

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

10 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MR Lay - Chairman
Cllr C Ladkin and Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chairmen
Cllr JMT Collett, Cllr DS Cope, Cllr MJ Crooks, Cllr L Hodgkins, Cllr K Morrell,
Cllr A Pendlebury, Cllr MC Sheppard-Bools and Cllr R Webber-Jones

Also in attendance: Councillor KWP Lynch

Officers in attendance: Chris Brown, Valerie Bunting, Bill Cullen, Edwina Grant,
Simon D Jones, Lesley Keal, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen and Ashley Wilson

198. Minutes

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Webber-Jones and

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

199. Declarations of interest

Councillor Pendlebury declared an interest in agenda item 6 (health and wellbeing) as an employee of the NHS.

Councillor Collett entered the meeting at 6.33pm.

200. Health and wellbeing

Members received a presentation from representatives of the respective agencies on the Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Leicestershire Public Health Strategy, proposed healthcare investment and dentistry services in Hinckley and Bosworth. During discussion, reference was made to the following:

- The lasting impact of covid on health services
- The new capital funded proposal for Hinckley District Hospital site which was currently awaiting decision by NHS England
- The £14.7m capital for a new community diagnostic centre in Hinckley which had been approved
- Increasing construction costs and inflation which were being factored into funding applications
- Plans to co-locate some NHS services at Hinckley Hub
- Issues as a result of dental funding not being ring fenced
- Loss of investment on specialist orthodontic dental services from NHS commissioned dental services for Leicestershire
- Staffing shortages in dentistry
- Capacity for dental treatment in the borough limited to only 50% of the local population.

Officers were commended on their work in partnership with health agencies in delivering the district offer to health. It was noted that there was no requirement to do this, but it was important for residents.

Councillor Sheppard-Bools left the meeting at 7.30pm.

201. **Cost of living crisis**

Consideration was given to a report which introduced the cost of living action plan to help address the impact of the cost of living crisis. Members highlighted the importance of the council's work on this issue and the need for it to continue despite it not being a statutory service. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The need to hold advice events in the rural areas and the wider urban area
- The importance of monetary donations to food banks
- The young people's Voice forum was undertaking a project in relation to foodbanks and would be making a video to raise awareness
- The services available to rural areas including Earl Shilton and Barwell.

Members were reminded of previous reviews into poverty in the borough including fuel poverty and it was agreed that the reports would be revisited.

Councillor Webber-Jones left the meeting at 7.55pm.

202. **Affordable housing delivery**

Members received an annual updated on the delivery of affordable housing in the borough. It was noted that some for-profit organisations including banks were moving into affordable housing with support of Homes England. The viability of the sustainable urban extensions was queried and members were informed that work was still underway and the proposals would be subject to a viability assessment.

Members welcomed the work undertaken by officers.

203. **Infrastructure funding statement**

Members were provided with a copy of the infrastructure funding statement report for the financial year 2021/2022. Members thanked officers for their work in monitoring and chasing progress on S106 contributions.

204. **Local plan update**

The Scrutiny Commission received an update on the local plan and the need for the revised timetable and attention was drawn to a briefing note recently sent out. The importance of attending the Planning Policy Working Group was emphasised as members were reminded that the Scrutiny Commission was not the relevant body to be considering the detail of the local plan.

Councillor Collett left the meeting at 8.25pm.

205. Acquisition and Development Strategy

Members gave consideration to a new strategy to provide the framework for acquiring assets and developing land as part of the council's delivery of services to stimulate and support regeneration and economic growth and to increase the supply of new affordable homes. The strategy was required in order to expedite decision making to take advantage of development opportunities.

Some members expressed concern at the suggestion that investment outside of the borough may be made. In response, it was noted that investment would be limited to the functional economic geography of the borough which could extend into the Leicester and Coventry LEP areas. The example was given of a project which created employment benefitting the borough and generated a return on investment. It was noted that the wholly owned company may be a vehicle used for some of the projects if it was more suitable.

RESOLVED – the strategy be RECOMMENDED to Council.

Councillor Lynch left the meeting at 8.49pm.

206. Planning service scrutiny review

The chair, on behalf of the Planning Service Scrutiny review working group, presented the findings of the review which had been carried out following the unprecedented exit of planning staff in 2021. It was reported that areas of concern included workload, morale, recruitment and retention, member/officer relations, lack of feedback to senior management and early engagement of members in the planning application determination process. Attention was drawn to the recommendations within the report. It was noted that a lot of work had already taken place to address the issues and the Director (Community & Development) had put in place an action plan and established a range of thematic working groups focussed on improvements to the service.

Whilst there were still recruitment problems, members thanked the Planning Manager for his hard work since coming into post. The Planning Manager reported that numbers of outstanding applications were reducing and workloads in terms of the number of applications being handled by one officer had reduced.

The importance of attending planning agenda meetings in order to maintain an awareness of upcoming applications and ask questions was emphasised, along with the importance of the Planning Policy Working Group.

In terms of recommendations, members felt the workload management tool was crucial in order to monitor workloads and escalate issues to the strategic leadership team if necessary. It was also felt that an officer/member engagement event would be a helpful opportunity to meet officers and to improve working together and that officers should be reminded of the process for addressing member behaviour.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The recommendations in the report be endorsed;
- (ii) Progress be monitored by the Scrutiny Commission and Finance & Performance Scrutiny.

207. Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

It was agreed that the chair and vice-chairs would consider how to take forward work to revisit the poverty review.

208. Minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny

Minutes of the meeting of Finance & Performance Scrutiny were received for information.

(The Meeting closed at 9.23 pm)

CHAIRMAN