

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne, on Wednesday 15th March 2017 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:- Councillors T. Alexander, A. Anderson, G. Buxton (left during Minute No. 0768), J. Clifton, M. Dixey, S. Statter and B. Watson.

Officers:- C. Millington (Scrutiny Officer), S. Coleman (Economic Development & Investment Manager)(to Minute No. 0768), K. Apps (Housing Strategy and Growth Manager)(from Minute No.0769), T. Evans (Empty Properties Officer)(from Minute No. 0769) and A. Bluff (Governance Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor S. Fritchley, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Development and Efficiencies.

Councillor J. Wilson in the Chair

0762. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

0763. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0764. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

0765. MINUTES – 15TH FEBRUARY 2017

Moved by Councillor A. Anderson and seconded by Councillor T. Alexander
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 15th February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

0766. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in private document.

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A Member noted that Regeneration Frameworks; Priority Projects (town centre regeneration), was included on the List of Key Decisions to be considered by Executive in April and raised concern that no update on progress had been provided to the Committee since September 2015.

Members agreed that Scrutiny should be informed of what was being considered at discussion stage and that a vision and a commitment from the Authority to move forward with Growth, including monitoring, was needed. Growth Scrutiny Committee's role was to help create that vision and appropriate targets in a coordinated approach with officers.

Moved by Councillor A. Anderson and seconded by Councillor M. Dixey

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in private document be noted.

0767. MARKETING AND HOW THE AUTHORITY ATTRACTS BUSINESSES – BRIEFING FROM THE SENIOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The Economic Development & Investment Manager provided a verbal update to the meeting in relation to how the Authority attracted businesses into the District.

The Economic Development team was small but structured with an Assistant Director, three senior officers and a Technical Support Officer who was the first point of contact for grants and business advice. The team looked at relevant businesses in the D2N2 and Sheffield City Region (SCR) areas.

Economic Development/Business Information - A pull out leaflet, "Business in Bolsover", had been produced by the team and was used quite extensively. Information for businesses was also included in the corporate structure on the Council's website, however, it had recently been decided that a more prominent site was needed and a Growth 'Microsite' would be developed by the Communications Manager in conjunction with the GIS team. The Microsite would also be used by potential Developers.

If businesses were looking to invest in the area, promotional leaflets providing information on statistics and testimonials from other businesses were available. These statistics were reviewed on an annual basis and the leaflets reprinted. Other leaflets covered information on the enterprise partnerships, D2N2, SCR etc, including access to finances, starting up a business and expanding a business in Bolsover. These leaflets were placed in the reception area of the Arc, in libraries and in the Council's Contact Centres. Information was available electronically and the Council used the social media website 'Twitter' and sent business updates via E-bulletins. The MINT database also formed a useful resource in targeting relevant companies for available resources and support..

Growth Target Information – this was updated on the Council's PERFORM system on a regular basis by the Economic Development team and this could be viewed by Members and other officers of the Council.

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Promotional Activity - In relation to promotional activity, brand guidelines had been developed and business events were attended including Chamber of Commerce events.

Business Relationships - Good business/officer relationships were formed and networks developed. This included Planning officers with businesses, agents and developers on the consultation process to support business growth and also Environmental Health officers co-supporting in relation to new practices and processes.

Communications – the Council’s In Touch magazine was mainly based on services to residents but there had also been a number of articles that highlighted the work of the Economic Development team.

In response to Members’ questions, the Economic Development & Investment Manager advised the meeting that the Authority did not have an international profile and the teams at D2N2 and SCR dealt with international business enquiries. With regard to national companies, the Economic Development team had been proactive in getting Wetherspoons into Bolsover. Companies tended to look at how many new houses were being built in an area as the potential for new business. The Tangent was an excellent example of a business centre being a modern building and having the right image as well as being accessible – this building had been ground breaking for the District and would be expanded in the near future.

It was noted that city centres were offering incentives to businesses with regard to business rates and Members agreed that the Council should also consider this. Promoting the District was key and this was something Members should do as well as officers.

Members thanked the Economic Development & Investment Manager for an informative report and looked forward to future updates.

The Economic Development & Investment Manager left the meeting.

0768. UPDATE ON CORPORATE PLAN TARGET G11 – THROUGH A PROGRAMME OF TARGETED REFURBISHMENT, BRING 15 EMPTY PRIVATE SECTOR PROPERTIES BACK INTO USE PER ANNUM – UPDATE FROM THE HOUSING STRATEGY AND GROWTH MANAGER

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager and the Empty Properties Officer attended the meeting to provide an update to Members regarding the Council’s Corporate Plan Target G11 – *Through a programme of targeted refurbishment, bring 15 empty private sector properties back into use per annum.*

Further to the Council’s Empty Properties Strategy, empty residential properties in the District had been identified from Council Tax records.

516 surveys had been sent to owners of empty properties in the District with a response rate of 28%.

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Detailed results from the survey, a copy of the questions asked and a scoring matrix used in the survey were set out in a paper circulated to the meeting.

In response to a Member's question, the Empty Properties Officer advised the meeting that the Council would attempt to take enforcement action on the owners of any empty properties with outstanding council tax arrears and which also scored high on the matrix, however, if the property was referred to Action Housing and was suitable for the intervention project where £18,000 was awarded to improve the property, once let as private sector housing, the council tax debt would be attached by way of a charge on the property, which would then be paid upon the sale of the property.

Advice was also provided to the owners of empty properties which had been on the market for a long time and the available options to them.

Further to a Member's request, the Empty Properties Officer would provide a list of empty properties in each Member ward.

Members thanked the Housing Strategy and Growth Manager and the Empty Properties Officer for providing the update.

0769. ANNUAL SCRUTINY CONFERENCE; CONFIRMATION OF A DATE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW AND WORK PLAN 2017/18

Annual Scrutiny Conference 2017: Members were advised that the Annual Scrutiny Conference would be held on Wednesday 31st May 2017 - an email would be sent to all Scrutiny Members confirming the date.

Work Plan 2017/18: It was agreed that items for the 2017/18 Work Plan include a review of Night time economy, Shopping trends and high streets and Transport links and infrastructure. Members were requested to inform the Scrutiny Officer of any further items they wished to add to the Work Plan.

Members noted that some areas of their work overlapped with the remit of the Healthy, Safe, Clean and Green and the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committees.

A lengthy discussion took place around how each Committee could maintain its own individual work area but also work together so as not to duplicate work and waste time.

In relation to the update provided by the Economic Development & Investment Manager regarding business information, it was suggested that comparisons with other local authorities be investigated.

(Scrutiny Officer)

0770. GROWTH SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2016/17

A quarterly Growth update was due at the next meeting and the following updates were requested;

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- Launch of the website
- Joint Venture Project
- HS2
- Fibre Optic Broadband – Pleasley
- Digital Derbyshire Project
- Recruitment of a Growth Director
- The Tangent (Phase 2)
- Sherwood Lodge site
- Coalite

(Scrutiny Officer)

The meeting concluded at 1150 hours.