

Minutes

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| Meeting name | Scrutiny Committee |
| Date | Tuesday, 23 July 2019 |
| Start time | 6.30 pm |
| Venue | Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH |

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Cumbers (Chair)

Councillors R. Bindloss (Vice-Chair) R. Browne
J. Douglas C. Evans
R. Smedley J. Wilkinson

Observers P. Chandler

Officers Deputy Chief Executive & Director for People & Communities
Director for Law and Governance
Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

| Minute No. | Minute |
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| 10 | <p>Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Child, Fisher and Holmes.</p> |
| 11 | <p>Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were approved and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p> |
| | <p>For Scrutiny</p> |
| 13 | <p>Questions to Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity, Councillor Higgins:</p> <p>(a) gave a presentation (copies of which had been circulated at this meeting and is attached), setting out current performance, focus and challenges for the portfolio around:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre, Tourism, Events and Place Promotion • Economic Growth and Inward Investment • Planning Policy and Housing Delivery • Major Developments <p>(b) asked Members if the format of the presentation had been useful and advised that more in-depth information would be provided as the portfolio grew.</p> <p>Members commented that the presentation had been helpful and they looked forward to receiving more information in due course.</p> <p>A Member asked if it was viable for the Council to set up a housing company to tackle housing needs. The Councillor Higgins provided a brief overview of how a housing company would work and the Director for Growth and Regeneration, Mrs. Parikh advised that there was an appetite for this. The Council had approved it in principle last year and an outline business case has been prepared. Drafting a detailed business case was the next stage, once development information was in place.</p> <p>A Member queried if there had been any progress on car parking charges, in relation to pay on departure. Councillor Higgins confirmed that he had raised this with Mrs. Parikh. This could increase revenue for the Council.</p> <p>Another Member asked if developers would find it more viable to build if the</p> |

'builder's contribution' was ended. Councillor Higgins advised that the contributions were required to provide community facility but viability was taken into account.

Referring to the Council's five year land supply, a Member asked how many new homes could be built during that time. The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services, Mr. Worley advised that the Council's supply was just under eight years and this equated to approximately 2,500 new homes which could be built.

Another Member commented that tourism formed part of this portfolio and enquired whether the Council should recruit a Tourism Officer. Councillor Higgins advised that as yet it was unclear what the remit of such a position would be and there was no money available to fund this role. It was highly likely that if the Council did wish to recruit a Tourism Officer, the position would be funded through the revenue it created and should be partly supported by the businesses it would be involved with.

[The meeting adjourned at 19:35.]

[The meeting reconvened at 19:45.]

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Consultation on Corporate Debt and Income Maximisation Policy

The Committee received a report on the Corporate Debt and Income Maximisation Policy from the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People and Communities.

Mr. Aubrey, Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People and Communities, provided a brief overview of the report, advising that Cabinet had approved the commencement of an eight week consultation period for the Corporate Debt and Income Maximisation Policy, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report. The Committee were invited to provide comments as consultees. Mr Aubrey highlighted that details about sundry debts had been circulated to Members via email (for background information) and hard copies of the email were available at this meeting;

A Member asked how much debt had been written off by the Council and how performance had improved since the Debt Officer post had been in place.

Mr. Aubrey advised that the amount of debt would have to be confirmed outside this meeting, as the information was not on hand. Bad debt provision had been increased and the Debt Officer post had been in place for around two years. The focus had been on collecting current debt and in year performance on collecting the current debt had improved from around 77% to around 85%.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- Over half of the Council's debt was in respect of housing benefit overpayments. Members raised whether this was in any way as a result of Universal Credit problems. It was important to be realistic about the likelihood of recovering this debt.
- Members queried whether there had been an increase in council tax support to vulnerable people and if this had contributed to them having greater debt

arrears.

- Members wanted to be reassured that the Council provided help, support and intervention for vulnerable people and were pleased that this had been addressed in the Policy.
- A Debt and Income Maximisation Policy was needed. However, consideration should be given as to why the Council's level of debt was so high and this in turn needed to inform the Policy, to ensure it was fit for purpose.
- Members enquired about the Council's debt, whether it had been growing and whether officers had been chasing the debt or if it would be written off. The Council should put every effort into recovering monies owed to it. (The Chair highlighted that the Council aimed to maximise its debt recovery and that this was the purpose of the Policy).
- Payment up-front and withdrawal of service, as detailed at paragraph 3.6 of the report was positive. It was noted that payment up-front was not appropriate for the Lifeline service and withdrawal of service only applied to discretionary services.
- Members noted that the Council had a high number of debtors opting to make payments via direct debit and that the Council aimed to increase this number further.
- The 'balanced approach', as detailed at paragraph 3.7 of the report was welcomed. Help and support must be given to people but action, including court action should be taken when necessary. In certain cases, it would not be cost effective to pursue a debt.
- The Council needed to understand the reasons why people found it difficult to make payments on time and whether this was caused by poor money management. Consideration should be given to make it more accessible and easier for payments to be made throughout each month (such as through a phone app), as it appeared that money was being spent before direct debit due dates.
- Prioritisation of the recovery of debts, which related solely to the Council, as detailed at paragraph 3.5 of the report was noted. This aimed to maximise the Council's debt income.
- Most Members agreed that writing off the debt of a deceased person was appropriate. The Director for Corporate Services had delegated authority to write-off irrecoverable debts up to a limit of £2,500 (in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder). Debts over £2,500 would be reported to Cabinet.
- Members noted the six years limitation which applied to much of the Council's debt.
- Members raised the current review of the Council's financial system Oracle, commenting that the system had cost a lot of money and requested further information regarding the value for money test in relation to moving to an upgrade/new system. Members were advised that the system had been procured by four of the Council's five partner councils. Further information would be provided to Members outside this meeting.

Mr. Aubrey commented that Universal Credit had possibly had an impact on

Council debt. The position may worsen, as Universal Credit was yet to be rolled out fully. One of its aims was to prepare people for work and for managing their money, paying their rent etc, which was why the rent money was being paid to the person rather than to the landlord directly.

The Council had in the past considered selling its debt but this would not be possible for housing benefit debt, which was subject to statutory requirements.

RESOLVED

The Committee's comments on the proposed Corporate Debt and Income Maximisation Policy be assessed and built into the Policy where appropriate.

For Approval

15

Establishment of Task and Finish Group

The Committee received a report on the Establishment of a Task and Finish Group from the Director for Law and Governance.

Mrs. Wylie, Director for Law and Governance introduced the report by highlighting that at the last meeting of this Committee, Members had considered the Workplan and had indicated that they would like to undertake a review of Housing Management Voids and Temporary Accommodation. Mrs. Wylie drew Members attention to Appendix 1 of the report (Terms of Reference), advising that the scoping exercise could be used to determine if these were appropriate. Any revisions would be proposed at the next meeting of this Committee and would not inhibit the Task Group from starting the review. The revised Scoping Document and an update on the work of the Group would be presented at the next meeting.

A Member commented that they did not want to lose focus on Homelessness. The impact of registered social landlords and private landlords needed to be considered.

RESOLVED

- (1) To **APPROVE** the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation. The review will support the organisational review of service quality and will give Members the opportunity to understand the systems thinking methodology currently being deployed for service improvement;
- (2) To **APPROVE** the Terms of Reference (which included the scope of the review) and **NOTE** that revisions may be proposed to the next meeting of the Committee, as scheduled in the Annual Calendar of Meetings, once a Scoping Document has been completed by the Group. Any revisions shall not inhibit the Group from commencing the review;
- (3) To **NOTE** that the Scoping Document shall include a timetable for

completion of the review and shall be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, as scheduled in the Annual Calendar of Meetings;

- (4) To **APPROVE** the membership of the Task and Finish Group to be no more than four Members, which shall include the Chair of this Committee and three other Members, as determined by the Chair (one place to be offered to the Opposition Group).

For Review Only

16

Review of Forward Plan and Annual Work Plan

Mrs. Wylie

- (a) asked Members to consider what they would like to include in the Work Plan. Comments should be submitted to the Chair and Vice Chair;
- (b) confirmed that currently, there were no consultation items on the Forward Plan (for the period August 2019 to October 2019). Relevant items would be brought to Members attention accordingly;
- (c) highlighted that the new Democratic Services Manager would be in post on Monday (29 July).

A Member asked Mrs. Wylie, Director for Law and Governance to clarify that the Members were able to request that the Leader of the Council attend a Committee meeting to answer questions and she confirmed that Members were able to do this.

Other Members asked if it would be possible to invite partner organisations, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner. Mrs. Wylie highlighted that the Leader was the Council's link to the Police and Crime Commissioner and confirmed that the Committee was able to invite any partner agency to attend a meeting if they wished.

Any relevant items for inclusion in the Work Plan should be submitted to the Chair for further consideration at the next meeting of this Committee (on 17 September 2019).

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Review Updates

There were no review updates.

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Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at: 8.30 pm

Chair

Growth & Prosperity

July 2019

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Cllr Leigh Higgins

Growth & Prosperity:

- Town Centre, Tourism, Events and Place Promotion
- Economic Growth and Inward Investment
- Planning Policy and Housing Delivery
- Major Developments (development of council assets)

Update:

- Accomplishments so far
- Status update since last quarter
- Planned actions for the next quarter
- Key risks and dependencies

Portfolio: GROWTH & PROSPERITY

Reporting Date : _____

Portfolio Holder : CLLR L HIGGINS

Lead Officer : _____

Estimated End Date _____

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| Define | Design | Build | Consultation | Deploy |
| Stakeholders | G | Resources | A | |
| Budget | G | Risks | A | |
| Scope | B | Issues | A | |
| Work & Schedule | R | | | |

| GROWTH AND PROSPERITY – (1) TOWN CENTRE, TOURISM, EVENTS AND PLACE PROMOTION | |
|--|---|
| <p>Last month's accomplishments:</p> <p>1) Established the Place Board and 3 sub-groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animation and events • regeneration and infrastructure • skills, business support and inward investment <p>2) Engagement with Rural Pubs in order to understand barriers to their sustainability and prosperity</p> <p>3) Tenders for Country Park café leases</p> | <p><i>Next 3 Month's Goals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meetings of each Place Board sub group and agreeing future agendas. This will set out directions and actions going forward for all partners.</i> • <i>Report to Cabinet- support for rural pubs</i> • <i>Conclusion of tender exercise- Country park cafe</i> |
| <p>Differences from planned accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None | <p>Risks / Dependencies / Other comments:</p> <p>Risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Quality of tender documents not satisfactory. 2) Competing and conflicting views from Place Board partners <p>Dependencies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Planning Policy for digital infrastructure. 2) Financial implications |

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Portfolio: GROWTH & PROSPERITY

Reporting Date : _____

Portfolio Holder : CLLR L HIGGINS

Lead Officer : _____

Estimated End Date _____

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| Scope | B | Issues | A | |
| Work & Schedule | R | | | |

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY – (2) ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INWARD INVESTMENT

Last month's accomplishments:

- 1) Business engagement – work commenced using the Manufacturing Zone (MAZ) grant
- 2) Nottingham Rail connectivity – consultants appointed
- 3) Ongoing work on LEADER assessments
- 4) Signing the A46 Trade Corridor Pledge and joining the A46 Partnership (route planning)

Next 3 Month's Goals

- *Procurement of consultants for development of Manufacturing Zone employment sites*
- *Participation in A46 Partnership meetings as they travel eastwards to our boundary*

Differences from planned accomplishments:

- **None**

Risks / Dependencies / Other comments:

Risk:

- 1) Quality of tender documents for not satisfactory.

Dependencies:

- 1) Local Industrial Strategy

Pages

Portfolio: GROWTH & PROSPERITY

Reporting Date : _____

Portfolio Holder : CLLR L HIGGINS

Lead Officer : _____

Estimated End Date _____

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| Stakeholders | G | Resources | A | |
| Budget | G | Risks | A | |
| Scope | B | Issues | A | |
| Work & Schedule | R | | | |

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY – (3) PLANNING POLICY AND HOUSING DELIVERY

Last month's accomplishments:

- Page 6
1. Planning SPDs
 - Masterplans for Northern and Southern SN's
 - Design Guidance SPD out to consultation
 - Developers Contributions out to consultation
 - Affordable Housing SPD adopted on 9th July
 - Housing Delivery Test and Action Plan showed increase in delivery circa 60% Delivery Test 84% required Action Plan - approved 9th July:2018/19
 2. Planning service review
 3. Ab Kettleby neighbourhood plan
 4. MMDR

Next 3 Month's Goals

- **Masterplans for Northern and Southern neighbourhoods** : consultation complete and responses reviewed
- **Design Guidance SPD** out to consultation : Expected Completion – autumn 2019
- **Developers Contributions SPD:** Prioritisation of all the (growing) calls made on developments when viability issues are present. Includes LCC, NHS, Parish, Police and other requests. **Completion estimated Autumn 2019**
- **Ab Kettleby Neighbourhood Plan:** referendum process to start

Differences from planned accomplishments:

- **None**

Risks / Dependencies / Other comments:

Risk:

- 1) Reliance on private sector and external forces for delivery

Dependencies:

- 1) Planning service review, MMDR, development of council owned sites

Portfolio: GROWTH & PROSPERITY

Reporting Date : _____

Portfolio Holder : CLLR L HIGGINS

Lead Officer : _____

Estimated End Date _____

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| Define | Design | Build | Consultation | Deploy |
| Stakeholders | G | Resources | A | |
| Budget | G | Risks | A | |
| Scope | B | Issues | A | |
| Work & Schedule | R | | | |

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY – (4) MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Last month's accomplishments:
Planning SPDs

1. Major Development secured and progressed: Significant upturn in the number of permissions and sites available (land supply approx 8 years). Permissions granted for major sites (**Bottesford, Waltham sites underway**)

2. Development of Council owned sites – Cattle Market, Leisure sites etc: stakeholder engagement of development options and opportunities started.

Next 3 Month's Goals

- Major Developments:** Many more in the pipeline – see agendas for 1st August (700 houses and significant infrastructure at Melton North) and 29th August (Melton South (550), Asfordby (70) and Melton Spinney Rd (200) anticipated)
- Development of Council owned sites :** Masterplans and development appraisals for all Council owned sites for a range of uses.

Differences from planned accomplishments:

- None**

Risks / Dependencies / Other comments:

Risk:

- Stakeholders expectations, viability, funding

Dependencies:

- Planning Policy

Any views/ comments?

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Thank you 😊