

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, 25th June 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Tom Munro in the Chair

Councillors Tom Kirkham, Will Fletcher, Duncan Haywood and Jeanne Raspin.

Officers:- Jim Fieldsend (Director of Governance and Legal Services & Monitoring Officer), Natalie Etches (Business Growth Manager, Dragonfly Development Ltd.), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer) .

LOC1-24/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absences received.

LOC2-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

LOC3-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

LOC4-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Will Fletcher and seconded by Councillor Tom Kirkham

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Local Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 29th April 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

LOC5-24/25 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Monitoring Officer explained that a number of the items included on the Key Decisions and Items to be Considered listed had already been considered at a meeting of the Executive the previous day.

After a question on the Roseland Park and Crematorium, the Business Growth Manager confirmed updates would be provided at future Committee meetings. The Chair stated the changes made had been confirmed at a previous Planning Committee meeting and that the process for the Crematorium would now accelerate.

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Moved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin and seconded by Councillor Duncan Haywood
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in the private document be noted.

LOC6-24/25 DISPOSAL AND ACQUISITION POLICY

The report on the proposed changes to the Council's Disposals and Acquisitions Policy (the "Policy") was presented to the Committee. The report explained that the Policy set out the processes that would be followed when the Council intended to either sell or purchase property, whether that be land or buildings. It also included the method for the granting of a lease for a period of more than 7 years.

The Committee was required to consider the proposed changes to the Policy and provide comment prior to submission to Executive for approval.

The Chair explained text had been changed and updated to reflect administrative changes nationally (e.g., the removal of EU Procurement Rules) and locally (e.g., new sections added).

A Member noted that included in the Policy was that Dragonfly Development Ltd. was part of the Asset Management Group (AMG) and asked what was their role in this Council interest focussed Group. The Monitoring Officer explained the AMG was an internal advisory Group consisting of Officers and Members, with no decision-making powers. The Member sought clarity if the recommendations the Group made included the purchasing of construction equipment. The Monitoring Officer reiterated the Group dealt with land and buildings only, with the Dragonfly Development Ltd. Officers only providing AMG with knowledge and recommendations from a Council point of view. The Business Growth Manager added that the Commercial Property Team, on behalf of the Council, managed assets and were able to provide information. The Monitoring Officer reiterated that the AMG was not a decision-making body, with all asset decisions being made by either a relevant Officer with delegated powers or by the Executive.

The Monitoring Officer noted that Annex 1 of the proposed Policy, the Disposal General Flowchart, still needed amending to reflect the changes to the Policy.

A Member asked, when recommendations were made in consultation with Dragonfly Development Ltd., did that mean the Leader of the Council would have a conflict of interest to declare. The Monitoring Officer stated that the Leader of the Council would have to withdraw if a decision being made by the Executive had a direct impact on Dragonfly Development Ltd., using the example of the sale of assets on Cotton Street, Bolsover by the Executive (the AMG had recommended a sale of these properties by auction with no impact on Dragonfly Development Ltd.). A declaration of interest would only be needed if the land and/or buildings being sold was purchased by Dragonfly Development Ltd..

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Will Fletcher
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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LOC7-24/25 PLEASLEY VALE REGENERATION PROGRAMME - VERBAL UPDATE

The Business Growth Manager provided a verbal update on the Pleasley Vale Business Park regeneration project.

Little progress had been made since the written report provided to the Committee at the last meeting, though of note were the following:

- There was a recruitment process following a member of staff moving to the Planning Team;
- Discussions around the options appraisal for the Gate House lodgers were taking place;
- The Council was working with West Notts. College to identify opportunities to work with their students on a real-life project;
- Beaumont Rivers were mobilising works on site with ground clearance along the river course (equipment was being delivered on the day of the Committee). The Business Growth Manager would continue to update the Committee on this vital work moving forward.
- The works to repair the damage caused by Storm Babet in October 2023 continued to take place. This was a lengthy process with the Council working with the insurers, the loss adjusters, the contractors, etc., though the water levels remained significantly high (required investigations had not been able to take place).

The Business Growth Manager noted that Pleasley Vale Business Park was operational, and tenants continued to operate on site; certain surveys could only take place once the water levels had dropped to a safe level.

A Member asked about the Skill Centre agreed several months previously. The Business Growth Manager explained the works of the Council as the landlord of the site were nearly complete. Once these works were completed the lease would be formalised and the tenant would take up occupation on site and carry out their own works; an anticipated opening of the Skill Centre was expected in September 2024.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

LOC8-24/25 BOLSOVER DISTRICT REGENERATION FUND UPDATE

The Business Growth Manager presented the report to update Members on the activities of the £15 million Regeneration Fund project awarded to the Council in the 2023 Autumn Statement; the fund was for "Place" based regeneration within the District.

The report stated that Henham Strategy had been appointed December 2023 to work alongside the Economic Development Team to identify and appraise appropriate options around the utilisation of the regeneration funding. Working alongside the Executive and acting on previous Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) feedback on the District's Levelling Up Fund round 2 feedback, Henham Strategy had implemented a methodical approach to appraising potential options based on their insight into the bid development process.

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Following this work, an Investment Plan had been submitted to DLUHC on 29th March 2024, setting out the proposals for how the Fund would be directed to best meet the strategic priorities for regeneration of the Place across the District.

The projects proposed had been considered based on their alignment and ability to deliver the strategic priorities within the provided timescale of the Fund (delivery up to 31st March 2026). The projects would directly deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits to the District's residents, businesses, and visitors.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the 8 projects proposed, the financial allocation of each project, and the upcoming key milestones.

The Chair asked, with the UK General Election taking place in July 2024, was this capital secured irrespective of the result. The Business Growth Manager explained that the Council was still waiting for a signed investment plan from DLUHC.

A Member noted the report detailed the stakeholder engagement. Mark Fletcher MP for Bolsover had publicly stated he had not been engaged with this, and neither had the Committee in its scrutiny role. The Member asked who had been engaged in drawing up the proposals. The Business Growth Manager reiterated from the previous Committee meeting that a Working Group of the Executive had been convened to carry out the consultation due to the limited timescale available of the Regeneration Fund; all projects had to be completed before the 31st March 2026 deadline.

A Member of the Committee asked if there were any learnings from the process so far, in particular with regards to improving the engagement in drawing up proposals in future. The Business Growth Manager reiterated the very tight timescales that had been involved, which had been:

- The announcement was made in October 2023;
- The details from DLUHC had been released on 16th January 2024;
- The Council had received the application form in February 2024;
- A response was required with the Council's information within a few working days;
- No response from DLUHC was received until more information was then requested, again within a few working days.

The Member clarified there had been no questioning by the Committee of the work the Team had completed and that in future, opportunities should be sought for the Committee to scrutinise the work even within the tight timescales.

In response to a question on Project 1 of the attached Appendix, the Business Growth Manager explained the Place led programme was a piece of work the Tourist and Place Manager was leading on; this was a District wide Place promotion initiative while the Bolsover loop was a 28 mile (to be confirmed) route around the District (a multiuser network of trails). The Bolsover Team would be promoting this loop by delivering signage and wayfinding across the District. For Bolsover Town, it was about creating connections with the proposed new Sixth Form, the new housing developments, and the proposed creative hub. The sustainable transport plan was a piece of work looking to encourage residents to use the trail and the networks rather than driving their vehicle into Bolsover Town, exacerbating air pollution and current parking issues.

The Business Growth Manager admitted one of the reasons Members may have felt a

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lack of clarity on projects present was due to the 150 word limit on each project to explain how the Council would spend the £15 million; this had been a challenge for the Council when applying for this funding.

A Member asked about the Green Skills Centres; there would be one at Pleasley Vale Business Park and another in Shirebrook, but why was this second site chosen when there was a potential to allocate it with the first to boost that area. The Business Growth Manager stated these were complimentary sites led by the same officer; they would not be competing. The equipment and intentions of the second initiative would also not be serviceable at Pleasley Vale Business Park, hence the intention to use Shirebrook.

A Member of the Committee asked a question regarding the rationale behind the Shirebrook Pavilion and the project in Pinxton. The Business Growth Manager stated that the decision regarding the scheme had been taken by Executive. The deliverability of schemes was affected by the time constraints of projects before the 31st March 2026 deadline; any projects outside this timeframe could not be completed before then and so could not be progressed (e.g., Blackwell Community Centre had been withdrawn due to this limited timescale). All current projects listed in the attached Appendix were ready to go pending the memorandum of understanding be provided by DLUHC.

The Committee discussed the Regeneration Fund proposals and concern was expressed regarding how the final projects had been chosen. It was suggested that Members of the Executive be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to answer questions and provide information on how the projects had been selected.

Moved by Councillor Will Fletcher and seconded by Councillor Tom Kirkham
RESOLVED that: (1) the report be noted; and,

(2) an invitation be extended to Members of the Executive to attend the next Committee meeting to provide information on the rationale behind the choices of the Regeneration Fund projects.

LOC9-24/25 DRAGONFLY DEVELOPMENT LIMITED DELIVERY UPDATE

The Committee considered the Dragonfly Development Limited delivery update report. The report provided an update regarding both live and pipeline projects.

The Chair noted the Roseland Crematorium was listed, but as mentioned earlier in the meeting this had already progressed through Planning Committee with an increased number of windows and additional design features present (some external cladding had been replaced as the original had proven unworkable).

A Member noted the Shareholder Board monitored Dragonfly Development Ltd.. At the previous Committee meeting, there had been no evidence of performance review monitoring in the Shareholder Board minutes provided. There was also no minutes or report supplied to this Committee meeting; was there no Shareholder Board meeting between the date of the last Committee meeting and this one. The Monitoring Officer explained the next Shareholder board meeting would be taking place at the start of July 2024. An update from the Shareholder Board would be supplied to the next Committee meeting in September 2024. A Member asked if this could be inserted into the

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Committee's Work Programme.

A Member asked about the current budget of the Roseland Crematorium. The Business Growth Manager explained the £7.4 million related to the construction cost, not the total project cost, and that value engineering was taking place. It was still predicted that there would be profit in year 1.

The Member asked, with regards to the review of the business case, could this information be shared with the Council to monitor progress and the viability of the sites. The Business Growth Manager explained it would be included in a report submitted to the Executive once all information was available.

The Chair noted that following the Executive meeting, the business case report could be available for the next Committee meeting to provide Members reassurance the project was on target and progressing as expected. The Monitoring Officer added this would be a Key Decision and therefore, Members would have the opportunity to scrutinise it.

A Member felt it remained inappropriate to leave it to either a full Council meeting or to call for an extraordinary meeting of the Committee when the mechanism to monitor Dragonfly Development Ltd. was the Shareholder Board; the Member felt the membership of the Shareholder Board should reflect the Council and not be made up of the Executive. It was asked this be noted in the minutes.

The Chair stated there was one Scrutiny Committee Member now on the Shareholder Board. The Member noted that this Scrutiny Member was also a Junior Executive Member.

In answer to a question the Business Growth Manager confirmed that the figures in the pipe line projects list referred to millions.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Will Fletcher
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Business Growth Manager left the meeting at 11:02 hours.

LOC10-24/25 AGREEMENT OF WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Chair began that, from previous discussions earlier in the meeting, Dragonfly Development Ltd. Shareholder Board updates would be added to the Work Programme 2024/25 and an invitation would be extended for a Member of the Executive to provide clarity on the choices made with regards the allocation of funding from the DLUHC Regeneration Fund to the Committee at the next meeting.

On a question of the Shareholder Board meetings, the Monitoring Officer confirmed it would be useful for updates to be included at every Committee meeting when available.

The Work Programme, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, was also a fluid document and the programme would be subject to change if additional reports/presentations were required, or if items needed to be re-arranged for alternative dates.

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Topics suggested by Members were included as Appendix 2, with a further suggestion, “Enterprise/industrial zones within Bolsover District – to review their current state of readiness for:

- Potential new business opportunities, in particular green energy based and other business opportunities;
- The potential disappearance of significant current active businesses within the enterprise/industrial zones.”

With Sports Direct actively working towards leaving the District, and a new Mayor in position for the East Midlands Combined County Authority, it was important to explore and promote business opportunities in the area, including the green transition and apprenticeships.

A Member agreed with the submitted suggestion, stating a third bullet point be added; “Innovative start-ups” – instead of inviting established businesses into the District, which has been done previously, focus on new businesses already local. The Scrutiny Officer stated the bullet points listed could be listed as objectives and provide a scope for the Committee’s work.

For a question on how the public could be engaged with the suggested topic, the Scrutiny Officer stated a citizens’ survey could take place and managed by the Improvement Officer. The Committee also agreed Unions and leading business figures should be invited to the Committee to provide their respective views.

For suggestion 2.1 of the attached Appendix 2, for a “Review of the Council’s approach to bid writing for external funding”, this was intended for when there was external funding available so the Council would be in the strongest position to bid successfully. Members agreed this information be shared with Parish Council to help them identify available funding.

The Committee agreed that a review of the Council’s approach to bid writing for external funding be part of the Work Programme for September-November 2024, as it was expected to be a short project, then the enterprise and industrial zones be started after this.

RESOLVED that: (1) the report be noted;

(2) a review of the Council’s approach to bid writing for external funding take place between September and November 2024; and,

(3) a review of enterprise and industrial zones begin once the review at (2) above had been completed.

The meeting concluded at 11:23 hours.