

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

18 JULY 2019 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr JMT Collett, Mr DS Cope, Mrs MJ Crooks, Mr SM Gibbens, Mrs DT Glenville (for Mr R Webber-Jones), Mrs LJ Mullaney (for Mr MC Sheppard-Bools) and Mr HG Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor K Morrell

Officers in attendance: Rebecca Owen, Tan Ashraf, Matthew Bowers, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Julie Stay and Ashley Wilson

74 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Pendlebury, Sheppard-Bools, Webber-Jones and P Williams with the following substitutions authorised in accordance with council procedure rule 10:

Councillor Glenville for Councillor Webber-Jones
Councillor L Mullaney for Councillor Sheppard-Bools
Councillor Walker for Councillor P Williams.

75 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Lay, seconded by Councillor H Williams and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2019 be confirmed and signed by the chairman.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

77 EQUALITIES MONITORING 2017/18

Members received a report which contained workforce data for 2017/18 and information on the gender pay gap. Gender pay gap comparisons were discussed, particularly HBBC's mean gap of 4.6% compared to the public sector average of 17.7% and private sector average of 19.3%. Members welcomed the report and recognised the work that had been undertaken to address inequalities.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The equalities monitoring data and proactive measures taken to address inequalities be noted;
- (ii) The positive gender pay gap of 4.6% be noted.

78 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE 2019

The Scrutiny Commission was updated on work undertaken to fulfil the aims of the Economic Regeneration Strategy action plan. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The poor standard of secondary education in some areas which reduced pupils' prospects and to some extent set the demographic of the area
- The desire for ward data showing pockets of deprivation in the borough
- The low quality of many jobs and number of skilled people in unskilled jobs
- The need to promote apprenticeships
- The need to address the lack of employment in the rural areas
- Disappointment at the lack of progress in relation to a particular regeneration project in Barwell.

In relation to the request for information on pockets of deprivation, members were offered a presentation on available data to a future meeting.

It was suggested that the LLEP be invited to a future meeting to talk about their work in linking businesses to schools and that North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College be invited to discuss how young people may access the best opportunities and their work with local businesses.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be noted and regeneration work undertaken be endorsed;
- (ii) a presentation be brought to a future meeting on available data;
- (iii) the LLEP and North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College be invited to a future meeting to discuss connecting with 14 – 18 years olds.

79 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Environmental Improvement Programme for 2019/20, which outlined the schemes to be funded, was presented to members.

The way the match funding worked was queried, and in response it was explained that it was not an equal match and that additional funding sometimes came from third party contributions.

A member asked officers to examine the quality of work undertaken on the wall at Newbold Verdon church hall as it was of a poor standard.

RESOLVED – the schemes recommended be endorsed.

80 HERITAGE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Members were updated on work undertaken on the Heritage Strategy action plan. The following points were raised:

- Twycross Zoo was the borough's biggest tourism attraction
- The Tourism Partnership ran initiatives including discounts for visits to multiple attractions

- The annual tourism report would be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Commission
- A bid had been submitted for the proposed 1485 sculpture trail
- Desford and Markfield had successful heritage trails
- The yards and jitties of Hinckley should be promoted due to the heritage aspect
- Hinckley Castle should be a tourist attraction.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The report be noted and work be endorsed;
- (ii) Information on heritage trails be circulated to members;
- (iii) A presentation on tourism in the borough, including Hinckley Museum, be brought to a future meeting.

81 PARISH & COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FUND

Members were informed of the agreed allocation of grants under the Parish and Community Initiative Fund. A member suggested streamlining the application process due to the amount of time it had taken to approve requests or having a rolling application process with quarterly decisions. Other changes were discussed and dismissed, such as involving members on the panel and amending the application criteria. Members were, however, clear that the scheme worked well and had brought about many benefits and came to the conclusion that no change was required.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The allocations be noted;
- (ii) No change to the scheme be recommended.

82 RETENTION OF BLOCK C AND POTENTIAL IMPACT ON MTFS

Further to a request of the chairman, the Scrutiny Commission received a report which informed them of the potential impact of the decision to retain block C of the Crescent in the council's ownership. The report included implications for the development of the crematorium.

In response to members' questions, the following was noted:

- Many councils nationally were investing in high street retail to help address declining town centres
- The council's investment in block C had made the development viable which had regenerated a previously run down part of the town
- The town had lower retail property vacancy rates than the East Midlands and national averages
- A consultant had been engaged to assist work on the development of the crematorium
- The proposed charges for the crematorium were lower than comparable providers
- Discounts for residents of the borough using the crematorium were still being discussed
- The quality of the service at the crematorium was important so the number of cremations predicted was conservative to ensure each service had sufficient time
- A decision on the operator of the crematorium was yet to be made.

Councillor Williams wished it to be recorded that he felt there was a financial risk to the council in retaining block C due to the current commercial market, the number of assumptions made in relation to the crematorium and the level of the loan required to be able to develop the crematorium. He felt that local councils had a place as an enabler of retail development but not as a retail property manager.

Some members expressed concern about using funding from the Developing Communities Fund (DCF) for the crematorium which would effectively be taking funding from the rural areas for the benefit of Hinckley.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The concerns of members be noted;
- (ii) The Scrutiny Commission seeks regular reports on performance of assets and looks to consider alternative uses and strategies;
- (iii) The risk management profile be reviewed regularly;
- (iv) The use of the Developing Communities Fund as a mechanism to support the development of the crematorium be not supported.

83 MINUTES OF FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

The minutes of the meetings of Finance & Performance Scrutiny on 24 June were noted.

84 MATTERS FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

On the motion of Councillor Lay seconded by Councillor Williams, it was

RESOLVED – in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

85 DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES FUND: ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Members received a report on successful completion of schemes from the first phase of the Developing Communities Fund (DCF) and proposed allocation of funding for the second phase.

At this juncture, Councillor Crooks declared a personal interest in the Newbold Verdon application as part of a group working on the project and took no part in the discussion.

A member queried the situation in relation to Oddfellows pub, Higham on the Hill and officers agreed to investigate whether a sale had been agreed.

In relation to Barwell, officers agreed to continue working with the Barwell Town Team to find a way forward on the project. A member expressed concern that the disrepair of the site known as “top town motors” had led to the town being unwilling to enter Barwell in Bloom and suggested that a solution needed to be found.

In response to a member’s question, it was noted that groups could still bid in round two if they had received funding in round one, subject to not exceeding the threshold set. It

was, however, explained that the funding for Market Bosworth in round two was actually the same project as that approved for round one, but had been phased.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The proposed allocation of funding be endorsed and RECOMMENDED to the Strategic Leadership Team;
- (ii) Work be progressed with the town team in Barwell.

(The Meeting closed at 9.04 pm)

CHAIRMAN