

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

12 DECEMBER 2024 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr C Lambert - Chair
Cllr MJ Surtees and Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chair
Cllr RG Allen (for Cllr M Simmons), Cllr DS Cope, Cllr C Gibbens, Cllr C Harris,
Cllr J Moore, Cllr A Pendlebury and Cllr A Weightman

Officers in attendance: Chris Brown, Valerie Bunting, Bill Cullen, Malcolm Evans, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Edward Stacey, Sharon Stacey and Ashley Wilson

287. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Crooks and Simmons with the substitution of Councillor R Allen for Councillor Simmons authorised in accordance with council procedure rule 10.

288. **Minutes**

It was moved by Councillor Gibbens, seconded by Councillor Cope and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

289. **Declarations of interest**

No interests were declared.

290. **Scrutiny Commission Work Programme**

The chair reported the following updates to the work programme since publication:

- 30 January
 - The Chief Executive would provide an update on the peer review and recommendations
 - The Leader and Deputy would be invited
 - Consideration would be given to moving the health review
- 13 March
 - The Overview & Scrutiny statutory guidance would be considered
 - Representatives of Cineworld would be in attendance
- 5 June
 - It was proposed that the meeting be moved to 26 June.

The following was also noted:

- A review of the recommendations of the 2022 planning review would be scheduled following further discussion on timing
- An update on devolution had been requested

- It was important that members were updated on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and Planning Committee reforms.

It was moved by Councillor Lambert, seconded by Councillor Surtees and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The work programme be updated;
- (ii) The June meeting be moved to 26 June.

291. **Affordable Housing Delivery**

Members received the annual update on affordable housing delivery in the borough. During discussion, reference was made to:

- Affordable rented accommodation
- Integration of owned and rented homes on a site
- The requirement for 20% affordable housing in the urban area as opposed to 40% in the rural areas
- The delay between permission being granted and the building of the affordable homes being commenced.

It was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Allen and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The report be noted;
- (ii) The positive delivery of completions and permissions of affordable housing in the borough in excess of the core strategy targets be noted.

292. **Planning appeals annual update**

Members were updated on performance in relation to planning appeals during 2023/24. It was reported that 34 appeal decisions were received in the year, with 12 of them being allowed and 22 dismissed. Members expressed concern that there did not appear to be a pattern within those allowed by the inspector. Discussion ensued regarding the five-year housing land supply following the announcement earlier that day that the housing requirement for the borough had been significantly increased.

It was moved by Councillor Allen, seconded by Councillor Harris and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The report be noted;
- (ii) The financial implications of planning appeals and the impact of appeals performance be acknowledged.

293. **Budget Strategy 2025/26**

The budget strategy 2025/26 was presented to the Scrutiny Commission. In response to members' questions, the following was noted:

- The business rates reset was anticipated for 2026/27 and would have an impact on the financial position of the borough council
- Use of reserves may need to increase in future years to supplement general fund balances.

It was moved by Councillor Lambert, seconded by Councillor Williams and

RESOLVED – the budget strategy for 2025/26 be noted.

294. **Crematorium Presentation**

Members received a presentation on the crematorium project. It was noted that the project would be subject to a competitive process and negotiations which would need to be reported in private session if members wished to be updated at a future date because of commercial sensitivity.

295. **Scrutiny review: housing**

The Scrutiny Commission received the report of the task & finish group following its review of housing and homelessness. It was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Gibbens and

RESOLVED –

- (i) Officers be recommended to:
 - a. Share information between the revenues and the housing services including a list of empty properties, the size of the properties and any second homes where the owner also lived in the borough;
 - b. Continue dialogue with local landlords and their representatives with a view to seeking to work together to relieve pressure on the homelessness service.
- (ii) The Executive be recommended to:
 - a. Consider providing additional staffing to investigate empty properties and bring them back into use;
 - b. Consider increasing capacity and expertise within the relevant team to benefit from opportunities to acquire S106 properties;
 - c. Lobby government in relation to:

- Section 106 sites: relating to affordable housing, engagement with registered providers, community infrastructure and viability;
- Right to buy: restricting the sale of council properties to support the council in retaining its housing stock;
- Empty properties: funding to assist with bringing empty properties back into use;
- Officer capacity and funding: funding for staffing to progress housing initiatives and requesting additional financial support for developing and acquiring council housing
- General: promoting a more coordinated approach to housing-related policies across government departments.

(iii) A review of the action undertaken following the consideration of the recommendations be added to the overview & scrutiny work programme for 2025/26.

296. Minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny

The minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny held on 28 October were received for information.

297. Matters from which the public may be excluded

On the motion of Councillor Williams seconded by Councillor Allen, 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.

298. Cineworld Hinckley

Members were informed of recent negotiations which resulted in Cineworld in Hinckley remaining open despite the national closure of five other branches. Members thanked officers who had worked at pace over the summer to secure the cinema in Hinckley. It was noted that representatives of Cineworld would attend a future meeting to update members on their plans.

(The meeting closed at 8.30 pm)

CHAIR