

BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present:

Councillor Suzy Cornwell (Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Clive Fletcher
Councillor Lee Hartshorne

Councillor Christine Gare
Councillor Tony Lacey (substitute)

Also Present:

D Johnson Assistant Director - Property, Estates and Assets
A Camus Economic and Regeneration Manager
A Maher Governance Manager
T Scott Governance and Scrutiny Officer

BSC Apologies for Absence

**9/23-
24**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Clough, D Hancock, S Reed and R Spooner.

BSC Declarations of Interest

**10/2
3-24**

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

BSC Notes of the Last Meeting

**11/2
3-24**

The Chair wished to clarify that in the 'Additional Urgent Items' item, Members would be asked to reflect on what the Committee had been done to help the Council achieve the goal of making the District a Great Place for our Community. She explained that this would be an Item in its own right at future meetings.

RESOLVED – That the Notes of the Business Scrutiny Committee held on 10 July 2023 were noted.

BSC Support to Businesses

**12/2
3-24**

The Economic and Regeneration Manager gave Members a presentation explaining the support provided to businesses in the District and an update on the regeneration initiatives for the District's Town Centres.

The presentation examined Business related aims to achieve the Council Plan vision of creating a great place to work by supporting existing businesses, to maintain and grow the workforce, support new businesses to start creating employment and attracting new businesses to the area which bring new jobs.

The presentation summarised the following areas:

- Town Centre regeneration and in particular, the Clay Cross Town Deal
- Tourism and events, including the plans for a new Visitor Economy

Strategy

- Business support, including advice to start-up businesses, Growth Advice to existing firms and financial aid, such as the Council's Shopfront Improvement Grant
- Business rates relief provided to 51% of all Commercial Properties within the District
- The Council commercial property portfolio of workshops, offices and industrial units that are used by businesses and with local vacancy levels
- Town Centre health checks to find out why people visit the town centres, how do they get there and what part of their visits they felt best about, such as safety and street lighting.

Committee discussed the presentation. As part of this, Members discussed the proposals for the redevelopment of Clay Cross. Members were informed that the aim was to make the Town Centre a destination to attract visitors, and new visitors would be measured by footfall data.

Members referred to the Clay Cross Town Deal plan to relocate the Library, and asked if footfall data could be taken from the Library to measure the difference the relocation would make. The Economic and Regeneration Manager explained that the possibility of gathering this would be discussed with the Library.

Members referred to the plans for Killamarsh and asked if there was a funding scheme for the shop fronts. The Economic and Regeneration Manager confirmed that there was a Shopfront Enhancement Scheme in place.

Committee referred to the plans for Eckington and the for the next steps for achieving these. They heard how following financial and economic case review of the preferred options a Masterplan would be prepared and funding opportunities would be sought.

Members enquired about the allocation of Shared Prosperity Funding across the District's towns. In this context they noted the projects to be funded in Dronfield and how these compared to other areas.

Committee discussed specific Business Engagement schemes and support to businesses. Members considered the extensive Business Rate Relief which the Council offers and anecdotal concerns raised about how this support was communicated. In this context, they agreed that the specific information in the presentation setting out Business Rate Relief be circulated to the Committee.

Members discussed the startup advice provided to new business, including the support provided to social enterprises.

Committee agreed that support provided to businesses should be considered by the Committee as part of its work programme for the year.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

BSC **The Council's Asset Management Strategy**

13/2

3-24

The Chair of the meeting (Councillor S Cornwell) left the meeting. Committee

agreed by acclamation Councillor L Hartshorne take the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Assistant Director - Property, Estates and Assets delivered a presentation to Members explaining the content and intention of the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28. Members were informed that this was the first occasion the Council had a plan like it in place, and the plan was currently in a draft form.

Committee heard how the aims of the Strategy were to:

- Govern how assets are managed to the best effect;
- Ensure that the use and management of the asset base is aligned to key corporate priorities;
- Integrate a number of other key documents, like the capital programme, disposals policy, and the investment & acquisition strategy;
- Ensure that the Council's land and property assets contribute pro-actively to the delivery of the organisation's priorities.

The presentation also explained that the Strategy was geared towards the Council Plan priorities of A great place that cares for the environment, A great place to live well and A great place to access good public services.

The Governance Manager asked the Assistant Director - Property, Estates and Assets what part of the plan he thought would be most relevant to this Committee. The Assistant Director - Property, Estates and Assets explained that as this was Business Scrutiny, it would be the management of the Commercial Property Portfolio and the duty to maximise revenue income from the estate.

The Chair requested that the presentation be circulated to the Members of the Committee, and that the Assistant Director - Property, Estates and Assets return to a future Committee meeting when the document was in a formal state.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

BSC **Cabinet Business**

14/2

3-24

Members considered the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions to the Committee.

The Committee was informed that future updates on the Forward Plan would be provided in a digest style, to identify Cabinet decisions that they could scrutinise further, and how scrutiny of them could contribute to achieving the Council Plan objectives.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information.

BSC **The Committee's Work Programme**

15/2

3-24

The Governance Manager presented a list of suggestions in preparation for drafting the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24. Members were asked to consider the suggestions after the meeting and present Governance with any amendments or additions to the list.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information.

BSC **Additional Urgent Items**

16/2

3-24

The Chair asked Members to once again reflect on what had been done at the meeting to help the Council achieve the goal of making the District a Great Place for our Community.

In this context, the Chair stated it would be beneficial for the Economic and Regeneration Manager to come to a future Committee meeting and update Members on some of the issues mentioned in the 'Support to Businesses' item.

BSC **Date of Next Meeting**

17/2

3-24

The next meeting of the Business Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place at 3.00pm on 20 November 2023.