

GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth Scrutiny Committee of Bolsover District Council held as a Virtual Meeting on Monday 15th March 2021 at 13:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors Jim Clifton, Tricia Clough (Vice-Chair), David Dixon, Tom Kirkham, Tom Munro and Peter Roberts.

Officers:- Grant Galloway (Director of Development), Chris Fridlington (Assistant Director of Development and Planning) (left at the start of Minute No. GRO57-20/21), Natalie Etches (Business Growth Manager), Jo Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer), Nicola Calver (Governance Manager) and Tom Scott (Governance Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillor Nick Clarke (Portfolio Holder - Carbon Reduction Efficiencies), Councillor Mary Dooley (Portfolio Holder - Partnerships and Leisure) (left at the start of Minute No. GRO57-20/21), Councillor Clive Moesby (Portfolio Holder - Finance and Community Safety) and Councillor Liz Smyth (Portfolio Holder - Economic Development).

GRO51-20/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chris Kane.

GRO52-20/21 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Chair had no urgent items of business.

GRO53-20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

GRO54-20/21 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor David Dixon.

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of a Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 17th February 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

GRO55-20/21 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer presented the list of Key Decisions to Members.

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Councillor Tom Kirkham asked why a decision regarding Community Right to Bid appeared to have been taken and then published months afterwards. The Scrutiny and Elections Officer advised she would investigate if this happened and any reasons behind it.

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

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

GRO56-20/21 BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGY (FINAL DRAFT)

The Assistant Director of Development and Planning presented the Business Growth Strategy report to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek adoption of the attached final draft of the Business Growth Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

Councillor Mary Dooley referred to the part of the Strategy titled 'Pinxton Station and Maid Marion Line' (the potential for re-opening the line) and stated that because Ashfield District Council had recently received £30,000 to reinstate one of their own lines, she was concerned Bolsover District Council would fall behind. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning assured her that since the draft Strategy was written, the Council had joined a Partnership with Ashfield District Council and both authorities would have a meeting to discuss rail lines in April 2021.

Councillor Tom Kirkham referred to the recent announcement of the East Midlands Freeport being accepted by the Government, and asked if Planning officers had undertaken any discussions about how Bolsover District could link to it. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning informed him that it was very early in the process because of the announcement being so recent, but officers would detail an approach towards it once the details became clear.

Councillor Tricia Clough asked if targets in the Local Plan on housing growth were being met, and what the plans were for housing supply on Clowne Garden Village. She also asked if there were any areas that had refused the electric charging points. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning responded that the housing numbers being delivered were well above the housing targets set by the Government, and housing delivery at Clowne Garden Village as part of the current Local Plan would be in approximately 6 or 7 years. He added that none of the areas had refused charging points, but some of the sites did not prove to be suitable.

Councillor Tricia Clough asked if the project at Clowne Garden Village had stalled. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that it had stalled, and would have to be referred back to Planning Committee.

Councillor Peter Roberts referred to paragraph 1.5 of the Strategy ('Optimise business growth as measured by gross Business Rates by £2m by March 2023') and asked if this would lead to business rates being increased. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning assured him that this was just a measure as

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part of the Corporate targets, and the thinking behind it was more to increase the number of commercial properties rather than increase business rates. Councillor Peter Roberts asked what was being done to attract new businesses to use the commercial properties, and the Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that the Action Plan attached to the Strategy included ambitions for the Council to buy land and build its own commercial properties. He added that Planning officers frequently marketed sites to businesses that could potentially use them.

Councillor Peter Roberts referred to 'Institute of Technology' in the Strategy and asked if there were any existing buildings the Council could use to create an Institute of Technology. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that the possibility would be investigated, but the size of any building would need to meet the type of institute being created, and businesses often required their training facilities to be located close to the businesses themselves.

Councillor Jim Clifton referred to the same paragraph mentioned earlier about business rates ('Optimise business growth as measured by gross Business Rates by £2m by March 2023') and was concerned that with the Government looking to change business rates, the Council should be more careful in setting this target. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that as this was a Corporate target, this was something all Members could look to amend if the Government's position changed. The Business Growth Manager added that the target was a way of setting a measure for building business units, but officers would recognise that owners of smaller businesses would also need support.

Councillor David Dixon hoped that the business growth in the Strategy would look to increase skill levels in the District by linking with existing education institutes. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that the preparation work for the aforementioned Institute of Technology was being done in Partnership with Nottingham Trent University, Vision West Notts and Nottingham College. He added that the Strategy also mentioned Partnership working with the Kick Start scheme, and Councillor Mary Dooley added that Sheffield Hallam University were carrying out a skills audit in Bolsover District.

Councillor Tom Munro asked if there was any possibility of factories that developed hydrogen fuel cells and batteries being located within the District. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that the LEP had earmarked the area near Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station for renewable energy regeneration.

Councillor Peter Roberts asked if using empty buildings and increasing overnight stays in the District were priorities. The Assistant Director of Development and Planning explained that there was a part of the Strategy about increasing overnight stays, and the Action Plan included looking at vacant properties.

The three recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor David Dixon.

RESOLVED that:

(i) the Business Growth Strategy and associated Action Plan are adopted by the Council;

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(ii) officers are granted delegated authority to amend the final appearance and layout for the Business Growth Strategy in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development prior to publication; and

(iii) officers are authorised to make amendments to the Strategy and Action Plan in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development as appropriate or required.

(Assistant Director of Development and Planning)

GRO57-20/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

(N.B. Councillor Mary Dooley and the Assistant Director of Development and Planning left the meeting at this point.)

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer presented the Committee's Work Programme 2020/21.

Councillor Tricia Clough asked if there could be an amendment to the Growth Committee meeting times that would appear on the Work Programme for 2021/2022. The Governance Manager explained that the meeting calendar for 2021/2022 was agreed at Council on 3rd March 2021.

Councillor Tom Kirkham suggested a Scrutiny review of green growth for the Committee to undertake in 2021/2022. The Scrutiny and Elections Officer advised that she would send him the Scrutiny topic suggestion form to allow him to provide more detail.

It was moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor David Dixon to note the Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the Work Programme.

(Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

The meeting concluded at 1410 hours.