

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Virtual Meeting and in the Council Chamber (if required) on Wednesday, 16 December 2020 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors Derek Adams, Jim Clifton, David Dixon, Chris Kane, Tom Kirkham and Tom Munro.

Officers:- Sarah Sternberg (Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer), Victoria Dawson (Head of Housing Management and Enforcement & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Ian Barber (Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs), Kath Drury (Information, Engagement and Performance Manager), Di Parker (Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer), Tom Scott (Governance Officer) and Liz Robinson (Governance).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Mary Dooley (Portfolio Holder - Partnerships and Leisure) and Liz Smyth (Portfolio Holder - Economic Development).

GRO34-20/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair stated that before apologies were received, the Committee would observe a moment of silence for the passing of Councillor James Watson.

Apologies were received from Councillors Tricia Clough, Sandra Peake (Portfolio Holder - Housing) and Peter Roberts.

GRO35-20/21 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Chair stated that she had one urgent item of business to raise under the provisions of Section 100(B) 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, which was that she had another appointment and might need to leave the meeting.

GRO36-20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

GRO37-20/21 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane.

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of a Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd October 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

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GRO38-20/21 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Monitoring Officer presented the October 2020 list of Key Decisions to Members. She explained that the three items on the list had been approved by the Executive.

It was moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane to note the list of Key Decisions.

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

GRO39-20/21 COUNCIL AMBITIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE - JULY 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 2020 (Q2 - 2020/21)

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager presented the Council Ambitions Performance Update July 2020 to September 2020 (Q2 - 2020/21) report to Members. The purpose of the report was to report the quarter 2 outturns for the targets supporting the Council's Ambition 2020-2024 and relevant supporting service indicators.

Councillor Tom Munro referred to performance indicators presented to Healthy Safe Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee on 15th December 2020 being colour coded to highlight indicators affected by COVID-19, and requested that the same be done for future performance reports to Growth Scrutiny Committee. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager agreed that future performance reports to all Scrutiny Committees would include COVID-19 impact colour coding.

Councillor Tom Munro referred to target ECO.07 (Deliver 150 new homes through the Bolsover Homes Programme by March 2024) and reported that all of the housing contracts apart from Sandy Lane and Thorpe Avenue were now underway. He also referred to target ENV.08 (Bring 5 empty properties back into use per year through assistance and enforcement measures) and reported that five new flats in the old Co-op building in Whitwell were now ready to be inhabited and more information about them would appear on Bolsover TV.

Councillor Derek Adams referred to the half-yearly indicator relating to the financial performance of The Tangent Business Hub (Financial performance for the Tangent in line or exceeding budget forecast) and asked why there was such a large difference between the 2020/21 target (£66,687) and the half-year outturn (£7,447). The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager explained that the Hub had empty units which had partly been caused by COVID-19 because of the financial difficulties the pandemic had caused businesses. She added that the Hired and Contract Services contract in place for the Hub was for a full year, so the indicator showed a year of cost against a half-yearly outturn. Councillor Derek Adams requested that he would like to see a financial breakdown of precisely how much COVID-19 had cost the Council (and led to missed invoices) in terms of The Tangent, and the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager stated that she would investigate this and provide a breakdown after the meeting.

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Councillor David Dixon raised the aforementioned indicator ENV.08 (Bring 5 empty properties back into use per year through assistance and enforcement measures) and referred to the paragraph which stated “a meeting has been arranged at the end of October to discuss introducing the Council Tax Premium”. He asked if this meeting had now taken place. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager stated that she would confirm whether or not the meeting had taken place and contact Councillor David Dixon after the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro to note the outturn targets and relevant indicators.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the outturns against the Council’s Ambition 2020-2024 targets and relevant service indicators.

(Information, Engagement and Performance Manager)

GRO40-20/21 HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-25 - CONSULTATION

The Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer presented the Housing Strategy 2021-2024 report to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the first draft of the Housing Strategy 2021 - 2024 with a recommendation to approve the draft to proceed with public consultation.

The Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer gave Members a presentation summarising the key strategic housing priorities of the draft. These were:

1) Key Priority 1 – Providing Good Quality Housing. Aims:

Build New Council Housing
Ensure Design and Quality to Reduce the Carbon Footprint (Council and Private)
Refurbishment/regeneration to existing Council Housing Stock
Making the best use of the Council’s Housing Stock
Quality Private Sector Housing (including Stock Condition Survey)

2) Key Priority 2 – Enabling Housing Growth. Aims:

Regeneration
Support Local Plan for Bolsover District/five year housing supply
Partnership working to enable housing growth
Bringing Empty Properties Back into Use (private sector)
Support Custom and Self Build
Support Gypsy and Travellers

3) Key Priority 3 – Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People. Aims:

Prevent and Relief Homelessness
Enable Supported Housing/Housing with Care for People with Physical Disability/Mental ill health/Domestic Violence/Complex Needs
Older People’s Housing Accommodation and Support
Support Care Leavers
Support Armed Forces Personnel and their Families

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Disabled Facilities Grant /Home Improvements/Energy Efficiency

Councillor Tom Kirkham asked how the Housing Strategy worked in terms of Bolsover Homes providing different types of housing to meet demand. The Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer explained that the Strategy was a document to highlight overarching housing need and to show external companies what the Council was doing in terms of Housing, and a document to seek funding opportunities rather than a document to directly address housing need demand for individual sites. The Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs added that whenever a site was put forward for housing use, the officers in Housing Needs were always consulted with on how many would need to be provided.

Councillor Mary Dooley understood that disability adaptations to Council properties could take two years to be processed, and she felt efforts should be made to shorten this. The Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs explained that if a resident in a Council property had applied for a disability adaptation and they were on the waiting list, it would take significantly less time than two years to complete the work.

Councillor Mary Dooley asked how many homes were left to be fitted with new boilers from the Warm Homes Fund. The Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs stated that he would investigate the exact figure and circulate it after the meeting.

Councillor David Dixon referred to the part in the Strategy about how a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey concluded that 1,443 homes in the district of Bolsover failed the Decent Homes criteria, and asked how many of these private landlords were DASH (Decent and Safe Homes) accredited. The Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer explained that a figure was not kept, but the Council did promote the DASH standard to all private landlords.

Councillor Jim Clifton asked where Members were involved in the process of identifying a piece of land and deciding the types of houses to be built on the land, because he was aware of a case in Creswell where a garage site was set to be built on without consulting local Members. The Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs explained that at the beginning of a scheme, the relevant ward Members were consulted, and then during the design process there were Portfolio Holders on the design team meetings. He added that for that specific garage site, there was no development planned, but rather a piece of work was undertaken to identify potential sites for various types of usage. He agreed that Members could have been consulted with more on the piece of work and Housing officers would consider this in future.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane to approve the recommendation in the report, which was to approve the first draft of the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2024 and begin the wider consultation process

RESOLVED that the Committee approves the first draft of the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2024 and beginning the wider consultation process

(Housing Policy and Intelligence Officer)

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GRO41-20/21 REVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ROBERT WOODHEAD LTD (RWL) - EVIDENCE GATHERING (2ND SESSION)

The Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs presented a document to Members titled 'Review of the relationship between Bolsover District Council and Robert Woodhead Ltd (RWL) – Evidence gathering (2nd session)'. This included a number of officer replies in response to Member queries that had been raised as part of the Committee's review into the relationship between Bolsover District Council and Robert Woodhead Ltd.

It was moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro to note the 'Review of the relationship between Bolsover District Council and Robert Woodhead Ltd (RWL) – Evidence gathering (2nd session)' response document.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the 'Review of the relationship between Bolsover District Council and Robert Woodhead Ltd (RWL) – Evidence gathering (2nd session)' response document.

(Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

GRO42-20/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

The Monitoring Officer presented the Committee's Work Programme 2020/21.

It was moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer to note the Work Programme.

Councillor Tom Kirkham asked the Chair if he could pay tribute to the late Councillor James Watson before the formal part of the meeting ended, and she granted his request.

Councillor Tom Kirkham spoke about how Councillor James Watson was a Member of Growth Committee and had been a great help during the call-in review of the sale of land at Glapwell in 2020. He stated that Councillor Watson was a much-loved local Councillor in his ward of Pinxton, and he had supported the residents of Pinxton and financially supported local causes on many occasions. He ended by stating that Councillor Watson was a real asset to the Council and was dedicated to making the Council better and more inclusive, and he would be missed by everyone.

The Chair thanked Councillor Tom Kirkham for his warm tribute and added that her thoughts were with the family of Councillor James Watson.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the Work Programme.

(Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

The meeting concluded at 11.15 hours.