

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2019

Present:

Councillor Carolyn Renwick (Chair)

Councillor Stephen Clough
Councillor John Funnell
Councillor Diana Ruff

Councillor Suzy Cornwell
Councillor Lee Hartshorne

Also Present:

K Apps	Acting Head of Economic Development
J Cosgrove	Economic Development and Growth Manager
Harrison	Senior Regeneration Officer and Urban Designer
R Purcell	Joint Head Of Service - Planning
S Veerman	Overview and Scrutiny Manager
D Stanton	Governance Officer

135 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Barry, A Hutchinson and N Whitehead.

136 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.

137 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 13 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

138 Town Centre Regeneration/New Homes Bonus and Council Tax on Housing Developments

The Committee welcomed Karl Apps, the Acting Head of Economic Development, and Bryan Harrison, the Senior Regeneration Officer and Urban Designer to the meeting.

Members received a presentation from the officers that outlined the New Homes Bonus, council tax, and town centre regeneration. It was stated that the New Homes Bonus was a grant paid by central government to local authorities to incentivise housing growth, and was based on the extra council tax revenue raised for new build homes; conversions; long term empty homes back in use; and social housing premium. The Committee heard that the Authority was rewarded for growth in council tax band D equivalent properties.

Members asked about the Council's housing stock at Rykneld Homes, and whether four bedroomed properties were on the increase due to 'blended families'. The Committee also enquired about the percentage of band D properties and the number of social houses at the Avenue site in Wingerworth. Whilst the officers didn't have that information available to them at the meeting, they agreed to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Manager at a later date.

The Committee heard that the revenue from the New Homes Bonus was available to view in the MTFP, and that whilst it did increase the Council's income, it also increased the costs required to maintain Council services. The officers stated that they expected the New Homes Bonus to cease in 2021/2022.

Members discussed their experience of housing developments in their own wards, in particular, some properties that were deemed to be lacking in quality.

The officers discussed the town centre regeneration frameworks at Clay Cross, Dronfield, Eckington and Killamarsh, and the various plans in place to achieve increased economic growth over the coming years. Section 106 agreements were discussed, and how they provided local communities with much needed infrastructure investment.

The Committee discussed the need for an overall strategic direction for the Council, and looked forward to the release of the Growth Strategy, which would coincide with the release of the Council Plan. Members agreed that they would like to see a strategy that set out the District's aspirations; that would attract inward investment; high skilled jobs and innovation.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

139 Section 106 Agreements

The Committee welcomed Richard Purcell, Head of Planning, to discuss Section 106 Agreements.

The officer stated that Section 106 Agreements were legally binding agreements attached to planning permissions, usually to achieve financial contributions that could not be achieved through planning agreements. Members noted that they needed to satisfy 3 tests;

1. That it was necessary to make an agreement acceptable in planning terms.
2. That it was directly related.
3. That it was fairly and reasonably related in scale and size to the development.

The Head of Planning informed the Committee that developers often subsidised some of their housing stock to sell to registered providers of social housing, so that there was provisions for affordable housing. Members noted that there was no set formula for this, nor for Section 106 Agreements in general, but that they were looked at on a case-by-case basis. The officer agreed to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Manager with further figures and overheads that outlined the provisions for social housing, so it could be presented to the Committee.

Members noted some examples of how Section 106 Agreements had been used, such as to provide additional funding to local schools to mitigate the expense of a large influx of pupils, or for offsite work to highways and junctions to improve traffic flow. It was stated that it was up to the local planning authority to determine what resources went where. The officer explained that viability assessors undertook a viability appraisal with developers to determine how much they could contribute towards an agreement, as some were not be able to afford the full cost.

The Committee discussed the investment from Section 106 Agreements in their own wards, and whether those agreements were subject to public scrutiny, as well as circumstances where there was non-compliance with the agreement. The Head of Planning informed Members that if there was non-compliance with the agreement, then the developers would have broken a legally binding contract, and it would therefore go back to Planning Committee for reconsideration. Members noted that if developers wished to alter the agreement due to a change in circumstances, they would need to seek a formal agreement with the planning authority. It was stated that Section 106 Agreements were sent to Planning Committee every six months, and the Joint Head of Planning agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of previous reports.

The Committee heard that the agreements had trigger points as to when certain payments needed to be paid, and if the money provided had not been spent within five years, it was returned to the developer. The officer explained that there was also various review mechanisms in the agreement that would take into account factors such as inflation and house prices so that contributions were reviewed.

Members discussed the practicalities in relation to all District and Parish Councillors being given future Section 106 Agreement reports, as they felt that there was a lack of awareness and knowledge that surrounded those agreements. The Committee agreed that it was especially important that Parish Councils understood the agreements, so that the resources provided could be used to improve local facilities.

Members thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

The officer then left the meeting.

Councillor S Clough then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

140 Business Support

The Committee welcomed Julian Cosgrove, the Economic Development and Growth Manager, to discuss the support the Authority provided to businesses.

The officer discussed the various methods the Council was using in order to grow the District's business base, which included engaging with local universities and growth hubs to attract investment. Members stated that they would like to see a wider vision and strategy for the District, and a clear plan on how that would be

achieved. Members were informed that the Economic Development and Growth Manager worked closely with the Portfolio Holder for Business Strategy, Commerce and Assets, and that the District's Growth Strategy would be released in due course.

The Committee heard that the Authority had hosted over 52 business support events in the last few years, and that the Council was essentially 'competing' with other Districts to attract inward investment and growth. Members noted that the Economic Development Team in the Council had carried out a sector analysis and that this provided a much deeper level of understanding across the specific economic sectors of North East Derbyshire, and included for example, trajectories, and a breakdown of all the sub sectors – including for example – the manufacturing sector. It was also stated that NOMIS was periodically used to carry out local economic assessments and was also particularly useful in providing an economic comparison with other Districts using higher (eg Local Authority Level) data.

The officer informed the Committee of the Government's Industrial Strategy and how this related to NEDDC, and detailed some of the funding bids that had been placed through central government, such as the high street funding bid. The Economic Growth Manager stated that in the future, he would like to see the Authority better positioned to take advantage of those resources.

Members agreed that they would like to see a focus on higher paid jobs, and discussed using the sector analysis to take a clear direction to invest in and attract higher paid manufacturing. It was stated that it was crucial the District had a 'USP' that encouraged people to move, live and work in North East Derbyshire. The officer and Members discussed some of the District's key attractions, as well as it being local to other major economic investments, such as the new £400 million iport in Doncaster.

Councillor S Cornwell then left the meeting.

The officer reiterated that his aim was to see the District retain and increase its business base to achieve further economic growth. Members would be provided with a copy of the presentation to look at in further detail after the conclusion of the meeting, and were encouraged to contact the officer directly if they had any other further questions.

Members thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

The officer then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

141 Scrutiny Review

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager asked Members if they had given consideration to a Scrutiny Review topic for the Municipal Year.

The Committee discussed their desire to focus on job creation and supporting infrastructure, but were mindful that the new Growth Strategy was not yet

available. Members agreed to spotlight various topics in the upcoming meetings, and that the decision on the main Review Topic should be deferred to the next meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager was asked if a copy of the sector analysis could be provided to the Committee.

142 List of Key Decisions - Issue No 86

The Committee considered Issue No 86 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 85, be noted.

143 Work Programme

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the Communities Scrutiny Committee 2019/20.

RESOLVED – That the Communities Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/20 be noted.

144 Additional Urgent Items

There was no additional urgent items discussed at this meeting.

145 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on Thursday 26 September 2019 at 1.00pm.