

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY GROUP
TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2020**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber Area B, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road,
West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors N Clarke (Chairman), A Brennan (Vice-Chairman), N Begum,
J Cottee, L Howitt, A Phillips, J Stockwood, D Viridi and L Way

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Executive Manager - Transformation
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer
C Evans	Economic Growth Manager
D Mitchell	Executive Manager - Communities
C Saxton	Economic Growth Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors

6 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies to report.

7 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations to report.

8 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

9 Business Support Offer

Catherine Evans – Service Manager for Transformation and Caroline Saxton – Economic Growth Officer delivered a presentation that updated the Group on the work completed by the Economic Growth Team which focused on Business Support within Rushcliffe.

The Service Manger highlighted the Council's priorities in respect of Growth and Development including driving growth and regeneration, infrastructure, business support, employment and skills and proactively managing growth to ensure the Council creates great places to live and work. The Service Manager – Transformation informed the Group that five Growth Boards have been

established to work with key partners to support our main towns and to capitalise on the opportunities presented by growth.

The Economic Growth Officer provided the Group with information on the successful regeneration completed in Cotgrave, the delivery and completion of housing at Hollygate Park and improvements to the town centre to support the housing growth. The regeneration in the town centre provided new shops and offices, a multi-service centre and public realm improvements including additional car parking. The Economic Growth Officer explained that the Council had worked with the developers to deliver employment and skills in the area during the construction phase of the development. An employment partnership has been established which includes, working with local schools and colleges, businesses etc. to support the delivery of this work.

The Service Manager presented a summary of the Economic data and commercial property within the Borough, which highlighted information contained in the appendices attached to the report. The Service Manager informed the Group that the majority of businesses within the Borough, (76.4%), are small and we have 15 businesses with 250+ employees. The 5 year survival rate for businesses is 45.75% compared to 44.8% for Nottinghamshire as a whole and the top 3 business sectors in Nottinghamshire are Health, Manufacturing and Retail. In addition, the Service Manager provided information on privately owned commercial property and commercial property owned by the Council. Council owned property is currently made up of:

- 49 industrial units ranging in size from 750 to 5000 sq ft.
- 11 retail units located in Cotgrave and Radcliffe on Trent
- 20 Offices in Cotgrave and West Bridgford

The Service Manager advised that there are also plans to build additional retail units at Cotgrave to complete the regeneration of the shopping centre. In addition, as part of the proposals for a new leisure centre in Bingham, a new 10,000 sq ft office building is included, which will potentially provide 6 individual offices (ground floor) and a serviced office (first floor) subject to planning permission. There are also plans to purchase 11 industrial units in Bingham which will range in size from 1000 to 1500 sq ft.

The Economic Growth Officer provided the Group with information on the range of business support that the Council and its partners provide. This includes:

- The D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which is a partnership between local government and businesses to drive economic growth in the area. It covers Derby, Derbyshire (D2) and Nottingham, Nottinghamshire (N2).
- The Growth Hub, established by the D2N2 LEP using European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) matched with local funding is aimed to be a 'one stop shop' for business support. The Hub provides a range of support including funding, events and workshops.
- The Rushcliffe Business Partnership is a not for profit partnership funded by

the Council through an annual service level agreement and also provides officer support in organising and promoting networking events and activities. The Partnership hosts monthly networking events in West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth and quarterly events, which have included training on upskilling workforce and physical and mental wellbeing, which Rushcliffe has hosted at the Arena.

In addition, the Economic Growth Officer advised that other events organised by the Economic Growth team include a Developer Forum and 'Big Business' events. A Recruiting Future Talent event is being planned for April 2020 and another 'Big Business' event is being planned for spring 2020 with the theme of clean growth and sustainability.

The Group asked specific questions in respect of businesses 'churn' and whether the Council has the commercial property available within the Borough to retain successful businesses wishing to expand. In addition the Group asked if the larger developments of employment land in Rushcliffe were Council owned or under private ownership. The Executive Manager – Communities advised that the larger developments are generally privately owned. In addition, the Service Manager advised the Group that there are no comparisons with other areas in respect of the 'churn' rate of businesses and explained that support is provided for businesses wishing to expand or reduce the size of premises. The Council does look to retain businesses within the Borough, although this may mean looking at alternative provision in the private sector.

The Group asked whether the Council could adopt a strategic approach to the supply and demand for business units and is there any market intelligence on the profile of tenancy of businesses to ensure that what the Council build/purchase in future is fully occupied. In addition, Councillors questioned the lack of creative or third sector businesses in the Borough, advising that this is a growing market. The Executive Manager – Transformation explained that local research is commissioned or completed by officers to understand the market in the area before any investment decisions are made. This requirement for a commercial return is balanced against the priority of supporting business.

The Group finally asked if further information and data could be provided from the business support partnerships and how their outcomes and achievements are measured. The Group suggested that D2N2 Growth Hub are invited to a future meeting of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group to explain their approach for business support.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The report provided by the Economic Growth and Property teams be noted, and the outcome welcomed in delivering a successful business support offer for businesses and employment in Rushcliffe.
- b) The Group provide future items for scrutiny as recorded in the Scrutiny Work Programme

10 Supporting and Promoting Economic Vibrancy in Towns and Villages

Catherine Evans, Service Manager for Transformation and Caroline Saxton, Economic Growth Officer delivered a presentation to accompany the appendices provided with the report. The report and presentation sets out data relating to the health of our high streets in Rushcliffe and the support the Council is providing to ensure they continue to thrive.

The Service Manager provided the Group with some background information on what the Council was doing to support local towns and villages, explaining the function of the growth boards in West Bridgford, Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent and more recently East Leake and Fairham. In addition, the Service Manager informed the Group of the success of the Council's Shop Front Improvement Grant scheme, a match funding facility available to all high street businesses across Rushcliffe.

The Economic Growth Officer explained some of the work completed by the Economic Growth team within the towns and villages, and how the team support the growth boards as well as non-growth board areas, providing examples: Melton Road Christmas lights and the West Bridgford Way. Further support is being developed, including a communication plan, digital growth and further work with the growth boards to support town and village events to increase their local footfall.

The Economic Growth Officer provided the key findings from a 2016 Kerching retail review and explained that town and village centres in Rushcliffe are performing well despite the challenging environment. The Kerching report highlighted the following:

- Low vacancy rates
- Provision of services e.g. Hairdressers, estate agents is higher than the national average
- Comparison shopping (non-essential items) is lower than the national average
- Leakage rates for Rushcliffe is high, the main causes of this being the lack of comparison shopping, as well as proximity to Nottingham and larger towns.

The Economic Growth Officer added that for the first time ever in any of Kerching's reports, there was not a single business in any of the villages reviewed which were rated as red according to their traffic light system. The only shops rated red were vacant shops. Kerching described the lack of red coded businesses as unprecedented.

The Service Manager presented the key features of a town centre using a model for future high streets and how Rushcliffe compares, more detailed information was provided in the Grimsey review as an appendix to the report.

The key features include:

- Accessibility including wifi, parking, cycle storage and public transport links
- A mixed offer of shops, services, cafes and public work space

- Regular activities and events to attract people to the area
- The provision of community services e.g. library, doctors, Council contact point

In addition, the Service Manager reported that Rushcliffe town centres all have a high street retailer e.g. Co-op, Boots, all have parking provision, all areas are delivering some events, mainly seasonal e.g. summer fairs or Christmas light switch on and all areas have social media presence. However, only two of the seven towns and villages have a bank or building society.

The Group asked specific questions in relation to leakage and what the Council is doing to ensure the vibrancy of our towns and villages continues and whether there are triggers that could alert any detrimental changes in the future. The Group provided examples of bank closures and lack of ATM machines as having a negative effect, particularly on the older population or retailers that rely on cash transactions. The Executive Manager – Communities explained that leakage is difficult to influence as spending habits are changing in response to technology, retail spending is moving more online or to larger towns and cities, this also applies to banking facilities too, the success of smaller towns is to keep residents in the area.

The Group suggested whether the Council's planning policy could have an influence on landlords, so that A1 retail remains sustainable. The Executive Manager – Communities explained that mechanisms are in place within the planning policy and Neighbourhood Plans to defend things that towns don't want.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The Group note the report provided by the Economic Growth and Planning Policy teams, and welcome the successful vibrancy of Rushcliffe communities, defying the downward trend in many other communities, highlighting the need to monitor trends and ensure continued success.
- The Group provide items for future scrutiny as outlined in the Work Programme.

11 **Work Programme**

The Group considered its work Programme and provided suggestions for potential items for the Groups Work Programme, these included:

- Engagement with the D2N2 LEP to outline their support within Rushcliffe.
- How are the six strategic employment sites being developed, and how is the Council engaged with the stakeholders.
- Supporting Town Centres – to bring this item back at a later date with an update and progress report.
- The availability of banks and cashpoints declining significantly across the Borough.

The Executive Manager – Communities suggested that Councillors complete a Scrutiny Matrix for items they wish to consider at future meetings, explaining that items they wish to consider would need to be approved by the Corporate Overview Group of which the Chairman and Vice Chairman attend.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Work Programme, as detailed below be approved.

17 March 2020

- Abbey Road Development – Meet the Developer
- Customer Service and Digital Transformation
- Work Programme

Action Sheet – 7 January 2020

Minute No	Action	Officer Responsible
9	The Group requested that more information be provided on retention of businesses and how many businesses move and to where	Service Manager - Transformation
9	The Group requested further information on the creative/third business sector	Service Manager - Transformation
10	The Group requested that a copy or web link of the Grimsey report be provided for Group members.	Service Manager - Transformation
10	The Group requested that a copy of the retail reports be circulated to members of the Group on request and suggested the reports are updated to illustrate change in the 3 to 4 year period from when they were last commissioned	Service Manager - Transformation

The meeting closed at 8.51 pm.

CHAIRMAN