

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 16th July 2018

Present: Cllr Lythgoe (Chair)
Cllrs Janet Eaton, Gill, Johnson, Kempson, Kenyon, Morris,
Procter, Robertson and Stansfield

In attendance: Sam Plum, Director of Communities
Cath Burns, Director of Economic Development
Guy Darragh, Economic Development Manager
Mick Coogan, Strategic Housing Manager
Jenni Cook, Committee Officer

Also Present: Cllrs Ashworth, A. Barnes, Bromley, Haworth, Essex, Lamb and
Walmsley
0 press
2 public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr L. Barnes (Cllr Stansfield substituting) and Zieda Ali (Co-opted Member).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2018 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items of business.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 The Chair noted that he would allow questions to be asked on each item as it was discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 6.1 Following the last meeting, the following updates were given:-
- Public Protection Unit (PPU): The PPU are looking at various options and work areas which includes fly tipping and other environmental crime.

Discussions were ongoing with partners regarding the Policy and CCTV suppliers. A members briefing is taking place on 17th July 2018 which will go into more detail.

- PPU can and do still access the DVLA database to establish ownership of vehicles when dealing with reports of abandoned cars.
- Complaints/Compliments: an annual complaints/compliments report will come as it does every year. This will probably be in September as the Council has not yet received the Ombudsman's annual letter. The report will go to Management Team first and more information was requested on learning outcomes so this will take more time to collate.

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE

7.1 The Director of Economic Development gave a presentation which outlined the draft Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale 2018-2033, summarised as follows:-

- A 15 year strategy with a performance based action plan to welcome sustainable growth; Rossendale is open for business.
- Rossendale's strategic context was defined, with particular reference to The Government Industrial Strategy 2017, the Transport for North 2020/50 Strategy and the Local Prosperity Fund.
- The SWOT for the Strategy was outlined which referenced active enterprises, manufacturing strength, resilient economy, natural beauty of the valley, difficult topography, commuters, economic and social deprivation, staff resources, local plan, road infrastructure and need for a rail link.
- The vision and priority themes were outlined with reference to establishing strong Town Centres, promoting the Invest in Rossendale brand, creating a strong, indigenous business base, developing the visitor economy and ensuring residents and communities reach their full potential.
- The economic narrative was outlined which included upgrading the A56 to an expressway, a new vision for Bacup, further investment, and progressing vision for town centres.

7.2 Members and members of the public commented as summarised below:-

- There was a mechanism for the Council to input into consultation documents and this was being done via discussions with Transport for North and the Leader had met with Andy Burnham.
- 27 hectares of land had been identified within the Local Plan.
- The food offer in Haslingden was noted and a Hot Food Takeaway Policy was being included within the Local Plan.
- Targeting of businesses with a strong ICT base was discussed.
- The Nathaniel Litchfield report commissioned a few years previously was discussed.
- Transport links were noted and the need for a rail link.
- The Strategy and update was welcomed and could be transformational for the Valley. It was noted that once this was out of a draft format, members may require a longer session for further discussion.

7.3 The Economic Development Manager gave a Project Update as follows:-

- Rail link: this would be transformational if successful and would have a huge impact on income levels within the Valley. This was a very long-term and challenging project involving multiple agencies.
- Spinning Point: the planning permission for stage 2 had been obtained and reports were being taken to Full Council on 18th July 2018 to discuss further.
- Futures Park Leisure Village: work was ongoing on this complex project with legal charges to overcome.
- Whitaker HLF: Funding had been obtained for the new proposal with the full application being submitted in November 2018. This could potentially release £1.9m of funding.
- Ski Rossendale: work was ongoing on the new facilities including a new café/bar and changing facilities.
- Rossendale Works: this was a project to get local people into local employment through placements, sport and volunteering. At a recent session approximately 400 people seeking work had attended.

7.4 Members and members of the public commented on the update as summarised below:

- Small businesses must be supported.
- The project update tied into the draft Economic Development Strategy
- The Leader had recently shown the President and Regional Chair of the RTPi around Rawtenstall.
- The success of the Northern Grip Festival was discussed.
- The need for a rail link was emphasised.
- More positive publicity was required regarding the project update and plans for the Economic Development Strategy.

Resolved:

1. The update was welcomed and noted and any further observations to be sent directly to the Director of Economic Development.

Note: Cath Burns and Guy Darragh left the meeting.

8. ENFORCED SALES POLICY AND PROCEDURE JULY 2018

8.1 The Chair noted that this was a draft policy and procedure which was seeking recommendations to Cabinet, with minor amendments delegated to the relevant portfolio holder and officers.

8.2 Members commented on the report as follows:-

- With regards to section 3 of the report, it was clarified that all three criteria must be met.
- If a councillor wanted to purchase a property how would this be dealt with in terms of transparency? It was noted that the property would be sent to auction so there would be no control over who could purchase it, although conditions would be attached to the purchase. This could be checked with the Legal department.

- The Officer had been in place for one year and resources had now allowed for this policy to be developed.
- Costs would be recouped from the sale of the property.
- This policy was quicker than a CPO, however the council preferred assisted sales rather than enforced sale.
- Clarity was given on the '1,400 empty properties' figure which was often quoted and this was clarified as everything from second homes, short time voids, long-term voids.
- This policy was not in reference to council tax debt; this was regarding works in default.
- It should be ensured that the review dates on the policy was correct before it was brought before the Cabinet.
- Any further suggestions for the policy should be sent to the officer directly.

Resolved:

1. That the Enforced Sales Policy is recommended to Cabinet for approval.
2. That all future minor amendments to the policy are delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

9. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY 2018/19

- 9.1 The Chair introduced the policy and noted that this was a draft policy. The Director of Communities clarified that the proposed changes would remove the means testing for grants of under £7k; allowing the fund to be more widely used and spent.
- 9.2 Members and members of the public commented on the policy as follows:-
- Removal of means testing for applications under £7k was welcomed.
 - Other East Lancashire Councils were in a similar position.
 - More publicity was required once the policy had been approved.
 - Shortage of Occupational Therapists was an issue; however the council was not allowed to spend the surplus fund on employing one.
 - The wording of the policy would be reviewed and the Chair would meet with the officer to discuss.

Resolved:

1. That the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, along with the appendices is recommended to Cabinet for approval.
2. That all future minor amendments to the policy are delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. THE FORWARD PLAN

- 10.1 The Committee and Member Services Officer noted that many of the items on the Forward Plan were due to be put before a future O&S Committee meeting. The Home Working Policy would be added to the plan and would be tabled at the September meeting.

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.10pm