



Enterprise and
Growth Scrutiny
Committee

2 February 2017

10.00 am

Item

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2017
10.00 AM - 12.45 PM**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak

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Present

Councillor Steve Davenport (Leader)

Councillors Andrew Bannerman, Pauline Dee (Vice Chairman), John Hurst-Knight,
Jean Jones and Nic Laurens

34 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor N Bardsley.

35 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

36 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

37 Public Question Time

It was agreed that members of the public present who wished to speak on tourism could do so at agenda item 9.

38 Member Questions

There were no questions from Members.

39 Licensing and A Prosperous Economy

Members considered a report and presentation on Licensing and a Prospering Economy (copies of both are attached to the signed minutes). The Trading Standards and Licensing Operations Manager gave an overview of the Licensing Service, the size and structure of the team, and explained which licensing regimes had the greatest impact on the economy. The presentation also covered the balance between discharging statutory responsibilities

and focusing on outcomes, role in public safety and safeguarding, and recent work undertaken with a holistic approach.

During consideration of the report members asked a number of questions and raised issues including those connected to the following areas:

- Licenses being granted before planning approval was granted
- Evening and Night time economy planning guidance and the need for a vision for the night time economy to identify if there was a balance to achieve between businesses, visitors and residents
- The shortage of private hire and hackney carriage vehicles for the night time economy and early mornings
- Taxi legislation and licenses for out of area operators
- Emissions and replacement vehicles

Officers explained that the law meant that planning approval was not needed before applying for a license, although applicants were encouraged to obtain planning permission first.

Officers reiterated the balance that needed to be achieved between contributing to a prosperous economy, statutory duties and safeguarding the public. There was a shortage of private hire and hackney carriage vehicles for the night time economy and work had been undertaken with Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID) to address this. However, the proposals would have meant taking short cuts with regard to safeguarding and this was not acceptable to the Council which maintained safety of the public as its overriding principle.

With regard to shortage of private hire vehicles and taxis, the Transactional and Licensing Manager, reported that she had regular contact with some of the larger taxi operators who were struggling to recruit drivers, even though they were able to provide vehicles.

With regard to compliance with emission standards, a new policy had been implemented in April 2015 following an 18 month consultation with the Trade. An extended period had been requested in relation to emissions and this had been implemented. However operators often left action to comply until the last minute.

Members asked that the evening and night time planning economy guidance be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman thanked officers for the informative presentation.

40 Update on the New Economic Growth Strategy

The Director of Place and Enterprise provided an update on the new Economic Growth Strategy which was now near completion. He reminded Members that it had been developed in partnership with University Centre Shrewsbury in three phases. He outlined the four key areas of focus within the draft Strategy and the priorities identified within each of these.

The Director went on to introduce the Council's new Partnerships and Economy Strategy Manager, Tim Jenkins.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need to retain and attract young people into the county, and the need for appropriate housing as well as jobs for them. In response to comments from a Member about the quality of work from the consultants involved in evidence gathering, the Director said the work had led to some new information around the digital health sector and an independent view from a third party had been useful.

Members noted that it was hoped to take the Strategy to Cabinet for approval on 1 March 2017.

41 Update on Economic Growth Activity

The Head of Economic Growth provided an update on recent Economic Growth activity. She referred to the Industrial Strategy consultation published by the government to which the Council would make a response as well as the LEP. Work was underway with the Business Board so that the private sector could also feed into the response.

She also reported on: work underway in relation to the Local Plan Review; exploration of opportunities for Shropshire related to the Northern Gateway working with Cheshire East Council; work to understand the potential options for Tern Hill when it was vacated by the Ministry of Defence; scoping of key milestones with the Department of Transport in relation to refreshing evidence and re-establishing the business case for the North West Relief Road; and the consultation underway to inform the preparation of the full planning application for the Oxon Link Road.

Members also heard that there were a number of EU funding calls out currently, details of which were available from the LEP website. Members were encouraged to draw these to the attention of any businesses which might be interested. The Business Growth Programme managed by Birmingham City Council had received very positive feedback and resulted in 10 successful applications, with 34 jobs being created in Shropshire when the target had been 12. This was a positive news story showing that businesses were investing and growing in the county.

Members asked about the Invest in Shropshire website which had been live since November. Ways to keep interest levels high were being identified and analysis had taken place of what people were looking for from the site.

Members asked about progress in developing an Oswestry Business Improvement District and the Head of Economic Growth reported on the very passionate group of businesses involved. A meeting was to be held shortly to consider how current plans how they could be pushed forward, and it was confirmed that the meeting would include highways colleagues.

Members thanked the Head of Economic Growth for the update and congratulated her on an excellent start in the post.

42 Tourism

Members considered a presentation (copy attached to the signed minutes) on Tourism and the wider visitor economy in Shropshire. The Director of Place and Enterprise covered the contribution of tourism to economic growth, the impact it had in terms of visitor

numbers in the county, the growth of the visitor economy in Shropshire, Shropshire Council's input to date and support for the visitor economy in future.

It was envisaged that tourism would mostly be driven by the private sector with the Council's role being strategic and one of co-ordination, working in partnership and offering leadership when needed.

Mr Michael Connor, Chairman of Shrewsbury Tourism Association, Mr Paul Davis, Chairman of Shropshire Hills Tourism and Mr Dilwyn Jones, operator of the Sabrina Boat in Shrewsbury were present at the meeting and the Chairman invited them to address the Committee.

Mr Connor articulated the wish for a specific Council officer lead on tourism to co-ordinate the work of all the different groups in the county. Shrewsbury Tourism had benefited greatly in the past from the Council's co-ordinating role and it wished to promote 3 – 5 day stays involving visits to other parts of Shropshire. He said the Council's policy of developing sustainable partners was welcome but at the current time there did not appear to be anyone to contact in relation to the visitor economy, or a willingness to invest to earn. He referred to the financial value of tourism in Shropshire which supported thousands of jobs. He also reported that Shrewsbury Tourism employed a Tourism Officer for one and a half days a week and but financial help was needed to increase her hours.

Mr Davis, referred to the large number of organisations involved in tourism in Shropshire and the need for them to work together better. He reported that the National Trust had turned away 1000 cars during the last August Bank Holiday Monday at Carding Mill Valley and there had been great potential to disperse tourism traffic to other attractions in the county. Co-ordination was needed to address this sort of issue and he emphasised the need for an officer to act as a contact point or conduit. Shropshire Hills Tourism was made up of volunteers who had been very disappointed that there was no longer a tourism officer at the Council.

Mr Jones, owner of the Sabrina Boat in Shrewsbury emphasised the importance of tourism to businesses in the county, for example, it was not possible to grow his own business until Shrewsbury itself grew more. He referred to the constraints caused by an inadequate taxi, train and bus network. He pointed out that the Shrewsbury BID was primarily focused on the town centre and added that Shrewsbury Tourism would become stagnant without any financial or officer support. He warned against the dangers of having many fragmented groups and websites and felt that a Council Officer needed to act as liaison.

Several Members of the Committee concurred with the need for the Council to take a co-ordinating role and felt that an officer should be designated to provide practical support for the visitor economy alone. Members heard that a review of the Economic Growth team was about to take place.

One member referred to the local MPs support for up-front investment in tourism as the potential was so great. He asked that innovative ways to increase potential be explored, for example Brexit meant that farmers would need to diversify.

Another member acknowledged the important work of volunteers in tourism but said that it was difficult for volunteers to co-ordinate and oversee the whole agenda and she felt this was a role the Council should play. For example, the story of industrial revolution in

Telford and Wrekin appeared to complement the rural story in Shropshire, and there should be a way to build on this. Another member referred to the importance of the Severn Valley Railway and reported that a local Tourism Group in Bridgnorth had recently been disbanded.

Another Member pointed out how the Council was struggling in the face of severe cuts and had to make them even if it did not want to, especially when tourism was so important to the county.

The Chairman felt that an officer was needed to lead and understand what was happening in the tourist economy in the county. He suggested that another Task and Finish Group on Tourism be formed to look at these issues but the Director asked for an opportunity to distil the information shared during the meeting. It was agreed that he would discuss this with the Chairman outside of the meeting. The Director emphasised that the Council was not divesting itself of any role in the Visitor economy, it was a key part of the new Economic Growth Strategy, and it was being considered as part of the review of the Economic Growth Team.

The Director highlighted the financial restrictions facing the Council but that it was committed to running a stakeholder event focusing on the issues raised. In the meantime he confirmed that the officer contact for those involved in tourism was Tim Jenkins and the Committee welcomed this information.

The Head of Economic Development referred to opportunities presented through a funding call out for ERDP money and a meeting was to be held shortly at which the Shropshire Outdoor Partnership Manager would be attending.

The Chairman thanked officers, members and visitors to the Committee for the useful discussion which would help inform future thinking.

43 Planning Task and Finish Group

The Chairman reported that the Group would be holding a last meeting to finalise its report which would come to the 23 March 2017 meeting of the Committee.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: