land was brought to the Council’s attention in various ways. The Council may approach Parishes directly regarding land that they own to possibly work jointly in bringing a larger site forward. The Council may approach the parish council or visa-versa. The committee were advised that the Council had direct links with parish councils over framework regeneration projects. Local councillors attended meetings and had been involved in various consultations.

- (10) What are the main barriers in the Authority to the identifying available land and/or disposal of land?

The Committee were advised that the main barriers in the Authority to identifying available land were balancing whether services were in correct locations, for example employment land needed access to motorways etc. There were sometimes constraints on particular pieces of land that needed to be overcome. It was advised that the Council needed to be aware of its legacy and image and needed to be shown that North East Derbyshire was ambitious and moving forward.

- (11) How well is the Disposals and Acquisitions policy working?

The Committee were advised that the Disposals and Acquisitions Policy was working well and had met its objectives and raised capital receipts for the Council.

- (12) If we dispose, develop or retain land how is this linked to the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy?

The Committee were advised that it was important to understand what assets in the Council's ownership could be sold and if this contributed and generated greater opportunities for the longer term use of that land.

- (13) What costs are involved in keeping land we own, do any generate income?

The Assistant Director – Economic Growth advised the Committee that general maintenance costs were involved in keeping land that we own. The Council could seed land as wild meadows to lower any maintenance costs whilst the Council could look into alternative uses if necessary for that land dependent on its location.

- (14) What is the net cost of our garages after rental and other costs have been deducted?

This question was not applicable.

- (15) How do we avoid the mass sell-off of land assets to private developers and are there alternative ways to generate income?

The Committee were advised that the mass sell off of land assets to private developers was a member decision and would be up to the Council whether to sell a piece of land or not.

- (16) How can new social housing be locked into a new local plan in light of the planning legislation changes?

The Assistant Director – Economic Growth advised the Committee that changes to social housing would come into force through the new Housing and Planning Bill. It would be a case of watch this space to see where the legislation goes. The LGA were currently organising a briefing on the Bill.

- (17) How can we benefit from the example of other Councils' provision of affordable housing and the information systems they use for asset management?

The Committee were advised that the Council were always looking at best practice and would always look at how other Council's dealt with strategies. It was advised that staff met regularly to discuss how issues in the Council were

to be tackled and if necessary, look to the LGA for advice and guidance. Housing Strategy staff also met regularly across Derbyshire.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Assistant Director – Economic Growth for contributing to the Review.

RESOLVED – that the information gathered as part of the committees review in Vacant Land be noted.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

524 Partnerships

The Committee agreed to defer the update on the Partnership Team’s activities in support of growth to a future meeting.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

525 Key Decision – Issue No 42

The Committee considered issue no 42 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 42 be noted.

(Governance)

526 Work Programme

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Growth Scrutiny Committee 2015/16 which set out the items which the Committee would consider for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED – That the Growth Scrutiny Committee’s 2015/16 Work Programme be noted.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

527 Additional Urgent Items

There were no additional urgent items to be considered at the meeting.

528 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 10.00 am in Chamber 1.