



Committee and Date

Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

9th November 2023

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023

**In the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

2.00 pm - 3.25 pm

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend Committee Officer

Email: sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257721

Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Rosemary Dartnall, Julian Dean, Roger Evans, Nick Hignett, Ed Potter, Rob Wilson, Paul Wynn, Roy Aldcroft (Substitute) (substitute for Steve Davenport), Ted Clarke (Substitute) (substitute for Pamela Moseley) and Peggy Mullock (Substitute) (substitute for Garry Burchett)

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Garry Burchett (Councillor Peggy Mullock was in attendance as his substitute), Councillor Steve Davenport (Councillor Roy Aldcroft was in attendance as his substitute) and Councillor Pam Moseley (Councillor Ted Clarke was in attendance as her substitute).

5 Disclosable Interests

Councillor Roger Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 (Social Housing and Reviewing the Housing Strategy) as he was a Board member of Shropshire Rural Housing Association, which was a provider of houses.

Councillor Julian Dean declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 (Social Housing and Reviewing the Housing Strategy) as part of the discussion around housing would be concerning temporary lets and his current property was a temporary let.

6 Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED:

1. That the minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th May 2023 be approved as a correct record.
2. That the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meeting held on 23rd March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3. That the minutes of the Communities Overview Committee meeting held on 22nd March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

7 Public Question Time

There were none.

8 Member Question Time

There were none.

9 Social Housing and Reviewing the Housing Strategy

The committee received the report of the Scrutiny Manager which set out the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of work carried out by the former Communities Overview Committee as they considered housing need and social housing in Shropshire with the objective of informing the future review and update of the Housing Strategy.

The Scrutiny Manager took the committee through a presentation outlining the various meetings and workshop that had taken place to inform this piece of work, including the main learning points from both the meetings and workshop.

Also in attendance were the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets, the Assistant Director Homes and Communities, the Head of Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living and the Strategy and Development Manager.

Prior to discussion, both the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets thanked all those that had been involved and contributed to the work and commented that both the report and the work that had been undertaken were excellent.

Committee discussion, comments and suggestions covered:

- It was noted that recommendation five of the report specifically covered key workers.
- Information was provided on cross subsidy housing and how this can be effective as well as local lettings policies.
- The revised Housing Allocations Policy and Scheme was due to be implemented on 27th July 2023.
- Shropshire Council sets an affordable housing contribution of between 10% to 20% of dwellings, dependent on the location, and it was questioned whether this percentage could be increased, given that other local authorities adjacent to Shropshire may require a contribution of up to 40%. It was commented that if this percentage were to be higher, it could put builders off building. In responding, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets commented that the

Council had to balance overall delivery against affordable housing delivery and that the historic performance in overall housing numbers delivery is in line with the needs of the next local plan period.

- It would be useful to have comparative data on affordable housing percentages from Shropshire's CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) family group and that perhaps a small working group could meet to look at the percentage of affordable housing contributions and the comparative data of other local authorities. It was thought that this could be achieved within one meeting and could be held within the next two weeks.
- It was explained that currently, and prior to the implementation of the new policy, registered providers do not use the Council's policy. Therefore, by implementing the recommendations detailed within the report, this would make a significant difference as registered providers have signed up to use the Council's policy. Also, government policy was moving towards a place based approach.
- It was suggested that Community Land Trusts should be explored as a possibility to attract funding.
- It was commented that there was a need for the Council to address limiting the growth of temporary let holiday accommodation as many people felt that this was affecting the rental market.
- The importance of the Social Care Strategy was highlighted and particularly, the need to ensure that housing priorities are delivered in the right place for social care workers and it was questioned whether larger properties / buildings could be converted into multi-occupancy houses for careers to occupy.

In terms of taking the report forward, the various options that were available to the committee were outlined by the Scrutiny Manager.

RESOLVED:

1. That a small working group meet within the next two weeks to look at the Council's percentage level of affordable housing contributions along with comparative data of other local authorities.
2. That the recommendations as detailed within the report be taken forward for consideration by Cabinet at their meeting on 6th September 2023 and that in addition, reference to Community Land Trusts in terms of the innovation be included and an additional recommendation looking at short-term lets and their impact be added.

10 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Manager presented the Economy and Environment's proposed work programme for the coming 12 to 24 months which had been informed by the committee's work programming sessions. He explained that it was a live, flexible document and asked the committee to confirm which topics they wanted to commission first.

Regarding the Housing Development Task and Finish Group Action Plan, it was noted that the committee should expect a report back at their next meeting on the action plan and the progress and impact that has been made to date. The Chairman explained that the Assistant Director had invited her to work with Officers to help ensure that the action plan and progress reporting is what is required.

Regarding Developer Contributions, it was requested that this be widened to incorporate developments and the adoption of roads, associated delays and costs of remedial action.

A question was asked regarding witnesses and whether Zero Carbon Shropshire, Marches Energy Agency and the Passenger Transport Group could be included as part of the Climate Change topic. It was also suggested that consultants such as Phil Jones Associates could be included as a witness on the Transport topic.

It was noted that the next Climate Change Annual Report was due to be published in Spring 2024 and that despite the previous two annual reports not having been scrutinised, it would probably be more appropriate to consider this topic around this time, in order that the most up to date information could be looked at.

Clarification was sought regarding Task and Finish Groups and the Scrutiny Manager confirmed that it was the Task and Finish Groups that would confirm the terms of reference, along with any witnesses that they wished to speak to.

Following discussion, a vote was taken and it was agreed that the Developer Contributions topic be commissioned as the first piece of work and that a Task and Finish Group be established to not only look at this but also to consider developments and the adoption of roads and associated issues. The Scrutiny Manager commented that he would look into the terms of reference and would aim to bring an update on this topic to the committee's next meeting.

11 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 9th November 2023 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: