



Enterprise and
Growth Scrutiny
Committee

29th January 2015

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2014
10.00 AM - 12.20 PM**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
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Present

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

37 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillor Martin Bennett.

38 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none disclosed.

39 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40 Public Question Time

There were no Public Questions.

41 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

42 Economic Growth Re-Design

The Economic Growth Redesign Manager updated Members on the progress of the Economic Growth Redesign Process and the New Operating Model which had been developed through the redesign process. [Presentation attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.]

Citing a presentation by the Tourism Officer at a previous meeting of the Committee, a Member asked how the need for investment to promote economic growth could be reconciled with the requirement to reduce expenditure. The Economic Growth Redesign Manager explained that this was possible as a holistic approach was being taken to the business support provided and through identifying and supporting the Council's priorities savings could be made in other areas and funding reallocated for investment in the Council's priority areas.

In response to a Member's query, the Economic Growth Redesign Manager confirmed that decisions had not yet been made regarding business team staffing. It had been established that there would be a new working culture and the development of softer skills. She confirmed that relationships with businesses would be improved through the establishment of relationship managers who would follow an established protocol which would ensure a smooth transition in the event of staff changes.

A Member requested more information on how the Economic Growth Redesign worked with the development of local commissioning. The Economic Growth Redesign Manager responded that greater use of Place Plans would enable local priorities for sustainable local economies to be identified. She continued that there were many common local issues across the County which would inform strategic decisions.

The Economic Growth Manager updated Members on the on-going work of the Economic Growth Redesign Task and Finish Group. Members considered the questionnaire produced by the Task and Finish Group. The Economic Growth Redesign Manager requested Members assistance with its distribution. Members noted the redrafted terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group.

43 Planning Update

The Planning Services Manager gave an overview of the work undertaken by the Planning Department and updated Members on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Rapid Action Task and Finish Group, endorsed by the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee on 31st October 2013.

Members noted that Planning was a service at the heart of the place shaping agenda, its aim was to facilitate sustainable development which supported business development and the economic growth in the County.

The Planning Services Manager explained that a reduction in the number of staff due to the voluntary redundancy scheme had coincided with a substantial increase in workload. This increase was due to generally improving economic conditions and

speculative applications, which were the result of issues around the five year land supply. He continued that a business case had been made and agreed for an increase in resources to be put into place by spring 2015.

Referring to the recommendations made by the Rapid Action Task and Finish Group he confirmed that there had been an improvement in the attendance at Committee by Town and Parish Council representatives where they had objected to applications, and also an improvement in Shropshire Council Members attending Committee for applications within their Wards.

He continued that where the Committee considered applications in the Wards of members of the Committee, voting rights on that item had been rescinded for the Ward Member concerned. Planning reports had been simplified and this had been met with general approval from Members, although was not always understood by members of the public. Efficiency had been improved by all Planning Committees now meeting at Shirehall.

He continued that due to the workload the three Planning Committees remained and the desired delegation rate of 96% had not yet been met and remained at around 94.4%. Members of the Planning Committees had expressed concern regarding the number of reports they had to consider at Committee meetings and the length of time it took to undertake site visits. Concerns had also been expressed at a lack of consistency in the decisions taken by the individual Committees and added that this could be overcome through the establishment of a single planning committee. A Member commented that a single Committee would not have the local knowledge demonstrated by the current Committees and decisions may not reflect local aspirations or needs.

A Member observed that there was insufficient emphasis on the elements of conservation and design in the consideration of applications. He continued that communities were defined by their buildings and this was being lost in the bureaucracy which now accompanied the planning process. The Planning Services Manager explained that Central Government had established a system within which they had to work and where the weight given in decisions was tightly prescribed.

Members requested further information on the speculative planning applications being made for areas outside of those designated as development land in SAMDev. The Planning Services Manager explained that until SAMDev was formally adopted and the 5 Year Land Supply issues resolved it was likely that these speculative applications, if refused, would be granted on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate. He continued that the applications made on sites which were not on designated development land only received a one year time frame for the planning permission. He continued that where applications were unsustainable Officers were prepared to take a risk based approach and refuse them despite the possibility that the decision could be overturned on appeal, although he was concerned that this could lead to an Inspectorate Statement regarding the 5 Year Land Supply.

Agreed:

- i. that Members consider the establishment of a Planning task and finish group;
and

- ii. that a draft scoping document with Terms of Reference for the potential planning task and finish group be considered at the next meeting of the Committee on 29th January 2015.

44 Future Work Programme for the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED:

That the Future Work Plan be noted.

45 Dates for Future Meetings

RESOLVED:

That the Committee next meets at 10.00am on Tuesday 9th December 2014.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: