

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 2 AUGUST 2021

Present:

Councillor N Barker (in the Chair)

Councillor John Funnell
Councillor Michael Roe

Councillor Lee Hartshorne

Also Present:

S Gordon	HR & OD Manager
J Green	HR Officer
D Parker	Joint Housing Strategy & Intelligence Officer
D Stanton	Governance Officer
S Veerman	Overview and Scrutiny Manager

GSC/10/ 21-22 Election of Chair

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the Committee elected a Chair for the meeting.

RESOLVED – That Councillor N Barker be elected Chair for this meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee.

GSC/11/ 21-22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors S Cornwell, M Emmens, A Hutchinson and P Wright.

GSC/12/ 21-22 Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, 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 Declarations of Interest.

GSC/13/ 21-22 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Informal Growth Scrutiny Committees held on 26 April and 28 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

GSC/14/ 21-22 Apprenticeships

Members received a presentation from the HR & OD Manager which provided them with an overview of apprenticeships at North East Derbyshire District Council. The Committee heard that apprenticeships/trainees had been used at

the Council since its inception, and that the apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017. The Council had also approved an Apprenticeship Strategy in November 2017. An apprentice was anyone over the age of 16 who combined working with studying and was paid at least the minimum wage.

Members heard about the routes into the apprenticeship scheme, which included existing employees learning on the job, internships, new starters, and career graded trainee posts. The Committee was also presented with statistics surrounding apprenticeships both at NEDDC and nationally.

Members also heard directly about the experiences of HR Officer Jodie Green, who had joined the Council as an HR apprentice.

The HR & OD Manager informed the Committee that new starter roles were assessed on a job-by-job basis as to whether they could be included in the apprenticeship scheme. Members enquired about retention levels and the costs to the Council for new apprentices resigning after completing their courses. It was stated that retention levels were high. An Apprentice is not required to pay back any training costs if they left the Authority within two years. Only employees whose training was funded from the corporate budget can be asked to sign a learner agreement which compelled them to pay back any training costs if they left the Authority within two years.

The update was concluded by outlining the opportunities offered to existing employees through the Leadership Programme provided by Sheffield Hallam University, and the next steps which included career fairs, the Kickstart Scheme, and links with universities.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**GSC/15/
21-22** **Housing Strategy**

The Joint Housing Strategy and Intelligence Officer was present at the meeting to discuss the Council's Housing Strategy 2021-24.

Members heard that the Strategy set out the Council's three key strategic housing priorities:

- Increasing housing growth and promoting home ownership;
- Improve existing housing; and
- Protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

The Committee noted that the emerging Local Plan 2014-2034 had set a target of 330 new homes for each year of the Plan. A range of housing statistics were also presented which included information from the ONS on housing growth in the District. Members heard, for example, that the average house price was £220,500, and that the current number of households was 43,070 (projected to increase to 48,202 by 2035).

The Committee discussed affordable housing and the First Homes Scheme which offered homes to first time buyers at a price 30% less than the market

value. The Officer informed Members that the Council was able to set local criteria for the First Homes Scheme to ensure that existing residents in North East Derbyshire benefited. It was stated, however, that this could only last for up to three months after the property was placed on the market.

Members had a wide ranging discussion on section 106 agreements and how the funds were used in the local community to support population growth. The Committee agreed that the Planning and the Housing Strategy Teams could work more closely together to better utilise the funding available.

There was a consensus that the empty homes strategy and the partnership with E-ON had worked well. The Committee noted that the Authority was the first in the country to enter into a partnership with the energy provider. The Strategy outlined that 15 empty homes would be brought back into use every year.

Members raised concerns that there could be a large number of evictions following the expiration of Coronavirus Regulations that protected tenants. The Officer advised that the Council was well prepared and would be ready to offer advice and support to anyone who was under the threat of eviction.

The Committee discussed the Right to Buy Scheme and the Council's 'right of first refusal'. This entitled the Authority to buy back a property purchased through the Right to Buy Scheme if it returned to the market within 10 years.

Members also heard about rough sleeping in the District, and the success of the Authority in re-housing people at the start of the Pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**GSC/16/
21-22** **In-House Services**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed Members that this item had been deferred to the next meeting.

**GSC/17/
21-22** **Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

AGREED – That the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions be noted.

**GSC/18/
21-22** **Work Programme**

AGREED – That the Work Programme be noted.

**GSC/19/
21-22** **Additional Urgent Items**

There were no additional urgent items at this meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee.

**GSC/20/
21-22** **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee would take place on Monday 27 September 2021 at 1pm.