



Enterprise and
Growth Scrutiny
Committee

2nd July 2015

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 11 JUNE 2015
10.00 - 11.10 AM**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
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Present

Councillor Steve Davenport (Chairman)
Councillors Dean Carroll (Vice Chairman), Andrew Bannerman, Charlotte Barnes, Peter Cherrington, John Hurst-Knight and Jean Jones

5 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors Pauline Dee and Nicholas Bardsley.

Councillor Peter Cherrington attended as substitute for Councillor Pauline Dee.

6 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none disclosed.

7 Minutes

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meetings held on 2nd April 2015 and 14th May 2015 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

8 Public Question Time

There were no Public Questions.

9 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

10 University Centre Shrewsbury - Student Accommodation Strategy

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity, stating that while the establishment of the University Centre Shrewsbury was greatly welcomed, it was recognised that it could have an impact on local communities which needed to be considered and any risks addressed. He continued that the Committee had been convened to consider the establishment of a Student Accommodation Strategy Task and Finish Group.

The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity gave a presentation on the progress of the Student Accommodation Strategy, which was initially proposed in a report to Cabinet on 11th February 2015 [report included with agenda papers].

The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity agreed that the establishment of a University presence in Shrewsbury was a wonderful opportunity for the Town and the County as a whole, but concerns over the provision and location of student accommodation had been raised by both Council Members and the public and these needed to be considered at an early stage. He added that Cabinet had agreed that he be granted delegated powers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to develop a comprehensive Student Accommodation Strategy with associated policies to be presented to Cabinet prior to formal adoption by full Council. The completion date for this work was anticipated as September 2015.

Members noted the list of Officers involved in the development the Student Accommodation Strategy and the appointment of an external Consultant; ARUP. The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity explained that ARUP provided external expertise and had already commenced work on the project.

The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity outlined the Council's roles in the provision of student accommodation. He explained that early research had shown developers unwilling to develop private accommodation until the student population was established. The Council had stepped into the gap and Mardol House in Shrewsbury was being refurbished to provide circa eighty residential units for September 2015. This was estimated as sufficient for the first year intake. In addition to this the Council was in the process of procuring a delivery partner to supply a further 800 units over the next three years, 200 of which to be available for September 2016. The tender process had been completed and a possible partner selected but contracts had not yet been entered into.

He confirmed that for the first three years following the establishment of the University Centre, the Council would provide the majority of student housing. He continued, that it was then expected that the private sector would begin to provide accommodation. Potentially this could be through houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). The Council also had a role in this supply through Planning Policy and Licensing provision.

Members noted that a house owner could convert a house to an HMO under Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) without planning permission if it had 6 or fewer residents. This restricted the Council's ability to influence the location of these

properties through the planning process. It was possible to remove an area's PDRs through an Article 4 Direction, but this could only be done where a situation warranting it could be evidenced. The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity explained that although a possible problem had been foreseen the situation did not yet exist that would warrant the imposition of an Article 4 Direction (A4D). The A4D would require the owner to gain planning permission before converting a property to an HMO. Policies could be established to guide planning decisions and protect communities from inappropriate or over development.

The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity continued that the Council could also ensure that student accommodation was of good quality through the licensing of HMOs and by only allowing those that met the specified criteria to be added to the register of properties recommended by the University Centre to students. Houses which met the criteria could be awarded a Student Accommodation Quality Mark.

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services, Housing and Commissioning [Central] was invited to speak and commented that if Members were so minded, he would welcome the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to consider the issue of student accommodation.

Councillor Alan Mosely confirmed support for the establishment of the University Centre from both himself and Shrewsbury Town Council, but added that he had concerns about the potential impact on the town's wider communities not just the areas surrounding the University Centre. He added that good communication with the people of the town was important to reassure them that action was being taken to address and resolve potential problems.

In response to a Members query, the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity confirmed that the anticipated student body would be approximately 2,000 to 2,500 students.

The Portfolio Holder for University Centre and Shrewsbury BID was invited to comment. She explained that she had recently incorporated the University Centre into her portfolio of responsibilities and welcomed the interest of the Scrutiny Committee in the project. She stated that she took a keen interest in the provision of high quality student accommodation and saw it as an important factor to attract high calibre students to study in Shrewsbury.

A Member asked for information on the HMOs currently situated in the town, the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity explained that it was part of ARUP's brief to provide an assessment of the current situation.

The Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity tabled the scoping document setting out the terms of reference for a potential Student Accommodation Strategy Task and Finish Group. Members expressed concern about the time frame given for the completion of the work, the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity confirmed that the report to Cabinet in February, had not specified a time frame for the work.

AGREED:

- That the Student Accommodation Strategy Task and Finish Group be established; and

- That the Student Accommodation Strategy Task and Finish Group once established, in consultation with the Lead Officer, be given delegated authority to amend the Group's Terms and Conditions of operation.

11 Future Work Programme for the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

Members considered the draft Work Programme. A Member asked for reassurance that the Committee would be able to continue to scrutinise the actions of former Council departments transferred to the control of ip&e. The Chairman confirmed that these operations would still come under the remit of the Scrutiny Committees.

In response to a Member's query the Chairman confirmed that both Planning and Licensing fell within the remit of the Committee.

Members raised concerns regarding the re-organisation of the Tourism Section. The Chairman confirmed that Tourism was an ongoing item on the Work Programme.

In response to Members' queries over the need to scrutinise the number of redundant buildings and disused land in Council ownership, Councillor Carroll stated that the use of assets had been a recommendation from the Economic Growth Task and Finish Group and he had received assurances that all the recommendations from the Group were to be taken forward for action.

The Chairman added that the Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group was also reviewing the Strategy for empty homes, and its final report would be considered at the next meeting of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee.

12 Date of Next Meetings

RESOLVED:

That the Committee next meets at 10am on Thursday 2nd July 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: