



Enterprise and  
Growth Scrutiny  
Committee

10 April 2014

10.00 am

Item

**4**

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON 10 APRIL 2014  
10.00 - 11.50 AM**

**Responsible Officer:** Amanda Holyoak  
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**Present**

Councillor Steve Davenport (Chairman) Councillors Jean Jones, Pauline Dee (Vice Chairman), Andrew Bannerman, Nicholas Bardsley, Charlotte Barnes, Dean Carroll, John Everall, John Hurst-Knight and William Parr

**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for late arrival were received from Pauline Dee.

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

**3 Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2013**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

**4 Public Question Time**

There were no public questions

**5 Member Question Time**

There were no questions from Members.

**6 Economic Growth Rapid Action Growth**

Councillor Charlotte Barnes, Lead Member for the Economic Growth Rapid Action Group, reported on the experiences and findings of the Group.

There had been initial difficulties identifying the remit of the Group, particularly as Economic Growth covered such a wide area. Working with the Head of Business Growth and Prosperity, and Service Manager for Business and Enterprise, the Group had focused on the area of Business and Enterprise. As the re-design had been in an early phase during the time of the Group's scrutiny, the members had decided to look at whether the re-design proposals might work.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that the remit and focus for each Rapid Action Group had taken some time to establish and this process would be improved in future.

The Committee also agreed that it had been right for the RAG to have focused on one particular issue and that it was for the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee to look at the whole picture.

The RAG had looked at proposed savings and challenges and the Service Manager reported that from an officer perspective the RAG group had asked helpful and challenging questions. RAG members had felt that it would be beneficial for future scrutiny activity to work alongside the re-design process, adding extra challenge and providing a Member perspective each step of the way, rather than waiting to comment at the end of the process. This was more likely to lead to an overall consensus at the end of the Programme. The Group had also felt that officer support was essential, for example, in arranging meetings and drafting reports.

The Service Manager explained that the Economic Growth Re-design had only just started and was being led by the Chief Executive. A clear purpose for Economic Growth had been established, and that was 'To Create Resilient Wealth'. All activity undertaken in future must align with this purpose, any activity that did not contribute to this purpose would not be undertaken. The Scope of the re-design was broad and would touch areas including highways, planning, housing, economic development, business rates and skills issues.

The Local Member for Cleobury Mortimer raised the issue of joined up thinking, citing an example in her electoral division related to a business wishing to expand but being restricted by planning constraints. The Chairman asked the Member to share these details with him and the Service Manager who commented that this sort of scenario should not be allowed to happen again.

Another Member referred to matters regarding a substantial residential site in their electoral division and felt that there were communication issues between planning officers and officers involved with management of assets and lack of a clear timescale. The Lead Member of the RAG commented that other members had examples of similar situations in their electoral divisions and felt that one point of contact for different areas would help address this.

It was felt that in future small scrutiny member groups could be set up but that their remits should be agreed by the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee and that they should always be required to report back to the full Committee which would retain a central focus. Small Group working would be just one way of conducting scrutiny with other approaches used as appropriate.

It was also suggested that the Committee could be involved in the re-design process in the same way as it had been with the development of the Economic Growth Strategy. This would mean involvement at key objectives, and perhaps each milestone could be scrutinised by a small group of members.

It was suggested that a small Group be formed to develop a work programme containing proposals for discussion at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Growth went on to refer to empty shops in some of Shropshire's market towns due to high rateable value. Although this was not in the control of Shropshire Council he suggested that this merited scrutiny attention in an attempt to influence Central Government to try and help town centre businesses. He also referred to support given to some large businesses by the Council but emphasised the need for them to help themselves too.

The Lead Member of the RAG Group recommended that the Committee visit the Review of Project North and Oswestry Economic Growth Commissioning 'Beautiful Minds Room' which illustrated well the many different entry points into the Council.

The Committee thanked the members of the RAG for their hard work.

## **7 Regulatory and Business Support Rapid Action Group**

Councillor Andrew Bannerman, Lead Member for the Rapid Action Group on Regulatory and Business Support Services, outlined the work of the RAG and its findings.

The Group had sympathised with the aims and objectives of the Project and its three aims:

- High levels of customer satisfaction achieved through positive culture change and reduction of process and bureaucracy
- Improved levels of efficiency and productivity
- Working in a more entrepreneurial way to create sustainable income streams

However, the Group's work had left them with a number of outstanding questions, particularly in relation to the provision of both advice and regulation, competition with external consultancies, start up costs, and the workload of Planning Services in the light of five year land supply issues and new targets for house building. Questions had also been raised by the Group in relation to a 'light touch' approach to regulation of businesses and the need to balance the interests of town centre residents and businesses.

During discussion of the points raised by the RAG, the Committee heard from the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Commissioning (Central) who stated that in the current financial circumstances, there was now no option available other than re-design. He referred to the two objectives of meeting statutory responsibilities and generating an income and the synergy between Planning Policy and Development Management. He believed that it would be possible to derive income from providing advice to external consultants. He encouraged any Member who was interested in these issues to get involved at a time when a number of options were still to be explored.

He also went on to report on a recent meeting he had attended with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning and on regulatory changes to the Community

Infrastructure Levy which would result in a significant loss of income in Shropshire. He agreed to circulate a briefing on this to members of the Committee.

He suggested that the Committee invite the RABBS team to a meeting to answer questions raised by the RAG.

Members thanked the Members of the Rapid Action Group on Regulatory and Business Support for their hard work.

## 8 Future Areas of Scrutiny Work

The Chairman explained that a report would be going to a future Council meeting proposing that Highways return to the remit of the Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee, and that Licensing and Public Protection come under the remit of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee.

Members made a suggestion of follow up work on the Visitor Economy to establish progress in the county following the work of the Tourism Task and Finish Group. A review of the progress made on recommendations made by the Rapid Action Group on Planning was also suggested, although the Portfolio Holder felt that more time may be needed due to distortion of Committee activity due to Five Year Land Supply issues.

It was agreed that a small Group of Members drawn from the Committee be formed to develop a work programme for the Committee. It was agreed that Nick Bardsley, Charlotte Barnes, Steve Davenport and John Hurst-Knight form this group.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<TRAILER\_SECTION>

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: