



Place Overview
Committee

6th June 2019

10.00 am

Item

Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH
2019
10.00 AM - 12.10 PM**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Leader)
Councillors Andy Boddington, Julian Dean, Rob Gittins, Simon Harris, Paul Milner (Vice
Chairman), Dan Morris, Pamela Moseley, William Parr and Paul Wynn

57 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

58 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests made.

59 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15th February 2019

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2019 be approved as a true
record and signed by the Chairman.

60 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

61 Member Question Time

A question had been received from Councillor Julian Dean in relation to Building
Control. The following response was provided:

Q: Building Control: How is building control managed at present? Are inspections of
new builds carried out by council staff? I have been given to believe that this function
is carried out on a commercial basis by contractors selected by developers: is this
the case? If so what check is in place to ensure the quality of these inspection?

A: The Building Regulations 2010 cover the construction and extension of buildings and provide standards for construction where the works are subject to regulation. This is a statutory regulatory process where some of the functions have been opened up to the market and either the Local Authority or private sector 'Approved Inspector' can provide Building Control Services. Where the Local Authority provides building control services works are agreed through a process of plan checking and site inspections depending on the nature of the works. The Local Authority has no jurisdiction where a customer elects to use a private building control service as they would then be responsible then for the site supervision and compliance with the relevant building regulations. The Local Authority does however have statutory enforcement powers and a role with respect to dangerous structures where a building or structure may through its condition and location cause a danger to the public.

A query was raised about whether a policy could be enforced that insisted all new builds achieve a minimum Energy Performance Certificate 'B' rating. In response, the Head of Economic Growth confirmed that it could be enforced if it was part of the planning conditions, for which the Council did have a statutory enforcement role. She confirmed that the Council had no control if the developer chose not to use the Council's building control service. The Sustainability Officer informed the Committee that Government Legislation that had come into force in April 2018 stated that private landlords were required to comply with an E rating or below and that Trading Standards could enforce this requirement.

62 Place Shaping - Diversification of the Local Economy

Members received a verbal report from the Head of Economic Growth on the delivery of the Council's Economic Growth Strategy and progress in securing investment in the Digital and Health Care Sector. A presentation was given which covered the following areas:

- Shropshire Context
- Jobs and Employment
- Economic Growth Team Structure
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Strategic Aims
- Results to date 2017 and 2018
- Current enquiries
- Invest in Shropshire Rebrand
- Sector Development Focus
- Lead Generation Campaign
- Visitor Economy

The Deputy Leader paid tribute to the previous Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth who had worked very hard over the previous 12 months to put the meat on the bones of the Economic Growth Strategy for which work was ongoing at pace. He informed Members of the recent interest from investors which was really positive and that work was ongoing in the right direction, it was just a matter of timing to secure investment.

A brief discussion ensued in relation to renewable energy, zero carbon housing, solar panels and the storage of energy etc. The Director of Place reassured the Committee that there was considerable work ongoing in these areas.

As well as external investment, Members felt that internal investment was also required for Shropshire to grow its own talent. A comment was made about there being no higher education being located in the south of the county. In response, the Head of Economic Growth drew attention to the SMEs and micro businesses along with centres of excellence such as The Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology and the LEP Skills Advisory Panel. She explained that there was a lot of work ongoing and more to be done.

A query was raised about the number of business in Shropshire and how this compared with previous years. The Head of Economic Growth confirmed that a direct comparison could be done as indicators were now tracked and the number had grown slightly.

A discussion took place around the visitor economy and the role of the Council, which was seen to have a strategic co-ordinator/facilitator role. It was hoped to get Shropshire on the national agenda including the Visit Britain campaign. In response to a query about hotel chains, the Deputy Leader reported that there was huge interest by hotel chains to invest in market towns and that 4-5 different chains had made enquiries about different sites in Shropshire.

In response to a query it was confirmed that population forecasts were used to predict what the worker/skills gap would look like in the future along with a Business Growth projection looking at the skills businesses would require. This data allowed officers to delve down into sectors. It was confirmed that the sectors selected for development were the fastest growing areas. In response to a query, it was confirmed that although there were opportunities for growth in retail, diversity was also required.

The Head of Economic Growth reported that there was now a team in place looking at job creation which was still on trajectory to meet its 2021 target of 3,700 new jobs. The Director of Place then discussed the number of new homes projected to be required by 2021. He reported that the Council's statutory target had been set at about 1400 new homes required per year in order to meet need.

The Chair requested any that any further questions be sent direct to The Head of Economic Growth or the Director of Place.

63 Corporate Climate Change Strategy

The Committee received the report of the Sustainability Commissioning Officer setting out the Corporate Climate Change Strategy (copy attached to the signed Minutes).

