

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom.

WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2021

Present:-

Cllr. Geoff Welsh (Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)
Cllr. Lee Breckon (Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner) and Cllr. Sam Maxwell
(Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)

Cllr. Nick Brown
Cllr. Nick Chapman
Cllr. Adrian Clifford
Cllr. Roy Denney

Cllr. David Findlay
Cllr. Nigel Grundy
Cllr. Mark Jackson
Cllr. Michael O'Hare

Cllr. Louise Richardson
Cllr. Kirsteen Thomson
Cllr. Jane Wolfe

Officers present:-

Jane Toman	- Chief Executive
Cat Hartley	- Planning & Strategic Growth Group Manager
Sandeep Tiensa	- Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer
Nicole Cramp	- Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
Katie Saunders	- Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

Apologies:-

Cllr. Shane Blackwell, Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore, Cllr. Deanne Freer and
Cllr. Antony Moseley

240. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

No disclosures were received.

241. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2021 ,as circulated, were approved as a correct record.

242. CABINET EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ADMINISTRATIONS 2021/22 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS

Considered – Report of the Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer.

Considered – Report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

DECISION

Scrutiny Commission noted Cabinet Executive’s response to Scrutiny recommendations on the Draft Budget Proposals.

Reason:

As set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, implemented on 1 April 2009, it is the duty of the Executive to respond to Scrutiny reports and recommendations.

243. BLABY PLAN PRIORITIES

Considered – Report of the Chief Executive.

The Chairman asked how we measure the success of the ‘visit’ priority within the Blaby District Plan.

The Chief Executive advised that there are various sources of data and information that is analysed, for example feedback from the Fosse Park extension that has recently opened. Other examples were given such as feedback from the public about local parks in the district, as well as social media providing feedback and data to consider. The Chief Executive also advised that data measuring the volume of car’s parking in Fosse Park is another source of information used to measuring the ‘visit’ priority.

The Chairman expressed concerns over the lack of hotel accommodation within the district to correspond with the increase in visitors.

The Chief Executive acknowledged this concern, and confirmed that new hotel accommodation has always been a need for the district.

Cllr. Nick Brown questioned what the Blaby District Plan would like to have achieved if it had additional resources?

The Chief Executive advised that the Blaby District Plan is about what is going on now and that future priorities will be affected by funding and investment, therefore attracting investment is important. The Chief Executive then told members that there is a specific funding available (e.g. LAD Funding) , however, the funding must be spent in a specific amount of time.

Cllr. Kirsteen Thomson expressed concerns about the lack of an integrated walk and ride plan.

The Chief Executive acknowledged these concerns, and expressed that we are learning from previous settlements such as Lubbethorpe, therefore in the future segregated cycling and walk and ride plans should be considered in the planning stage.

Cllr. Sam Maxwell expressed concerns over the effect on local businesses from heavily funded and promoted attractions such as Fosse Park. This is surrounding the concern of the public visiting sites such as Fosse Park, where large companies have outlets, rather than visiting local independent businesses.

The Chief Executive reassured members that they are focused on encouraging visitors to utilise not only sites such as Fosse Park, but local businesses in the District too and emphasised the importance of promoting local businesses.

Cllr. Nick Brown queried whether the route from Lubbethorpe to Braunstone

would indeed be happening this year as previously advised.

The Chief Executive advised members that the work and conversations surrounding this matter are still ongoing and that once there is an update this will be shared with members.

DECISION

Members noted the Blaby District Plan Priorities.

Reason:

It is appropriate for Scrutiny to consider these priorities to form future work programme items.

244. HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING APPLICATION PROTOCOL

Considered - Presentation of the Planning & Economic Development Group Manager.

The Planning & Economic Development Group Manager provided a recap on the previous discussion on 27 November 2019 surrounding this item. The protocol was discussed due to customer concerns about the inability to call in householder applications. Therefore members agreed to develop a trial scheme where an independent check by the Planning & Economic Development Group Manager is made when a case is raised by a Member relating to a householder application.

The Planning & Economic Development Group Manager explained to members how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted the volume of household planning applications, with 70% of applications between November – February being household. This then has led to a backlog of applications which the planning department are working through. Therefore, it was suggested that members discuss the possible outcomes of the protocol including how this could influence customer behaviour.

The Chairman queried whether there are any current issues with the existing protocol that members needed to be aware of.

The Planning & Economic Development Group Manager advised members that they were comfortable with the existing protocol and that it is not the right time to amend or discuss this as it could lead to customers using it in the wrong way, causing an increase in workload for the team.

Cllr. David Findlay expressed concerns over a possible backlog of applications this may cause.

The Planning & Economic Development Group Manager assured members that 100% of major applications have been completed in the correct time frame, as well as 90% of Householder applications being completed, so there should be no cause for concern. The Planning & Economic Group Manager also advised members that they have a job advert for a new senior planning officer about to be published which will be funded by external funding through a planning performance agreement. In addition, the department has been securing help through external planning officers on short-term, temporary contracts.

The Chairman suggested a 6 month delay of any amendment or discussion by the Scrutiny Commission of the protocol due to the possible implications this could have in relation to workload for officers and members. The Chairman and fellow members agreed that due to the circumstances surrounding the covid-19 pandemic, this was not the correct time to review the protocol.

DECISION

That Scrutiny members approve the continuation of the Householder Planning Application Protocol and review it again in 6 months.

Reason:

Due to current circumstances changes to the Householder Planning Application Protocol could change customer behavior in a negative manner.

245. CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

No issues were raised for further information or examination.

246. FURTHER ACTIONS FOR SCRUTINY ARISING FROM MEETING

There were no further actions arising.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.47 P.M.