

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8th March 2017



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	D Mann (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
D Garrod	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	Yes	F Ricci	Yes
P Horner	Yes	Miss V Santomauro	No
D Hufton-Rees	No	P Schwier	Yes
G Maclure	Apologies	C Siddall (Chairman)	Apologies

56 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision when the Item was considered.

57 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

58 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st February 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59 **SECOND EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO EMPLOYMENT SITES AND PREMISES**

INFORMATION: This was the second evidence gathering session of the work programme for the Committee's Scrutiny Review into employment sites and premises.

The session provided Members with an introduction to the Governments Industrial Strategy and the Enterprising Essex: Opportunities and Challenges programme. Anita Thornberry, Interim Head of Economic Development, and Andrew Hull, Interim Head of Projects – Sustainable Development, had kindly agreed to participate in the Scrutiny Review and they attended the meeting to present information and to answer Members' questions.

Members considered a number of questions that were posed to the terms of reference in order to assist in covering all aspects of the Review. Members were given the opportunity to amend, remove or add to the series of questions and were given up until the beginning of April 2017 to advise the Governance Team of any changes they wish to make.

Members focused on each series of questions and were provided with additional details on how to engage and explore these areas further in order to identify evidence based recommendations that would later be put to the Cabinet. Anita Thornberry and Andrew Hull presented information and responded to questions from Members accordingly:

- A fundamental aspect of the review was to address issues around meeting the growth needs of current businesses and how to attract potential inward investors.
- It had been identified that there was a significant lack of grown on space and a lack of the supply for grown on space with only a supply of one year remaining.
- The issue of market failure was substantial and it had been recognised that banks refrained from funding grow on space and were much more inclined to fund a building with a single tenant with a longer term lease.
- The effect of market failure on the economy meant that businesses looked to grow either could not grow because they were unable to move in to larger premises or they grew elsewhere outside of the District. It was therefore essential to look at what the premises needs were and how the Council are able to assist in business growth and expansion to larger premises.
- It was recognised that there was a correlation in respect of skills availability and business growth as businesses needed to be able to access a skilled workforce in order to expand. Members were reminded that skill sets and job readiness was not a direct area covered under the terms of reference for the Review and Members were directed to former reviews where such topics had previously come under scrutiny and were looked at in great detail. Documentation on all previous Scrutiny Reviews was available to Members upon their request.
- The Industrial Strategy Green Paper published by Government in January 2017 was currently out for consultation until April 2017 and the Council would be submitting a formal response to the paper. The basic concept behind the response was to rebalance the economy for areas outside of London, in the South-East and to increase productivity through innovation and increased skills particularly in stemmed subjects.
- The eventual Industrial Strategy would become the guiding principle for Government in terms of providing funding. It was recognised that the work of the Council in respect of business growth and employment sites would need to be fashioned around the Industrial Strategy and ensure that any work carried out by the Council was not in direct conflict with the Strategy, but helped to support the Government in delivering it and by doing so would subsequently meet the Council's own aims and objectives.
- Opportunities would arise within the next 18 months to secure or bid for funding. The London Plan presented the opportunity to take advantage of the shortfall of meeting the housing needs in London and would therefore look to house people out of London. Businesses would also be encouraged to relocate part of their activity outside of London. The Braintree District would need to be in a position to be prepared to take full advantage of this opportunity.
- Members were advised that the Council may have to take forward actions in isolation of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in their capacity for the Scrutiny review, as deadlines from other parties may not necessarily marry with the Councils. Due to this, the Committee may wish to consider interim work around each term of reference in order to stay in line with current affairs.
- The Council was carrying out research with SQW to look in more in depth at different sectors in order to understand what was going on within them and pinpoint areas

where support may be required. Within the Health and Care Sector this type of research should indicate whether there was a nucleus of companies who had a common interest around medical technology. In Harlow, work was being carried out to look at providing a supply chain of medical instruments to Cambridge in respect of delivering pharmaceuticals to the patient. A proportion of the innovation and manufacturing of this would be taking place in Harlow and combined with Public Health England there was a specialised area emerging around Harlow in terms of medical technology.

- It was recognised that there was the potential for medical technology to be developed in Braintree however the nature of this was not yet known and the report from the SQW would sought to clarify this.
- The Garden Communities development would create a number of opportunities for the District. It was recognised that there was potential for economic growth by utilising smart technology within the Garden Communities and by setting down a core for health and care, medical technology and assisted living would generate a greater spring board and would encourage businesses in and around the employment sites of the Garden communities.
- The report of the SQW would be published in May 2017 and this would have an impact on the second cluster of questions aimed around the Local Plan. Members were advised that these questions could not be looked at in any depth until the information from the report was available to them. It was recognised that employment needs would change as a result of the advancement in people's ways of working over the course of the Local Plan and the manner in which businesses operate would also change.
- The economy generally was in a state of flux as old ways of working were slowly being phased out with new ones being phased in, however the entirety of new ways of working was not yet known and thereby looking at the specific sectors that would encouraging high tech elements would, to an extent, dictate how the new ways of working would take form.
- It was not an option for the Council to parachute into sectors that did not already exist in market terms. As part of the Industrial Strategy the Government had decided that in order to support economic growth they would look to relocate Government bodies elsewhere outside of London. This presented the Council with an opportunity to seek out bodies to potentially relocation within the District, it was however recognised that the Council should not bid for government bodies which fell outside of the Council's leading sectors.
- In respect of specific sectors, part of the work of the SQW was to provide workshops and interview businesses in said sectors in order to discover what public intervention was needed in order to help them grow.
- The SQW work was part of a wider study by Haven Gateway and there was a particular emphasis that the Braintree District had brought in to the wider study in the respect that it did not have the evidence base that other neighbouring authorities had. SQW had been asked to produce heat maps of where particular sectors were within the Haven Gateway and the Braintree District, and the Braintree report would therefore contain additional details in comparison with some of the other reports produced and may highlight areas where potential collaborative work could take place.
- It was reported that a number of the District Investment Strategy decisions that had been made and investments that had been planned had been affected by some of the barriers already identified. Major infrastructure and strategic infrastructure was to a certain extent not within the Councils remit, however the Council was working with other Local Authorities and organisations to ensure that these plans became a reality. The Council was aware that there was a lack of grow on space in the District and were working to address this.

- It was identified that one area the Committee could investigate further on the grounds of making potential recommendations was to look into the influence that the Council has over what investment decisions are made in the District going forward and to make interventions for further economic growth.
- Members touched upon the importance of apprenticeships and whilst it was recognised that apprenticeships played a fundamental part to the sustainability of a business and contributed towards the greater economy, Members were reminded that this was outside of the scope of the Review and were referred to the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Apprenticeships in the Braintree District undertaken in 2016 where recommendations were made to Cabinet.

Members identified a potential line of enquiry in respect of representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and considered extending an invitation to them for a future meeting. Members were advised that should they establish any other areas they wish to investigate with a view to inviting representatives to a future meeting that they should advise the Members and Governance Team at their earliest convenience.

Members were advised that under the arrangements in place for Scrutiny where there was good reason to conduct a site visit Members were able to do so. Members were reminded that they would need to clarify which organisations they intended to engage with and to notify the Governance and Members Team with any suggestions they may have. Members were also advised that it would be the responsibility of those taking part in the site visit to report back to the Committee by way of a written report.

The Chairman thanked Anita and Andrew for their attendance and expressed his gratitude for their contribution to the Scrutiny Review.

60 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE**

INFORMATION: Members were advised that the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Obesity had held its fourth meeting on 1st March 2017 and were well on track. At the meeting of the Task and Finish Group, Members were joined by Claire Popperwell, Sports and Community Development Manager at Fusion and Adrian Coggins, Head of Public Health and Wellbeing Commissioning at Essex County Council. It was agreed that the Group would hold a final meeting in early April 2017 to finalise the report and any recommendations contained therein.

Members were advised that the final report of the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review in to Obesity would be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8th June 2017.

61 **DECISION PLANNER**

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st April 2017 to 31st July 2017 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.15pm.

Councillor D Mann
(Vice-Chairman in the Chair)