

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 6th December 2022 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors Derek Adams, Tracey Cannon, David Dixon, Tom Kirkham and Janet Tait.

Officers: Natalie Etches (Business Growth Manager) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

LOC33-22/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jim Clifton and Liz Smyth.

LOC34-22/23 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

LOC35-22/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

LOC36-22/23 MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 4TH OCTOBER 2022

An error had been found in the version of the Minutes produced in the agenda and a revised version was circulated to Members at the meeting. A full copy of the exempt minute was also circulated to Members for their records.

Moved by Councillor Tom Kirkham and seconded by Councillor David Dixon.

RESOLVED that the circulated revised version of the Minutes of a Local Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 4th October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

LOC37-22/23 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 Tom Kirkham and seconded by Councillor David Dixon.

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

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

LOC38-22/23

BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGY - MONITORING UPDATE (INTERIM) 2022/23

The Business Growth Manager provided a verbal update to Members on current progress against the Business Growth Strategy.

Key points of discussion included:

- Crematorium Development – planning permission had been granted with specific conditions attached. The detailed designs were being developed to go out to pricing. The aim was to complete the build via Dragonfly following the changes to the company as this would give the Council more control over the development. It was hoped to achieve BREEAM status for the building which would be crucial for long-term sustainability of the building. If the next stages went to plan, it was hoped to be on site by June/July 2023.

A Member queried whether the use of Dragonfly as contractor was under full scrutiny and if an open book process was being used. The Business Growth Manager explained that using this approach would give the Council far more control over costs and quality than if a wider procurement process was used. All procurement standards would be met and the scheme would comply with the Construction Playbook.

- Garage Sites – the review of garage sites was complete and all sites identified for disposal had been sold. Sites identified as no longer suitable for use due to condition or not viable as a site, had been demolished to make way for redevelopment as green/open space. A small number of viable sites remained in use. The programme had brought in approximately £2m capital to the HRA.
- Pleasley Vale – a dedicated officer was now in post on a temporary contract for three years. Options for development work were being drawn up and there would be consultation with existing tenants in the New Year.
- Portland Drive – a flood risk assessment was due to be completed as a result of the culvert on the site. The current proposal was to erect 14 units with parking based on the size of the site and planning permission was due to be considered before Christmas.
- Business support/engagement – a programme would hopefully be delivered as a result of UKSPF monies which had just been approved by the government. The programme would involve business grants, tourism support, a net zero support programme and development of Oxcroft House. The UKSPF monies had been used as match-funding to support the Levelling Up bid to redevelop Oxcroft House into a cultural/creative hub. The delivery plans for the UKSPF monies had finally been approved on 5th December 2022.
- Oxcroft House – the Council had been approached with a potential letting option for the site. While this was unexpected, work was progressing with the prospective tenant to secure a lease. This would not impact the ability to create a cultural/creative hub through the Levelling Up monies as alternative sites had been identified. If the lease option did not progress, then the hub would be based at Oxcroft House as planned.

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- Horizon 29 – a non-disclosure agreement was currently in place for one of the proposed tenants. One confirmed tenant was Wollesley Group, which would generate at least 20 new jobs related to warehouse distribution.
- Business Engagement Strategy – officers were currently working on a strategy to help businesses move forward within the District. Support had been received from the LGA (£14k) and Grant Thornton were also providing support as part of its development. The aim was to bring the Strategy to a future meeting of the Committee.

A Member queried if there was a known timetable in relation to the Levelling Up Fund and when an outcome would be received. The Business Growth Manager advised that the current guidance was 'before Christmas'. Officers were also considering proposals that could go forward for round 3 of funding once this was confirmed.

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor Tracey Cannon.
RESOLVED that the verbal report be noted.

(Assistant Director of Development & Planning/
Business Growth Manager)

LOC39-22/23

UPDATE ON SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND LEVELLING UP FUND

The Business Growth Manager provided a verbal report to Members on current progress against the funding bids submitted.

As noted by the officer in discussion of the previous item, the Council's allocation from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had now been formally signed off and work could progress on the action plans.

Officers were still waiting to receive confirmation in relation to the Levelling Up Fund bid submitted for Bolsover town. If the bid was successful, it would likely require an urgent report to Executive for approval so work could progress in accordance with the funding criteria.

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor Tracey Cannon.
RESOLVED that the verbal report be noted.

(Assistant Director of Development & Planning/
Business Growth Manager)

LOC40-22/23

REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION FRAMEWORK - SHIREBROOK

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained the various documents that had been presented to Members as part of the review, including a supplementary report covering the villages and hamlets in the Shirebrook area.

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Business Growth Manager presented a review of Shirebrook Town Centre 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 at the previous meeting, officers had produced a scorecard which analysed progress against the various elements of the Framework. On reflection, the Framework document had not guided development and 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 seven core delivery objectives, two had been completed, largely as a result of the Building Resilience programme. A further objective; 'Remodel of the Market Place', was ongoing. This had been supported by local crowd funding for a Miner's Memorial statue and officers were awaiting the outcome of a bid to the Cultural Development Fund.

In relation to the third objective listed in the Framework, 24 bungalows were scheduled to be erected on the Ashbourne Street/Portland Road site. Ashbourne Court was also under redevelopment and would be extended creating further independent living provision.

In relation to objective 7; 'Pleasley Vale Loop', a lot of work had taken place on trails development with the Tourism Officer and the Countryside Officer from Leisure Services.

The Stepping Stone projects, highlighted to Members, were largely beyond the Council's control and required action by the Town Council to progress them.

The Business Rates Retention Programme was helping to deliver Shop Front Improvements. There had been low take-up to date but money was still available for local businesses. The Programme offered up to 80% of the improvement costs to encourage greater up-take and support was also being provided with building contractors.

The work on additional greenways, within and out of the town centre, had come to a halt as all previously identified routes had proved non-deliverable.

Following the initial updates Members discussed the information presented:

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Q: The route down Main Street in to the town centre had an appalling view and needed significant investment. There needed to be far better signage and clearer gateways in to the centre of town – was this being looked at?

A: There was now potential for residential development in that area and it was hoped that a number of the derelict sites would be converted over the coming months which should greatly improve the area.

Q: A key issue was how to regenerate the centre when the shops/businesses would not come back to the town. How do we do this?

A: It was noted there had been a big shift in the type of businesses in the area, particularly during, and post pandemic. There was now a much higher percentage of service sector businesses rather than retail and this was something to be mindful of when engaging with prospective businesses.

Comment: A BBC article had been released which highlighted the change in business types within the Bolsover area. It highlighted an increase in service-based business such as beauty and piercing/tattooists, a reduction in fish and chip shops (against national trend), and loss of national chain businesses amongst other statistics.

Q: Was there a reason for the loss of established retailers, was there a pattern?

A: Many businesses had moved to an online model, others had simply gone as a result of market pressures. There had been a big shift to larger footprint premises often on the outskirts of town, e.g., M&S in Chesterfield. A piece of work was needed to understand the issues businesses were facing.

Q: Had we considered the issue of the potential loss of the Frasers Group from Shirebrook, given their proposal to develop a new site in the south?

A: The new site had been promoted as an additional site to Shirebrook rather than a replacement but officers were keeping a watching brief on how things developed.

Q: How could we direct Pleasley based business to support?

A: Unfortunately the shop front improvement scheme did not cover Pleasley. It may be that if there was low uptake of funding then we may be able to stretch to cover the neighbouring villages/hamlets.

Q: What support could Pleasley and New Houghton access?

A: Officers from the Development team would be in touch with the ward Member to advise, however, there was nothing specific targeted at Pleasley and New Houghton.

Q: Was the Council in danger of chasing a retail offer that was in decline – should focus be on another development option?

A: This was something that officers were currently developing, with a focus on cultural activities and development of cafes/bars and the night-time economy within town centres. As town centres were used less as retail hubs, it was important to realise their

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

potential for creating community focal points. At this point officers were not aware of any cafes/eating places operating in Shirebrook, as was the case in other town centres.

Comment: A Member noted there were three such businesses on the market place but was not sure if additional businesses like that were required based on the impact that could have on existing establishments.

Q: When driving through the town centre past the Gate Hotel, all that was seen were the backs of the terraced properties rather than the market place. Could something be done to improve the look of the area via murals or screening?

A: This was something that the Planning Policy team were looking at as part of the Growth Plan development and feedback gathered today would help to shape the next steps as part of the current consultation process. A Cultural Development Fund bid had been made through the Arts Council and BDC was classed as a priority area and had been invited to engage with the second stage of bidding. A key issue was having clarity over the potential investment costs and also gaining a better understanding of what DCC planned to invest. Transport links would play a big part in ensuring any cultural developments were fully accessible. Real-time bus services were part of the DCC Bus Improvement Plan. Other areas for investment included signage; public realm of the outer market square area; investment in the exterior of the square including the rear view of various properties. The Cultural Development Fund bid was crucial.

Comment: Having witnessed redevelopment of other market squares around the country, the more successful developments had taken a traditional approach using heritage colours, and keeping a uniform theme to the shop fronts

Q: Could we consider some form of conservation design policy for our town centres, moving forward?

A: This would need raising with Planning Policy as part of Local Plan delivery.

Moved by Councillor Derek Adams and seconded by Councillor Tracey Cannon.

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

(2) The findings of the report be compared with the forthcoming reviews of the remaining Regeneration Frameworks to inform next steps.

(Assistant Director of Development & Planning/
Business Growth Manager/ Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

LOC41-22/23

OUTCOME OF CALL-IN OF DECISION EX41 22/23 – FUTURE SKILLS HUB

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer advised Members of the outcome of Executive's reconsideration of the Future Skills Hub report, following the Call-in by Scrutiny Members.

Following receipt of Scrutiny's recommendation, Executive considered the evidence and chose to keep to their original decision made on the 5th September 2022.

LOCAL GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Derek Adams.
RESOLVED that the outcome of Executive's reconsideration be noted.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

LOC42-22/23

WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23. It was noted that a number of proposed items were impacted by external factors which may affect the opportunity to receive those reports as planned.

It was agreed to add the Engagement Strategy referred to by the Business Growth Manager to the Committee's meeting scheduled in March.

Moved by Councillor Tracey Cannon and seconded by Councillor Derek Adams.
RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted, with proposed agenda items rescheduled where required.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 11:33 hours.