

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2016

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GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2016

Present:

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

Also Present

Dan Swaine – Chief Executive (Min No 645)
Julian Cosgrove – Economic Development and Growth Manager (Min No 645)
Bryan Harrison – Senior Regeneration Officer and Urban Designer (Min No 645)
Grant Galloway – Assistant Director – Property and Estates (Min No 645)
Councillor J Austen – Portfolio Holder for Information Technology, E-information and Asset Management (Min No 646)
Matthew Kane – Governance Manager (Min No 648)
Sue Broadhead – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Sarah Cottam – Governance Officer

642 Apologies for Absence

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

643 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.

644 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

645 Growth Strategy and Local Enterprise Partnership/Combined Authorities/Devolution

Members considered a presentation from Dan Swaine – Chief Executive on progress of the Growth Strategy. As part of the presentation an update was also provided on the Local Enterprise Partnerships/Combined Authorities and Devolution.

The Chief Executive was accompanied by Julian Cosgrove, Bryan Harrison and Grant Galloway to share their expertise.

There was positive growth over Bolsover and North East Derbyshire with an extra 4,100 jobs expected by 2030. Unemployment continued to reduce with job seekers allowance claimants down by 650. The Council were currently working up proposals to deliver residential and commercial developments through capital receipt and through a longer term revenue stream. The Committee noted that Coney Green Business Centre had recently been refurbished and was turning over a profit.

The Committee were advised of how the Council would deliver the Growth Strategy through:-

- Supporting enterprise – maintaining and growing a business base;
- Unlocking development potential – unlocking the capacity of major employment sites such as Coalite;
- Enabling housing growth – increasing the supply, quality and range of housing to meet the needs of a growing population;
- Maximising employment – skills and training opportunities;
- Town Centre Redevelopment – ensuring the vitality and viability of town centres;
- Supporting and developing the rural economy.

The Chief Executive outlined the key sites in the District including the Avenue Site, Mill Lane, the former Biwater Site, Coalite and Callywhite Lane Industrial Estate. The Committee were advised of the ongoing progress at each site and that the Council was also working closely with key partners to bring the sites forward.

A Developer Prospectus was currently being put together and the Chief Executive welcomed the Growth Scrutiny Committee's input into the development of this document.

The Committee were advised that European funding was available through the BNED LEADER Project (2014-2020) and this was launched in November 2015. The focus of the project was to promote growth in rural areas and to create jobs.

1,713,000 euros was available (£1,370,400) and was being promoted through various roadshows. The programme had reasonable interest with 72 enquiries received, 43 from North East Derbyshire, 18 from Bolsover, 1 covering both areas and 10 from ineligible areas. 7 outline applications had been endorsed and these were all from the North East Derbyshire area.

The project proposals included campsites, holiday lodges, a swimming facility, farming machinery and an equestrian centre.

A further source of support was available through the North East Derbyshire Business Growth Fund which focussed on areas that could not bid for BNED LEADER funding. This aimed to promote growth and to create jobs in the area. £40,000 North East Derbyshire funding was available with a maximum grant per application of £4,000, with a minimum of £500. To-date, 20 enquiries had been received, 6 had been endorsed from which 2 full applications had been received.

Moving on, the Council needed to consider if it was taking the right approach was it being receptive and progressive, using a 'can do' attitude towards growth. The Committee were advised that a model had been proposed for opening up opportunities for both Council's and a report would shortly be going to the Leadership Team.

Full Council had agreed on the 2 March 2016 to become a constituent member of the North Midlands Combined Authority and to remain a non constituent member of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority. The Committee were advised that 13 out of the 19 Authorities in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire area had agreed to become constituent members of the North Midlands Combined Authority.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked the Chief Executive and colleagues for attending to the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Growth Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and progress on the Growth Strategy, the Local Enterprise Partnerships/Combined Authorities and Devolution.

(Chief Executive)

646 Scrutiny Review – Vacant Land – Interview

The Committee carried out an interview as part of its review into 'vacant land' with Councillor J Austen, Portfolio Holder – Information Technology, E-information and Asset Management

Councillor J Austen

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

The Committee were advised that the Asset Management Strategy had five key objectives that were realised through the Strategy's Action Plan.

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

Councillor Austen advised that the link was there and delivery models were being developed. Land assets supported the Council's wider corporate objectives in the corporate plan.

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

The Asset Management Group played a big role in how the Council measured progress and performance against the Asset Management Plan. The Quarterly Performance reviews were also part of this.

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

The Asset Management Group contributed to how the Council managed land assets. All assets should be submitted to the Group. The Group's membership consists of two Cabinet members, Directors and Assistant Directors and Departmental Leads from Housing Strategy, Planning and Rykneld Homes.

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

N/A.

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

The Committee were advised that one action target in the new strategy and plan was to carry out a stock condition. Councillor Austen was unsure how accurate the asset list was and felt that it should be made available to ward members to check the current register and report any anomalies.

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

The Disposal and Acquisitions Policy outlined the procedure for land and buildings. The Asset Management Group would consider any recommendations coming through and should include consultation with the relevant ward member. Ward members were often only contacted when the issue was considered contentious. The Portfolio holder felt any issues should be reported to the relevant ward member as they may have different views on whether something was contentious.

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

The Committee were advised that the use of land was linked to the Council's Corporate Plan.

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

Councillor Austen did not feel that the ward members were involved as much as they should be and parish councillors were only involved on an ad-hoc basis.

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

The Asset Management Register if not up to date could be seen as a barrier. The Transformation Agenda should be used to identify how we could overcome barriers when identifying vacant land.

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

The Policy had been operating for a year and the Portfolio Holder had no indicators on how well it was working.

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

Any decision made on land and assets should go through the Disposal and Acquisition Policy and ensure it satisfies the criteria.

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

Councillor Austen recognised that there would be costs involved in keeping land that we own and that the Council does generate income from land.

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

Councillor Austen was unsure of the charges but the rent had increased on garages by 5%.

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

Councillor Austen advised that the Council had to look if it needed the finance or had it got the capability to develop land to generate income over the longer term.

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

N/A.

- (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 Council could look at what provisions other Councils had in place and look at examples. Members needed to be more pro-active in identifying land.

Councillor Austen had requested that the Asset Management Group review and reflect on the process of long term cases that had gone through the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy to ascertain if any lessons could be learned from for example – the protracted case for the Ridgeway Craft Centre.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Councillor Austen for contributing to the Review.

RESOLVED – That the information gathered as part of the Scrutiny Review into Vacant Land be noted.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

647 Scrutiny Review – Vacant Land – Triangulation of Evidence

A discussion took place between the Committee to triangulate the evidence gathered in the Scrutiny Review of 'Vacant Land' which would be used to produce a report and recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

Good Practice

- Asset Management Group was working well and was a useful tool – as always there was room for improvement;
- Officers' knowledge, enthusiasm and contributions in this area had improved;
- The Disposal and Acquisitions Policy was working well;
- Positive approaches, structures and systems had been put in place to make things happen and this appeared to be working better;

Areas for Improvement/Recommendations

- Garage sites – the need for an audit of what the Council has and how the sites can be utilised;
- Members should be contacted regarding their items on the Asset Management list and their local knowledge be recognised as a valuable asset;
- The need for a complete database including the possible use of the asset, the status ie tenants/restrictions;
- Key documents should be shared and published – Asset Management Strategy – Minutes from Asset Management Group; The Asset Management Group was seen as good practice, but more people needed to be involved with the Group;
- An analysis and identification of underused skills to ensure use of staff potential. Training/development to be provided where needed;
- Forum for managers to discuss issue and share good practice;

- The need to widen the scope of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy;
- To consider reviewing how we are monitoring performance. Is it measuring impact and are we monitoring the correct things;
- Local Plan – resources need to be there to produce more quickly;
- Need to consider the impact of not having a plan in place including the impact on new homes and bonus appeals. Felt it was important to consider the need to bring forward the production of the plan;
- The need for the Local Plan to be communicated across all areas of the Council;
- Reconsider the driver of the Local Plan.

RESOLVED – That the triangulated evidence for the Scrutiny Review – ‘Vacant Land’ be included in the Scrutiny review report.

(Members/Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

648 Working with Town and Parish Councils Action Plan

The Committee considered the progress against the Scrutiny Review Action Plan for Working with Town and Parish Councils. Matthew Kane, Governance Manager attended the meeting to update members on progress.

The Committee were advised that the majority of the actions had now been completed, A couple were outstanding but progress had been made and this would be monitored regularly to ensure implementation.

The Committee were advised that the District/Parish Liaison Group had been reviewed. The number of meetings would be reduced from 4 to 2 with one being earmarked for training and the other District/Parish Liaison Forum once a year.

It was advised that Council diaries would be distributed to Town and Parish Councils on an annual basis.

The Committee thanked the Governance Manager for overseeing and implementing the Action Plan for the Working with Town and Parish Councils Scrutiny Review.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the update on the progress against the Action Plan be noted.
- (2) That the Scrutiny review into ‘Working with Town and Parish Councils’ be signed off.

(Governance Manager)

649 List of Key Decisions – Issue No 44

The Committee considered issue number 44 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 44 be noted.

(Governance)

650 Work Programme

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Growth Scrutiny Committee 2015-2016 which set out the items which the Committee would consider for the forthcoming year. The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported it was nearly complete.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised the Committee that the Scrutiny Review into 'Vacant Land' was now concluding and a draft report would be brought to the next meeting for members to agree and then be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED – That the Growth Scrutiny Committee 2015-2016 Work Programme be noted.

(Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

651 Additional Urgent Items

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

652 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 5 April 2016 at 10.00 am.
