



Enterprise and
Growth Scrutiny
Committee

2nd April 2015

10.00 am

Item

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Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2015
10.00 - 11.15 AM**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor Steve Davenport (Chairman)

Councillors Pauline Dee (Vice Chairman), Andrew Bannerman, Nicholas Bardsley, Charlotte Barnes, Dean Carroll, John Hurst-Knight, Jean Jones and Peggy Mullock (Substitute) (substitute for William Parr)

52 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillor William Parr.

Councillor Peggy Mullock attended as substitute for Councillor William Parr.

53 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none disclosed.

54 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 4th December 2014 and 9th December 2014 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

55 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

56 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

57 Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2016/17

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance introduced the Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2017/18 Report which had previously been considered by Cabinet in December 2014. He reminded Members that the Council Business Plan and Financial Strategy 2014/15 – 2017/18 had been agreed by Council in February 2014. The Financial Strategy was identified as a key document and part of the Council's Business Plan which reflected the financial implications of all the Council's plans and strategies.

He continued that the Financial Strategy was a dynamic rolling plan which was revised regularly throughout the financial year as circumstances altered. This report considered the information from the current year's monitoring reports and any implications for future budgets. It also contained revised information for years 2 and 3 of the Financial Plan and initial projections for 2017/18. The Plan had been refreshed to reflect changing circumstances and to accurately represent the Council's financial position.

It was noted that the refresh of the Plan was not yet complete but a final draft would be submitted to Council in February 2015, this would enable the setting of the Council's Budget for 2015/16.

Members discussed the Budget implications of increased costs for Adult Social Care.

A Member asked about the consultation process with regard to the removal of the Rate Support Grant given to Town and Parish Councils. The Head of Finance Governance and Assurance confirmed that he had received feedback on this from various Town and Parish Councils.

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance suggested that, should current trends continue, the Funding Revenue Support Grant would be completely withdrawn by 2020/21, due to this expectation a number of services currently financed by the Council were under continual review.

Members discussed the Economic Growth Redesign work being undertaken and the changes that Central Government had made to the collection and localisation of Business Rates, which made promoting the establishment of businesses within the County more important. It was noted that the County's amenities, such as its museum provision, were important in attracting people to the County and it was suggested that these should be supported.

RESOLVED:

- i. That at a future meeting of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee considers the age demographics of the County and the effect of this on the County in relation to employment and business;
- ii. that the report be noted.

58 Planning Task and Finish Group

The Planning Services Manager introduced the tabled Planning Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document.

Members noted that the Planning Services Manager had been requested to prepare a scoping document for a Planning Committee Task and Finish Group at the previous meeting and was based on the work undertaken by the previous Planning Task and Finish Group which had reported to the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee in October 2013.

A Member queried the definition of the term 'strongest Members' used in the scoping document. The Planning Services Manager explained that this referred to Members with a keen interest in the planning process, with a good understanding and knowledge of planning issues and the ability to challenge confidently. He continued that this was aligned to a good training programme.

A Member enquired why it was assumed that Planning Committees should last no more than three hours and suggested that should the Committee have a 10am start, a full day could be dedicated to the agenda and more items considered. The Planning Services Manager explained that this was the process agreed by Council and allowed site visits to be held on the morning of the Committee. Members discussed the arrangements for site visits and requested that the process for identifying sites to be visited and the timing for undertaking such visits should be added to the scoping document.

In response to a Member's question the Planning Services Manager confirmed that the process for identifying decisions for delegation could be made more clear and transparent. Although a process had been identified on occasion its application had been inconsistent.

Returning to the issue of Member training, Members agreed that regular planning training was essential for members of the Planning Committees. A Member suggested that learning was being lost due to a lack of organised training sessions following Planning Inspectorate appeal decisions. A Member added that due to short time scales for the decision making process, it was not always possible to arrange training on specific or unusual issues after an application had been received and before the decision had to be made.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference set out in the Planning Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document be agreed and the group established, with the addition that the group consider:

- i. the organisation of site visits;
- ii. training provision; and
- iii. the process for identifying decisions to be delegated and those to go to committee.

59 Future Work Programme for the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

Members considered suggested future topics for the Committee’s work programme. Suggested topics included:

- Museums
- Bishop’s Castle Business Park and other Business Parks in the County
- LEP funding
- Mobile phone signal provision
- Leader Plus

The Chair of the Economic Growth Redesign Task and Finish Group explained that the Group had been looking at business parks and the Group’s final report would include a suitable recommendation on this issue.

Members suggested that it would be useful for the Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) to attend the next meeting of the Committee to answer questions on the LEP funding.

60 Dates for Future Meetings

RESOLVED:

That the Committee next meets at 10.00am on Thursday 2nd April 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: