

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillor Carolyn Renwick (Chair)
Councillor Anthony Hutchinson (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Nigel Barker
Councillor Suzy Cornwell
Councillor Nick Whitehead

Councillor Stephen Clough
Councillor John Funnell

Also Present:

Councillor Jeremy Kenyon – Portfolio Holder for Business Strategy, Commerce and Assets
D Swaine Joint Chief Executive
D Stanton Governance Officer
S Veerman Overview and Scrutiny Manager
A Bashir Improvement Officer
K Apps Acting Head of Economic Development

358 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Hartshorne and D Ruff.

359 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.

360 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 26 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

361 Growth Discussion - Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder for Business Strategy, Commerce and Assets, and the Acting Head of Economic Development were present at the meeting to discuss growth within the District.

Members heard that the District had a number of strengths and weaknesses in regards to economic growth. The Portfolio Holder believed that North East Derbyshire was in a great location, with the potential for a strong visitor economy and a low cost place to start up a business and live.

The Committee heard that they were surrounded by big business hubs and cities in Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby. It was recognised that the District need to improve its transport links. The Committee agreed that poor public transport and accessibility were issues that needed addressing.

The Committee heard that the Council aspired for North East Derbyshire to be a better place to work and live, with a large business and visitor economy. The Portfolio Holder stated that he wanted to see annual salaries increase, and to generate more small and medium enterprises. There had been a focus on town centre regeneration, developing better relationships with LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships), and improving transport and traffic.

Members discussed the shared arrangements with Bolsover District Council and the recent director appointment that would enable both Authorities to focus on individual Growth Strategies.

The Portfolio Holder stated that there had been a focus on the visitor economy, with the Council being in partnership with a number of organisations in order to attract inward investment and make the most of the District's potential. Members heard about key sites such as the Avenue Development Site, Biwaters, and the Coalite Site, and plans for future housing development. The Committee discussed housing supply within the District and the disparities in demand on different areas in North East Derbyshire.

Members noted that the District was strategically competing with other areas in order to attract businesses and wider investment. The previous Growth Review was discussed, and there was a wide ranging discussion on tourism, jobs and investment.

The Committee agreed that it was vital the Council had an investment strategy so that land could be used to its best potential. The Portfolio Holder stated that this was best done through the use of Joint Ventures, as well as replicating the success of the business units at Coney Green. Members also discussed the income streams of such investments.

The Committee discussed the merits of focussing the Council's Growth Strategy on tourism and job creation.

The Portfolio Holder informed Members about the Clay Cross Town Deal Project, which had a potential value of £25m, as well as the OPE Eckington and Killamarsh projects which was hoped to regenerate the town centres and raise the profiles of both areas.

Agreed - that the update be noted.

362 Growth Discussion - Chief Executive

Members received a presentation from the Chief Executive Officer that provided an update on the Council's Growth Plan and related issues.

The Committee heard that the 2015-2019 Growth Plan was coming to an end, and as such the new Administration was in the process of developing the new Growth Strategy for 2020-2024.

Members noted some of the priorities of the previous Growth Plan, which included supporting enterprise, enabling housing growth, and unlocking development potential. The Officer discussed some of the programmes that was supporting businesses around the District, which included the LEADER Programme, Business Growth Fund, and Business Support Events. The Committee also heard about the Avenue Site and Egstow Park, both of which were key housing developments within the District.

The Chief Executive Officer outlined the revenue received as part of the New Homes Bonus. Members discussed business rates collected within the District and raised concerns about the flat lining of NNDR receipts, and what could be done to incentivise business growth.

The Committee discussed LEPs and its role in promoting economic growth in North East Derbyshire, as well as the outcome of a recent LEPs Review. Members heard about the Empty Homes Strategy and the e.ON Partnership, as well as some of the success stories in reviving previous empty properties.

The Officer informed Members about the North Derbyshire Manufacturing Zone, where £220,000 worth of funding had been secured. One Public Estate Projects in Clay Cross, Eckington, Killamarsh and Mill Lane had also secured £180,000 worth of funding. The Committee also discussed developments at the Coalite Site close to the M1 at Markham Vale, which included investments of £5.8m from the LEP and £2.2m from Derbyshire County Council. Members noted the joint venture with Northwood Development Limited, and the economic and social benefits that the partnership had delivered.

At this point Councillors S Cornwell and A Hutchinson left the meeting.

Members had a wide ranging discussion on job creation and how developments in technology could impact both high and low skilled employment. The Committee agreed that the District should be focussed on creating high skilled and high paid jobs for residents.

The Chief Executive Officer then updated the Committee on the new Administration's growth plans for 2020-2024. The priorities were stated as being town centre regeneration, business support and a visitor economy. Members heard about the 'cross cutting themes' of the growth plan which included skills, council income growth and carbon reduction.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting, and stated that they looked forward to the release of the Council's Growth Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Strategy, Commerce and Assets; Chief Executive Officer; and the Acting Head of Economic Development then left the meeting.

AGREED – That the update be noted.

363 Six Monthly Growth Report

The Committee received a report that provided a 2019/20 half year growth summary. It was stated that the Council had established three strategic priorities to unlock the District's growth potential. A summary of the progress against those priorities for April to September 2019 was outlined in the report.

Members discussed average earnings, and welcomed figures from the ONS that wages in North East Derbyshire were higher than the East Midlands average. The Committee agreed that they would like to see ambitious targets set for North East Derbyshire, as well as consistency in the areas or regions that the District was compared to. Members stated that they would like to see a further breakdown of income from the Council's industrial units and the New Homes Bonus.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

The Officer then left the meeting.

AGREED – That the report be noted.

364 Scrutiny Review 2018/19 - Business Centres and Industrial Units

Members were asked to consider the previous year's review report on business centres and industrial units and to feedback any comments and queries they had to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager before it was submitted to Cabinet.

365 List of Key Decisions - Issue No 89

Members discussed the proposed landsales and medium term financial plan.

AGREED – That the List of Key Decisions be noted.

366 Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager asked Members to consider any questions that they would like to be included as part of the proposed interview of the Chief Executive at the next meeting.

AGREED –

- (1) That the interview with the HS2 Engagement manager be deferred to a future D2N2 meeting.
- (2) That Members forward any questions to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager for the interview with the Chief Executive D2N2.
- (3) That the Work Programme be noted.

367 Additional Urgent Items

There were no urgent items to be discussed at the meeting.

368 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee will be held on 16 January 2020 at 1.00 pm.