

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Tuesday, 7 February 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors Derek Adams (left during Minute No LOC50-22/23), David Dixon, Liz Smyth and Janet Tait.

Officers: Jim Fieldsend (Assistant Director and Monitoring Officer), Grant Galloway (CEO, Dragonfly Development Limited), Chris Fridlington (Director of Economic Development, Dragonfly Development Limited), Joanne Green (Partnerships Policy Officer) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Tom Munro and Rita Turner (to Minute No. LOC48-22/23).

LOC43-22/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jim Clifton, Maxine Dixon (Minute No. LOC48-22/23 only) and Tom Kirkham.

LOC44-22/23 URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

LOC45-22/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

LOC46-22/23 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor Janet Tait

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Local Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 6th December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

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LOC47-22/23 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.

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor David Dixon
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

LOC48-22/23 REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS - CLOWNE

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained the various documents that had been presented to Members as part of the review.

The Director of Economic Development, Dragonfly Development Limited (DDL), presented a review of Clowne Town Centre Regeneration Framework, acknowledging the Committee's original review plan to take each town area in turn. The Framework had originally been commissioned in autumn 2015, and had highlighted a range of public and private interventions that could be made to improve the town centre.

As agreed with Committee, officers had produced a scorecard analysing progress against the various elements of the Framework including in surrounding villages and hamlets. On reflection, the Framework document hadn't guided development to a great extent within the area. Many elements remained undelivered as the document had been aspirational in nature requiring additional buy-in from Town and Parish Councils to engage in the development plans themselves. Where funding had not been in place, many ideas had been difficult to deliver.

It was noted that the previous Regeneration Frameworks, to some extent, also sat outside a wider strategy for development and there was not a bank of costed projects ready to put forward to support the area. While the intention of the Frameworks had been to lever investment, the lack of costed projects had made them almost impossible to deliver. As there was insufficient evidence base within the document, additional research was now being commissioned in order to evidence and cost the projects that could regenerate the town centre.

Of the six core delivery objectives, only one had been completed, with two objectives (4 & 5) in progress but still requiring significant work. Objectives 1 and 2 required the Clowne Garden Village scheme to progress. Objective 6 was no longer viable.

Of the Stepping Stone projects, none had progressed. The officer noted that pedestrianisation of Mill Street had been trialled during the pandemic but local shop owners had not seen any benefits for the approach and were not keen for it to become a permanent arrangement. While work had taken place on highway improvements, any subsequent work by utility companies had not replicated the surfacing, which had not enabled the works to improve the aesthetics of the highway on Mill Street to have the intended success. It was also noted that the retail offer within Clowne required improvement to create a greater mix.

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In reference to the appendix outlining progress within the surrounding villages and hamlets, the officer noted the following:

- Barlborough – a number of improved walking links, but further work was required in support of objectives 1-3.
- Creswell – 3 out of 5 objectives were either delivered or in progress, with the Heritage and Wellbeing Centre nearly completed, improved tourism through links with the Community Rail Partnership and redevelopment of the Station Hotel.
- Whitwell – improvements around the station due to engagement with the Community Rail Partnership, renovation of the former Co-op building in to flats, and redevelopment of the colliery site expected which will provide housing and a country park area.

The officer noted that within the objectives of both the core town centre and the surrounding areas, there were a number rated red and amber, with successes more due to good fortune than good planning. The original document was completed back in 2015-17 and did not fit with current community aspirations. The aim of completing the community consultation at the time was to ensure partners were on board with regeneration. The suite of documents overall were potentially too ambitious and were very resource intensive to produce. It was important going forward that any new approach to regeneration planning was value for money.

The officer noted that there would be a working group for the Bolsover area, following the failed Levelling Up bid, so that a revised plan could be put in place ready for future funding announcements.

A Ward Member for Whitwell noted the redevelopment of the Co-op site with Action housing had proved very successful. The current partnership with the Robin Hood Line would enable the village to create a floral area at the side of the station, and it was hoped to install an old railway carriage to be used for refreshments. A key concern was signage at gateways to the village, and this was noted as an objective that hadn't progressed. It was particularly an issue at Bowler's Corner, and it was hoped to refurbish this area. The play areas had now been upgraded with Welbeck Street receiving approximately £250k which had created a brand new MUGA toddler area and space for older children, and also a dog park. The Parish Council had tried to deliver this via the District Council's BILD Programme, but this had not been possible. The work did however complement the aspirations in the Framework. Looking beyond the Framework, the Parish Council were engaged with the current Woodlands project and a new orchard was in development. They felt the Framework had at least given local impetus to endeavour to improve the area.

A Ward Member for Barlborough noted that the footpath running alongside the golf course at the edge of Clowne had now been unblocked, which was a huge improvement. They also noted that overall progress was disappointing and the Frameworks had not delivered as expected.

The officer acknowledged that the Frameworks hadn't had the expected impact and it was clear that officers welcomed recommendations from Committee on potential future activity. They noted that it was important that the Council was clear how it could support

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parishes and that there were clear mechanisms to signpost elsewhere when the Council could not assist. This would also enable the Council to prioritise future action more effectively.

A Ward Member for Whitwell noted that they were aware of the failed bid for Bolsover but understood there would likely be another funding stream to bid to. They noted that things had moved on fast as a result of the pandemic, and the Frameworks did not reflect current local ambitions. Areas not addressed in the Frameworks included carbon emissions, active travel, digital connectivity, parking/park & ride facilities, and this needed rectifying within any new plans formed.

The Officer noted it was vital that any future plans were clear about the type of development that would be accepted within town centre areas, in place of any vacant retail units, where the retail offer could not be replaced.

In reference to Clowne town centre, the Scrutiny & Elections Officer gave feedback on behalf of a Clowne Ward Member. Key issues currently were the revival of the market which had operated for a number of years previously. Furthermore, there was an appetite for shop front improvements, and further improvements to the Mill Street area, to improve the visual look of the centre similar to the Committee Members ideas for Shirebrook Market Place.

As the Framework for Clowne was not currently superseded by recent work as was the case in Bolsover and Shirebrook, the Director of Economic Development asked the Committee for their recommendations for a way forward. Following a brief discussion, Members agreed that initial conversations needed to take place with parish councils to establish local aspirations and ideas. Members agreed the existing framework should be used as starting point for discussions but would ultimately be replaced with a new development framework. This could then enable the creation of a larger working group, covering the whole of the Clowne Framework area, to develop a new integrated plan with representatives from each parish, alongside wider District Council plans in relation to economic development and housing development.

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Jen Wilson

RESOLVED that (1) the contents of the report be noted,

(2) using the existing Framework as a reference point, initial discussions with parish councils within the Framework area should be held,

(3) following parish level discussions, a working group for the whole Framework area be established, to develop a new strategic vision for the wider town centre area and surrounding villages and hamlets.

(Director of Economic Development, DDL/ Business Growth Manager/ Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

LOC49-22/23 DELIVERY OF DRAGONFLY AND BOLSOVER HOMES PROGRAMMES

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer advised Members of the work completed during the

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previous scrutiny review and the draft recommendations created. They also advised of committee reports considered by Executive and Council in the period since the previous review. They advised Members they would need to consider if any of the previous recommendations identified were still relevant and required either submission to Executive or consideration as part of the current development of governance arrangements for the new company.

A Member confirmed that they believed governance arrangements was dealt with within the new set up, and that it was clear that all projects and the Business Case developments would be presented to Members at Council. They felt that all governance and communication issues previously identified would be resolved with the new arrangements.

The CEO, DDL, noted that a portfolio of sites proposed for development via Dragonfly had been presented to Council prior to the creation of the wholly-owned company. These were also noted within the Business Case presented to Council. They noted that all required monitoring would be catered for within the new governance arrangements and these would be aligned to Council operations which would be more rigorous than the previous arrangements with Robert Woodhead Limited. They noted that the link with scrutiny was still to be determined but would be accommodated within final arrangements, and further work was to take place on the arrangements for the internal Board.

A Member noted that they felt the original recommendations, identified by scrutiny within the previous review, were now void due to the current situation. They were aware that the proposed Board would have 7 members and queried how these would be chosen. The CEO, DDL, confirmed that the company would have to satisfy usual company regulations in relation to the appointment of Board members. There would likely be 5 internal members made up of Dragonfly management/Council Members and 2 external members likely from within the industry. It would also be vital that anybody acting as an external member had no conflict of interest in relation to another company with the same remit as Dragonfly. They also thought it would be possible for any Councillor appointed to remain a Board Member for their specified term, even if they were no longer a Councillor to ensure stability in company Board membership. The CEO, DDL, noted that their previous experience, whilst as a joint officer supporting the JVC Boards at both authorities of the Alliance, had been mixed due a number of Board membership changes which had resulted in instability. They felt it was appropriate for Board members to serve for a 4 year period, as a minimum, to enable stability.

A Councillor noted that although Robert Woodhead Limited were no longer involved, the process should still be the same with all reports going direct through Council. The CEO, DDL, felt the move to a wholly-owned company would enable more prescription over how the company operated.

The Monitoring Officer noted that there was extensive work taking place to finalise proposals for the governance arrangements, including service level agreements, the shareholder agreement and Board arrangements. All of this was being completed in line with the Business Case submitted to Council.

A Member commented that time was of the essence to ensure the company was put in to place in a timely manner, to ensure there were no further delays to delivery. The CEO, DDL, noted that the Finance team, in particularly, were keen to ensure the company was

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ready to operate fully by the start of the new financial year. A meeting was due to take place with the consultants within the next few days.

A Member commented that it was key to ensure there was transparency in the process, with good communication links in place, both with the Council and externally with partners and the public. They commented on coverage within the local press following consideration by Council and noted that the article was not a true reflection of the situation or the decision made. The CEO, DDL, noted that reports would flow regularly to Council, and other committees as required, as they had done previously. The Director of Economic Development, DDL, noted that they were aware that some Councillors had raised concerns in the past. They reiterated that transparency was key and something that was non-negotiable as part of the creating of the company, with open communication channels paramount to delivering that.

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor David Dixon

RESOLVED that (1) Members were satisfied that the proposals in the Business Case and expected developments outlined to date would satisfy the required level of governance and oversight and that a role for scrutiny would be determined as part of the process,

(2) due to the cessation of the partnership with Robert Woodhead Limited and the change of Dragonfly Development Limited to a wholly-owned company, Members were satisfied that the new management, reporting and governance arrangements proposed would address the issues identified within the previous scrutiny review work, and that none of the recommendations were currently required,

(3) clear communication channels were required going forward to ensure that Members, staff and the public were aware of all developments and achievements of the company.

(CEO, DDL/Director of Economic Development, DDL/ Assistant Director and Monitoring Officer)

LOC50-22/23 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23.

It was agreed to clarify with the Vice-Chair in relation to one of the proposed items they had originally requested, to establish if the report was still required. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that the relevant Ward Councillors had been invited to the next meeting for the South Normanton report.

Moved by Councillor Janet Tait and seconded by Councillor David Dixon

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted, with proposed agenda items rescheduled where required.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

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The meeting concluded at 11:27 hours.