

BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2024

Present:

Councillor Suzy Cornwell (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Stephen Clough (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Christine Gare
Councillor Stephen Reed

Councillor Lee Hartshorne
Councillor Tony Lacey

Also Present:

D Thompson	Assistant Director of Planning
S Lee	Assistant Director - Regeneration and Programmes and SIRO
K Drury	Information Engagement & Performance Manager
T Burdett	Programmes Manager
J Hayden	Senior Scrutiny Officer
T Scott	Governance and Scrutiny Officer

BSC Apologies for Absence

28/2

3-24 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Fletcher, D Hancock and R Spooner.

BSC Declarations of Interest

29/2

3-24 There were no interests declared at this meeting.

BSC Minutes of Last Meeting

30/2

3-24 The Chair referred to the paragraph in the minutes which stated “the Chair suggested that social enterprises and charities might be a way to attract businesses” and wished to clarify that she said “the Council names itself as a social enterprise place, so it should link with NHS organisations in the area” and also “can we explore a social enterprise place?”

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Business Scrutiny Committee held on 20 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BSC Draft Notes of the Local Plan Review Working Group

31/2

3-24 The Assistant Director of Planning presented the draft notes of the Local Plan Review Working Group meeting on 1 November 2023. It was announced at Council that the notes of the meetings would be shared with Scrutiny Committees for their information.

The Working Group had been informed that although the Council’s Local Plan was adopted two years ago, it had been prepared in line with the provisions of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Since that time, the NPPF has

had numerous changes including the introduction of the national design guide, the standard method for calculating local housing need and an increased emphasis on climate change. In response, officers had undertaken a desk top review of the Local Plan, which utilised the PAS assessment tool to identify if an early update of the Local Plan was likely to be necessary. The review suggested that the local plan was working well overall with the exception of a couple of areas of concern.

The Chair referred to the paragraph at the end of the notes which stated “officers considered it prudent to issue a statement informing members of the public about the evidence gathering process that would be commencing in 2024” and asked what ‘evidence gathering’ meant. Members were informed that the first stage of this process was to collect evidence on the current position in relation to those areas where an update was required, like the availability of land for housing and employment and data on flood risks. Decisions would then be taken (and Members and Parish Councils informed) regarding how to address any deficiencies outlined by the evidence gathered.

The Chair requested an update on some of the issues discussed at the latest meeting of the Working Group on 22 February 2024. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that detailed notes of the meeting would be circulated in the near future, but the Working Group were informed of legislation and guidance in relation to the plan-making reforms, an overview of evidence base requirements and indicative phasing timetable, and proposals for issuing a position statement to clarify the Council’s intentions for reviewing the Local Plan

Members enquired as to how existing Neighbourhood Plans would be affected by any changes to the Council’s Local Plan. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that Neighbourhood Plans have to conform with the strategic policies of the District Local Plan, and that the National Planning Policy Framework included provisions which protect the weight to be given to Neighbourhood Plans that are less than 5 years old where they allocate housing sites to meet the area’s needs.

The Committee enquired what the Local Plan included in terms of employment supply and upcoming jobs. Members were informed that the Plan included employment related policies and strategies.

Members asked what Planning Performance Agreements involved. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) was a project management tool which local planning authorities and applicants could use to agree timescales, actions and resources for handling particular applications, and there was detailed guidance on the Council website about them.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

BSC **Clay Cross Regeneration Scheme**

32/2

3-24

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes delivered a presentation to Members updating them on progress of the Clay Cross Town Deal Programme.

The presentation included updates on milestones, Clay Cross Active, Town Centre regeneration, the Low Carbon Challenge Fund and the rail and energy strategy.

Members asked what the Programme included about employment, new enterprise and connectivity. The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes explained that because investment would be put through the Low Carbon Challenge Fund, it was too early to report on the impact made in these areas.

Members referred to 'tag active' in the Clay Cross Active slide and asked where this would be. Members were informed that the tag active course would be within the refurbished Clay Cross Active facility.

The Chair referred to retail units and asked if any progress had been made with them being made 'anchor shops' (a high-end shop that attracts customers to other shops). Members were informed that the Council was seeking expressions of interest from a breadth of food and beverage and leisure sector businesses to ensure it had a good mix of establishments that met the aspirations for the site.

Members asked how the jobs created by the Programme compared to the target set for it. The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes explained that the jobs created could start to be counted once the construction phase had commenced, and ultimately when the site was built and the new retail and hospitality businesses were open to trade.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

BSC **Shared Prosperity Fund**

33/2

3-24

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes delivered a presentation to Members updating them on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The presentation included updates on the financial overview, delivery mechanisms and budget commitments.

Members asked if this fund was the reallocation of UK funds previously directed to the EU, following the withdrawal of the UK. This was confirmed.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

BSC **Residents Survey (Swapped with Performance Management)**

34/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained how the Council undertook a Residents Survey in November 2023 to help further understand resident perceptions of the local area and local services. A total of 3,269 responses were received and the results were being reported to each Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair felt that because of the performance of 'shops' and 'job opportunities' in the survey results, these should be two areas the Committee adds to its Work Programme.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

BSC **Performance Management (Swapped with Residents Survey)**

35/2

3-24

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager presented a report which gave progress on the strategies underpinning the Council Plan objective ‘A great place to work’ for the period ending 31 December 2023.

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager explained some of the progress areas in Appendix 1, including the Clay Cross Active Social Value initiative, employment opportunities, the approved Planning application in Morton to increase storage space, the approved Clay Cross Town Deal redevelopment which would potentially create 16 new build commercial units, disposal of land brought forward for Employment Uses, and Environmental Health officers providing advice to businesses on a range of issues.

Members enquired how officers carried out skills matches. The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes explained that the Economic Development team had now been expanded, so they could give more individual focus to matching skills.

Members referred to the ‘green skills project’ and asked what it involved. Members were informed that the purpose was to train business owners to integrate green ideas into their businesses.

RESOLVED – That progress against the Council Plan “A great place to work” objective was noted.

BSC **Cabinet Business**

36/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since 29 June 2023. The digest set out key information for each decision.

The Chair requested that in future Business Scrutiny Committee agendas, a printed copy of the Forward Plan should be included as well as the Cabinet Digest. In terms of the Cabinet Digest, only those decisions taken since the last round of Scrutiny meetings need to be shown.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

BSC **Work Programme**

37/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Work Programme 2023/24 for the Committee to consider.

The Chair stated that the Committee should scrutinise internet coverage in the District. The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Programmes explained that Derbyshire County Council had a programme named ‘Digital Derbyshire’ about internet coverage, and the Assistant Director suggested that this would be a good starting point.

The Committee discussed the possibility of including the Council’s business support onto the Work Programme. Members agreed to add ‘business support the Council is offering’ onto the Work Programme.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That scrutiny of internet coverage in the District be added to the Work Programme 2023/24.
- (2) That business support the Council is offering be added to the Work Programme 2023/24.
- (3) That the Work Programme 2023/24 be approved with the agreed additions.

BSC Reflection on the Council Plan

38/2

3-24

The Chair asked Members to reflect on if the work of the Committee at the meeting had added value to the Council Plan objectives. The Committee felt they were asking the right questions and scrutinising the correct areas to appropriately oversee the Council Plan objectives.

BSC Additional Urgent Items

39/2

3-24

None.

BSC Date of Next Meeting

40/2

3-24

The next meeting of the Business Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on Monday 13 May 2024 at 3.00 pm.