

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Wednesday 4th April 2018 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor J. Wilson in the Chair

Councillors T. Alexander, A. Anderson, P. Barnes, G. Buxton, J.A. Clifton, P. Smith and S. Statter

Officers:-

J. Wilson (Scrutiny and Elections Officer), T. Evans (Joint Empty Property Officer) (until Minute No. 0731) and A. Brownsword (Senior Governance Officer)

0725. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Connerton and M. Dixey

0726. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0727. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

0728. MINUTES – 28TH FEBRUARY 2018

Moved by Councillor S. Statter and seconded by Councillor A. Anderson
RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 4th April 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.

0729. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS

Members considered the current List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document.

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Moved by Councillor A. Anderson and seconded by Councillor G. Buxton

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private be noted.

0730. DRAFT ENFORCED SALE PROCEDURE – PRIVATE EMPTY PROPERTIES

The Joint Empty Property Officer presented the Enforced Sale Procedure which was being put in place to enable the Council to consistently apply the current legislation when dealing with long term empty properties.

There were approximately 600 long term empty properties across the District. The Council had tried to engage with every owner and had received a 50% response rate. There had been some successes, most notably the Station Hotel in Creswell which was currently being converted into flats.

The Enforced Sale Procedure was designed to be an enforcement tool for those owners who would not engage with the Council. It was to be used in instances when the Council had carried out works in default and the owner had refused to pay the charges. It was a way to recover monies spent and bring an empty property back in to use. Every other option would be exhausted first and it could not be used to recover Council Tax debt.

In the first instance an external 'no win, no fee' company would be used to pursue cases through the court and they would provide training so that the in house legal department could pursue future cases.

Members noted that it was understood that the Council would use the procedure as a last resort, but from a resident's perspective, long term empty properties could become an eyesore. It was suggested that 'last resort' be changed to 'all reasonable measures'.

A question was asked regarding how the properties were prioritised and the Joint Empty Property Officer noted that a scoring matrix was used. A further question was asked regarding whether there were any patterns regarding ownership and response and it was noted that there were, but it was a wider issue and in order to enforce sale, there must be appropriate charges registered on the property.

Moved by Councillor J. Wilson and seconded by Councillor P. Smith

RESOLVED that the draft Enforced Sale Procedure and Members comments be noted.

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0731. WORK PLAN 2017/18

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer noted that the draft report of the Review of Income Generation would be presented to the Informal Growth Scrutiny Committee on 2nd May 2018.

Moved by Councillor J. Wilson and seconded by Councillor P. Smith
RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 1043 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1125 hours.