The Chairman introduced this item and explained that millions of pounds could be saved by reducing the energy costs of Shropshire Council buildings.

The Sustainability Commissioning Officer gave a presentation (copy of slides attached to the signed Minutes) which covered the following areas:

- Targets;
- Why is a Strategy necessary;
- The Basics;
- Solving the Energy Trilemma;
- Marches Energy Strategy;
- Renewable Energy;
- Achievements – Building Running Costs / Energy Savings
- Achievements – Solar PV
- Achievements – Renewable Energy
- Achievements – Recycling
- Warp-it (Waste Action Re-use Portal)
- Project Opportunities
- Commercial Strategy

A Member commented that he did not feel that growing crops to feed anaerobic digesters was the way forward as it took 40 acres of land compared to 30 acres for a solar farm. The Sustainability Commissioning Officer explained that it was a mistake to compare the two and that he had seen anaerobic digesters working as a renewable source of energy, using a combination of municipal waste, garden material and food waste.

A member commented on plans in Bridgnorth to cut down 100 acres of woodland and queried whether more trees would be planted to replace those cut down. He also queried the current progress with wind turbines in Shropshire. In response, the Sustainability Commissioning Officer agreed to ask Dan Wrench, the Council's Biodiversity Officer to provide a response which would be attached to the signed Minutes, but he explained that planning was an issue in Shropshire but that if sited in the right place wind turbines could produce very reliable amounts of energy.

Councillor Julian Dean, suggested that a Climate Change Task and Finish Group fitted well with the workload of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee. It was however agreed for this Committee to take it forward as a Task and Finish Group and to co-opt Councillor Dean Carroll onto the Committee to assist with the work of the Task and Finish Group, along with an officer from Transport/Highways.

The Director of Place reported that a Task and Finish Group would provide an opportunity to look at climate change with a single focus and look to set the standard by doing more to achieve wider sustainability, which may mean recruiting someone as a single point of contact. In response to a query, the Director of Place confirmed that this could be achieved financially

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Climate Change Strategy be taken forward as a Task and Finish Group and that Councillor Dean Carroll be co-opted onto the Committee to assist with the work of the Task and Finish Group, along with an officer from Transport/Highways.

64 Shopping Centres Updates

Members received a verbal report from the Head of Economic Growth on the shopping centres in Shrewsbury Town Centre. The Head of Economic Growth

updated the Committee in relation to the three shopping Centres. She reported that the Council was heavily involved in the redevelopment of the Riverside Centre which was an exciting project and an opportunity to place shape and drive forward. She confirmed that Member Board representatives met with Officers on a regular basis and that a Programme Officer had been recruited to take this work forward.

The Head of Economic Growth went on to discuss the opportunities around the Big Town Plan and drew attention to the £4m capital budget being invested in the Darwin Centre to bring the lower level up to the same standard as the higher levels. She confirmed that the refurbishment of the Darwin Centre was due to commence in mid 2019. She then took Members through the headlines from the previous year.

In response to a query in relation to whether any retailers were looking to move in in the next few months, the Head of Economic Development explained that all sorts of conversations were going on but it was difficult to land some of these deals. However there was a lot of interest and footfall was really good. A query was raised in relation to Business Rates and whether these could be reduced in order to attract business, however it was confirmed that the rent was guaranteed until 2020 as part of the purchase deal. The Director of Place reported that the Government's outline plan was for councils to be able to retain 100% of the Business Rates collected from 2020. In response to a query, it was confirmed that there was a 9% vacancy rate in the Darwin shopping centre and 5.7% in Pride Hill.

A brief discussion ensued in relation to how the Riverside Centre could be integrated into one despite the huge disparity between the levels. It was confirmed that the architects were thinking about creative ways in which to get people from Frankwell into the shopping centre and how to tier up to the different levels.

65 Work Programme 2018-2019

The Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Officer which set out the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny for the forthcoming year. The Chair requested members to feed any further topics directly to the Scrutiny Officer.

A query was raised in relation to progress of the Road Safety Task and Finish Group. In response the Scrutiny Officer reported that the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group had been agreed at the end of the previous year and that three meetings had subsequently taken place. However, the relevant officer required to come and talk to the Task and Finish Group was currently on long term absence. Once this officer returned to work, Professor Whitelegg would be invited to a meeting of this Task and Finish Group. It was felt that this may need to be reconsidered at some point if the relevant officer was not back at work once the restructure within Highways had been completed. The Chair suggested that in that case perhaps an officer from Telford and Wrekin Council with a similar remit be asked to assist.

A brief discussion ensued in relation to wind turbines and whether the Council had a policy in place.

66 Date/Time of the Next Meeting of the Committee

Members were reminded that the next meeting would be held at 10.00am on Thursday 6 June 2019.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: