

## **SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

**WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2023**

### **Present:-**

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)  
Cllr. Roy Denney (Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)

Cllr. Nick Chapman  
Cllr. Luke Cousin  
Cllr. Susan Findlay

Cllr. Janet Forey  
Cllr. Antony Moseley  
Cllr. Matt Tomeo

Cllr. Geoff Welsh  
Cllr. Neil Wright

### **Officers present:-**

Louisa Horton	- Corporate Services Group Manager & Monitoring Officer
Luke Clements	- Business Systems & Information Manager
Katie Brooman	- Elections and Governance Manager
Tracy Gaskin	- Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader
Sandeep Tiensa	- Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer
Isaac Thomas	- Democracy Support Officer

### **Apologies:-**

Cllr. Tracey Shepherd

#### **96. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS**

No disclosures were received.

#### **97. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023, as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

## **98. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2023-2026**

Considered - presentation by the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader.

The Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown welcomed the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader to the meeting.

The Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader provided an overview of the Economic Development Framework 2023-2026 and introduced the 'Economic Development Action Plans' document, which was circulated to Members as a handout at the start of the meeting.

The handout included five priority themes for driving economic improvement, each with an associated action plan. It was agreed that the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader would present each priority theme and take Members' questions on each.

### **Priority Theme 1: Supporting local businesses and innovation**

Members questioned the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader on the following:

- Blaby's strategy for SME's (small to medium-sized enterprises) and the challenge posed by Fosse Park to smaller retailers.
- The overall resilience of the local economy.
- The level of dialogue between Blaby District Council and the district's larger employers, such as Next, and the importance of knowing what these employers are looking for.
- The ecosystem of smaller businesses supplementing larger ones.
- The impact of the pandemic on SME's.
- How SME's are identified by the council. The Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader highlighted the success of initiatives like the weekly newsletter and bi-monthly Business Breakfast in providing key networking opportunities and support for local businesses. These initiatives helped to raise the council's profile and expand its SME database.

### **Priority theme 2: Shaping our work and skills agenda**

Members questioned the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader on the following:

- Increasing partnerships and building relationships with schools and higher education establishments.
- Upskilling Blaby District's workforce of the future.
- Identifying skill gaps among 16-24 year olds and mitigating the impact of the pandemic on their professional development.
- The affordability of housing relative to salaries across the district.

### Priority 3: Growing and supporting the Green Economy

Members questioned the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader on the following:

- How SME's are supported in going Green and the advice that is offered.
- Collating data on SME's that need the council's assistance in reducing their carbon footprint (e.g. solar panels and heat pumps).

### Priority 4: Building Pride in Place

Members questioned the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader on the following:

- The marketing of local businesses and the image of the District.
- How Blaby's visitor figures compare to other district and borough council's in terms of day and overnight visitors. The Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader responded that this information would be circulated in a future meeting.
- How Blaby's visitor statistics are calculated. The Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader responded that this would be taken into account and that a background to these statistics would be brought to a future meeting.
- The weighting of visitor statistics towards Fosse Park and the need to promote other areas of the district.

### Priority 5: Identifying Investable Propositions

Members questioned the Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader on the following:

- How the Economic Development Framework/ retail strategy aligns with the aims of the Local Plan and other strategies, particularly in terms of planning and land use. The Economic & Community Development, Work and Skills Team Leader explained that the 'Economic Development Action Plans' document was distributed to the Planning Department and that further input from the Planning Departments would be sought.
- Different methods of creating retail units, such as the pop-up shop model and the use of vacant spaces (e.g. empty supermarkets).
- The impact of Leicester City's rival markets policy on local business.

## **99. UPDATE ON CORPORATE MEASURES**

Considered - demonstration of Corporate Measures on iPlan by the Performance & Information Service Manager and the Corporate Services Group Manager.

The Performance & Information Service Manager explained that the performance management system formerly known as Pentana would henceforth be known as iPlan. Members were reminded of the suggestions made in the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on Wednesday 12 July 2023:

1. That the system display measureable targets and trends.
2. That clearer and simpler descriptions of measures be added to give meaning to the statistics.
3. That Scrutiny determine whether the right measures were categorized as Priority 1 through an examination of current Priority 1 and Priority 2 measures.
4. That self-service logins be provided for Members.
5. That trends be shown in a graphical format.

The Performance & Information Service Manager thanked Members for their previous feedback and explained that these five areas of improvement were now implemented. A list of data measures currently at Priority Level 2 was distributed to Member's for their feedback on whether any should be moved to Priority 1.

Members were made aware that self-service logins would be provided by email the following day. This was followed by a brief demonstration of iPlan in order for Members to get used to navigating the system. The Performance & Information Service Manager demonstrated the expanded context tabs that were added to give a fuller and more accessible description of each measure. Members were also shown how to view Priority 1 measures in a range of formats (e.g. chart, graph or numerical format).

The Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown thanked the officer for attending and asked Members to access iPlan via the self-service login when they receive them.

**100. PROPOSED 2023-24 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Considered - report of the Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer.

**DECISIONS**

1. That the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023-24 be approved.
2. That the Scrutiny Work Programme be communicated to all Councillors, Senior Officers and Parish and Town Councils.

Reason:

As set out in the Council's Constitution, Part 4, Section 5, paragraph 7, it is the responsibility of the Scrutiny Commission to set and agree its work programme for the next municipal year.

**101. CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN ITEMS**

The Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown informed Members that a regular budget monitoring item would be brought to the Commission as and when the quarterly figures are made available.

**102. FURTHER ACTIONS FOR SCRUTINY ARISING FROM MEETING**

There were no further actions arising from the meeting.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.52 P.M.**