

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, 27 June 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Tom Kirkham in the Chair

Councillors Will Fletcher, Duncan Haywood, John Ritchie (Portfolio Holder for Growth) Phil Smith and Janet Tait.

Officers:- Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Ian Barber (Director of Property and Construction, Dragonfly Development Limited), Natalie Etches (Business Growth Manager, Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd.), Caroline Daghsh (Senior Economic Development Officer – Growth and Investment, Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd.), Therasa Garrod (Tourism & Place Manager, Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd.) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

Also in attendance observing were Councillors Anne Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health and Licensing, and Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing.

LOC1-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Deborah Watson.

LOC2-23/24 URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

LOC3-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

LOC4-23/24 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Janet Tait and seconded by Councillor Will Fletcher
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Local Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 13th March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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LOC5-23/24 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. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained the importance of Scrutiny involvement before reports were submitted to Executive and asked that any queries be directed to the listed officer or portfolio holder in the first instance. Should Members then feel that a more detailed examination of the proposed decision is required, Members must contact the Monitoring Officer and Scrutiny & Elections Officer so that a meeting of the relevant Scrutiny Committee can be held to enable pre-scrutiny of the decision. She also explained the process of Call-in subsequent to Executive decisions.

Moved by Councillor Tom Kirkham and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith

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

LOC6-23/24 LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – APPROVAL OF PROGRAMME

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2023/24. The Chair briefed Members on the programme explaining that it was a fluid document which could be added to and amended as required. The programme was considered as part of every meeting to allow Committee Members to adjust to emerging issues throughout the year.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that a decision still needed to be taken on the frequency of reports in relation to Dragonfly construction projects. Members agreed that these should feature on each meeting initially.

A Member queried how the findings from the recent Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks Review would be addressed in the coming year. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained that a report was due to be submitted to Executive in July and scrutiny would then monitor implementation of the recommendations over the coming 12 months. Normally this would be at six-month and 12-month intervals, but Members could look at a different frequency if they felt it was necessary. This could be decided once Committee received Executive's response. The Member noted that more frequent reports may prove valuable due to the monitoring required for areas where work had not progressed.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Will Fletcher

RESOLVED that (1) the Work Programme 2023/24 be noted,

(2) updates from Dragonfly Development Ltd. be added to each meeting, with a focus on construction delivery.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

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LOC7-23/24 UPDATE ON BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGY

The Business Growth Manager provided an update on the main Business Growth Strategy to Members.

This was the first briefing to the new committee and outlined the priorities for the Development Directorate for 2019-23. When considering the six priorities, the following was noted:

- Building Back Better – this strand was focussed on nature recovery, sustainable transport, and carbon reduction.
- Enabling Housing Growth – this was being delivered via Dragonfly and included Council housing via Bolsover Homes and construction of commercial sales properties via Dragonfly Development Ltd.
- Increasing Revenue Streams – This included projects such as the development of the Crematorium, Dragonfly Development Ltd., and local growth plans for Shirebrook and Creswell.
- Making the Best Use of our Assets – a key deliverable under this strand had been the review of Council garage sites. Over £1m had been secured via disposal or redevelopment and teams were now assessing other assets to go through a similar review process. A dedicated officer had now been appointed to assess proposals for development of the Pleasley Vale site. This would involve complex consideration of listed buildings, the conservation area, and a variety of stakeholders including Mansfield DC and Nottinghamshire CC.
- Promoting the District and Increasing Tourism – the new Tourism and Place Manager had now started in her role, and it was hoped to move this area forward swiftly due to her past experience working for the Council on tourism.
- Working with Partners – the team were now able to move forward with this area of work because of the UKSPF monies allocated by the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team for business support and development. This commenced in April. The team were also working with partners from One Public Estate (OPE) as part of a countywide exercise looking at the future scope for publicly owned buildings within Bolsover town centre. The team hoped it could lead to the Council being able to access additional funds.

The Business Growth Manager also noted that following the recent District Council election, it would be appropriate to review the Strategy and Action Plan as it came to the end of its lifecycle to ensure that new Members priorities were being addressed.

A Member queried the four areas of delivery under the Working with Partners strand. The officer directed Members to the action plan appendices for further detail - the four areas were Business Support, Business Engagement, Social Value Index, and OPE.

A Member queried who was part of the OPE team. The officer noted that this was a national team. As a result of the unsuccessful LUF bid the area had been identified as having public buildings and land which could benefit from redevelopment. By taking part in the current consultation exercise this would put the area in a strong position when future funding was announced.

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A Member questioned why Dragonfly had no clear target dates assigned within the Enabling Housing Growth action plan. The officer noted that these could be included in future updates once they had been decided.

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that service level agreements between the Council and Dragonfly were currently in production including specification of services, all KPIs and targets, with a target date of completion by the end of August to then enable approval by Executive in September.

A Member noted that when looking at industry development within the District, there seemed to be limited focus on promoting the opportunities in the immediate vicinity of M1 junction 28. The officer noted that there was no availability of land for start-ups within that part of the District, however, the Development team were aware of opportunities across the border within both Mansfield and Ashfield. The Council hoped to instead use revenue budget to create a support package offer for all businesses within that part of the District to include business support, engagement, cost of living support, and streamlining of processes. The Council would like to create a stronger online presence to engage with businesses and this would benefit from further support from Members. The Development team had seen a significant increase in business engagement because of the pandemic and were trying to maintain the links created.

A Member suggested using a business-to-business scheme to encourage greater networking and development of support networks.

A Member asked for clarification on how the £1.9m UKSPF monies was distributed across the four strands outlined in the Working with Partners action plan. The Senior Economic Development Officer (Growth & Investment) advised that the funding allocated to the Development team was split as follows:

Tourism and Culture	£78,000
Business Growth Grants Scheme	£228,212
Net Zero Hyper Local Innovation programme	£300,000
Small Business Support Scheme	£95,000
Visitor Economy Business Support	£88,000

The Business Growth Manager reminded Members that the £1.9m was being managed by the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team with only a portion being delivered by the Development team. The other monies allocated were being directed towards youth engagement work and diversionary activities amongst other projects. Furthermore, the monies allocated for redevelopment of Oxcroft House could now be reallocated due to the site being let.

A Member was aware of resident concerns in relation to future development at Pleasley Vale, particularly in relation to potential conversion of buildings or development of flats. They were aware that this was not the only option available and asked for greater clarity within the service level agreement with Dragonfly Management so that the objectives and targets in relation to the site were clear to all. The Business Growth Manager noted that consultation would take place with both residents and tenants. Specific work on flood modelling had also been commissioned to establish the full-scale of potential development. The team was benefiting from the Pleasley Vale officer's planning knowledge to ensure that development proposals identified were sustainable in the long-term for both the Authority and the community.

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Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Janet Tait
RESOLVED that the report and feedback on progress be noted.

(Business Growth Manager, Dragonfly Management
(Bolsover) Ltd.)

LOC8-23/24 REPORT ON THE LEVELLING UP FUND - ROUND 2 APPLICATION

The Business Growth Manager briefed Members on the outcome of the recent bid. In May 2022, the Government announced a second call for the allocation of the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund (LUF), investing capital funds into places in need of economic recovery and growth, regeneration, and improved transport connectivity. Investment was targeted against the three themes of Regeneration and town centre, Cultural, and Transport.

As part of the development of LUF, the Index of Priority Places was formulated, ranking lower-tier and unitary authorities based on a combination of metrics, and then used this ranking to award 'priority status' to those areas in Category 1, awarding a capacity fund of £125,000 to all Category 1 places to support the development of their bid submission/s. Bolsover received Category 2 status, so no capacity fund was available for the development of its bid.

The Fund focussed on investment in projects which required less than £20m of funding, and it encouraged bids to include a local financial contribution of at least 10% of total costs. Private sector partners were encouraged to contribute if they stood to benefit from an intervention.

The total amount of grant fund requested from LUF was £14,218,305 with a match funding contribution of £1,242,595 – 8% of the total project costs. It sought 45% of the funding from the Regeneration and Town Centre strand, and then the remaining 55% from the Cultural strand.

The application focussed its delivery around three main project areas, as set out below and also shown in Appendix 1 – Bolsover Town Proposals:

- Purchase, demolition, and redevelopment of the former Co-Operative Foodstore to provide a cultural hub including a cinema; theatre; gallery and exhibition space; food and drinks court; indoor market area. This would have linked through to the redevelopment of Oxcroft House for the cultural industries to base as a business hub.
- Townscape improvements, including a shop front improvement scheme and a comprehensive public realm improvement scheme for the public areas across the town.
- Connectivity through investment in digital connectivity, Internet-of-Things (IOT) and technology to support the visitor experience including parking apps and augmented reality experiences.

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The Council received significant support for the development of a cultural hub from English Heritage, National Trust, and Welbeck Estates amongst others, who were keen to ensure the town had a local venue to display artifacts currently located in London and elsewhere.

Feedback on the bid acknowledged that the gap in match funding, 8% rather than 10%, had been a factor in failure of the bid. The Council were not able to commit any financial resource to the application and was only in a position to contribute its UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) allocation, land and buildings, and match funding from Old Bolsover Town Council. While DLUHC encouraged bids to include a local financial contribution of at least 10% of total costs, this could not be met.

Officers also noted that due to the area not qualifying for capacity funding, the bid was not as detailed as other areas, and this had also limited the resource available for local consultation. This was highlighted in the feedback:

“There were other risks where it would have been helpful to have seen more work completed to demonstrate that the programme was truly deliverable. Such works could have included more advanced designs, a plan for purchasing the shop, pre-application advice - especially important given the potential impact on the conservation area, more detailed costs, support from shop owners, and the preparation of a business plan for project 1. Without these, there was little confidence in the deliverability of the project within the time allowed for the LUF programme.”

The Business Growth Manager noted that a workshop was due to take place on 29th June, to look at the creation of a local evidence base for a Round 3 bid. The High Streets Task Force (HSTF) had committed resource to supporting the District Council through the Understanding Your Place Potential. The HSTF last visited Bolsover on 16th March 2023 to undertake an *Unlocking Your Place Potential* diagnostic visit that identified ‘Repositioning’ as our greatest challenge, meaning there was a need to use data and evidence to understand the challenges and identify the priority solutions.

Visit Bolsover was still engaging with local traders and the Council was able to link into this network to both consult and relay key messages/information.

A Member noted that they had only heard positive feedback about the work completed by the team on the bid. They noted that the feedback from DLUHC identified that the Council had not clearly evidenced their commitment to the bid, with minutes of Executive not showing any discussion of the bid prior to submission. They questioned how the Council would ensure there was evidence of clear political support moving forward. As DLUHC had identified this as a weakness it needed to be addressed in a future bid. Another Member agreed that this could only add value to future bids.

The officer noted that there would be more time to develop the Round 3 bid and therefore greater capacity to ensure it featured on the committee programme with regular reports to Executive/Council on development of the scheme. Any Round 3 bid would look notably different as Oxcroft House was under offer and a number of the vacant buildings identified for inclusion in the bid were now off the market.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth noted that Category 1 areas had received £125,000 in capacity funding and queried what difference this had made to production of the bid submissions. The officer acknowledged that it would have made a huge difference. It

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would have enabled a third-party check on the bid and could have enabled the team to develop the proposals in much greater detail. This could have included planning applications, building purchases, detailed development plans – as produced by other successful areas. The criteria used to define Category 1 and Category 2 areas was extensive and the government did review this for the Round 2 bids, however, there were some parts of the District that show up as less deprived which skewed the overall deprivation rating for Bolsover.

A Member noted that the bid had only linked to the themes of Regeneration and town centre and Cultural, with no focus on Transport. They queried this decision given the transport issues the area faced. The officer noted that DCC had also been engaged throughout and they had bid in relation to the Transport theme.

A Member questioned what the High Streets Task Force (HSTF) was. The officer noted that they had been in operation since 2016 with a focus on improving high streets across the country. As a national body they offered mentorship and support materials, and support to bid production such as LUF.

A Member questioned whether support for production of the bid had come from Dragonfly as this was not clear in the report. The officer confirmed there had been no support from Dragonfly at the time the bid was produced. The work was completed by six members of the Development team working full time and it would be impossible to quantify the full cost to the Council of producing the bid in-house.

A Member noted that based on the feedback it was clear that the 10% match funding had been 'expected' rather than something that was 'encouraged' and asked how the Council could generate more match funding for a Round 3 bid, should DLUHC state an expected amount. The officer noted that the Council would have more time to develop a Round 3 bid which would allow time to secure additional match funding if required. This could be because of additional commercial development in advance of submitting the bid.

A Member queried what support there had been from the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team as part of the bid and in particular if they had helped with engagement work. The officer confirmed that all the engagement work completed had been delivered by the Development team and the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team had engaged as a consultee like other stakeholders.

A Member noted that the Council had only contributed £14,000 to the overall project that was costed at just over £15m and queried whether a decision for the Council to contribute more should have been considered. The officer noted that due to time constraints when completing the bid, it had not been possible to secure confirmation of additional funds. They acknowledged this was a weakness and had the Council been in a position to obtain the vacant buildings identified this would have provided a much higher match figure and enabled more detailed plans to be progressed. Without ownership of the full site identified the bid required the LUF monies to progress further.

The Chair suggested that an additional recommendation to those contained in the report – that an internal group be formed to monitor funding streams and ensure the Council was best placed to act quickly as they arose. Members agreed that the group should include Executive Members, Scrutiny Members, Development team and Leader's Executive & Partnerships team and possibly external partners too.

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The Business Growth Manager noted that moving forward Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd. would lead on formulating funding applications for all economic funding with the Leader's Executive and Partnerships Team supporting community led funding. Funding streams currently being delivered in the area would feature as part of Business Growth Strategy updates going forward.

Moved by Councillor Will Fletcher and seconded by Councillor Janet Tait

RESOLVED that (1) the feedback from DLUHC be noted,

(2) Executive consider the allocation of additional financial resource to support future calls for grant funding both for Levelling Up Fund and other calls for funding to ensure the maximum investment for the District can be captured.

Moved by Councillor Tom Kirkham and seconded by Councillor Will Fletcher

RESOLVED that (3) the creation of an internal group including representatives from Scrutiny, Leader's Executive and Partnership Team, Executive and Dragonfly to identify, action, and jointly write bids for future opportunities available via national and regional funding streams be recommended to Executive.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer /
Business Growth Manager, Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd./
Executive))

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 11:25 hours and Members then met as a working party to discuss potential review work. The working party concluded at 12:13 hours.