

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD - 8
March 2022**

MINUTES

- Present: Councillors: D Howell (Chairman), D Howell (Chairman), D Pinwell (Vice-Chairman), J O'Nyons, W Qais, J Ryan, K Thomas, P Thomas and A Mackiewicz
- Councillors in Attendance (Virtual): Councillor A Mackiewicz: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing
- Officers: Fiona Hughes: Chief Executive, Solihull Community Housing (SCH)
Martyn Sargeant: Executive Director – Customer Services, Transformation & Business Support (SCH)
Richard Hyde: Chairman of SCH Board
Perry Wardle: Assistant Director, Growth and Development
Rachel Egan: Head of Inclusive Growth, Growth and Development
Beverley Hill: Technical Development Officer - Enforcement Monitoring
Austin Rodriguez: Head of Stronger Communities (Housing and Communities)
Neeraj Malhotra: Deputy Director of Public Health
Nick Laws: Senior Public Health Specialist (Healthy Places)
Paul Rogers: Democratic Services

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tim Hodgson and Councillor Max McLoughlin.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Ian Courts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for the Economy, who was on Council business.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Pinwell declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Board Member of Solihull Community Housing (SCH) in relation to agenda item 5 'Solihull Community Housing Delivery Plan: 2022/23'.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. MINUTES

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

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To agree the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board Minutes dated 12th January 2022 as an accurate record.

5. SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING: DELIVERY PLAN 2022/23

The report was submitted to the Scrutiny Board to present the draft SCH Delivery Plan 2022/23 for consideration and review.

The Chief Executive (SCH) provided a PowerPoint presentation to introduce and set the context for the report before the Scrutiny Board. The PowerPoint presentation addressed key strategic themes across the Delivery Plan for the 2022/23 period and included the following areas:

- SCH strategic vision
- Delivery Plan priorities
- Managing the stock portfolio in a proactive, green and holistic way
- Building new environmentally sustainable homes
- Delivery commitments - key activities
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- SCH and SMBC - operational framework
- Monitoring and Delivery

The Scrutiny Board was further advised that the SCH Delivery Plan 2022/23 was scheduled for submission to the Cabinet meeting of 7th April 2022.

Having received the presentation, Members of the Scrutiny Board raised a number of related questions to the report, which in summary included the following matters:

Councillor Howell noted that with regard to the three corporate priorities detailed within the report, all three were attributable to one SCH directorate only and addressed improving SCH business infrastructure. Councillor Howell queried how these priorities would filter down to the customer experience and across other SCH directorates.

Members were advised that the Corporate Directorate also supported SCH's customer facing directorates. In terms of data integrity, the organisation had recognised that greater data integrity was required in order to support customers and to provide a more joined up service experience. Furthermore, the SCH Board had recently approved customer portal investment, which was to be a key priority in 2022 as it was envisaged the portal would lead to a more beneficial customer experience across the organisation.

The Executive Director – Customer Services, Transformation & Business Support (SCH), further informed Members that the Corporate Directorate existed to facilitate other services across SCH, such as the complaints service from which learning could be extracted in order to improve future service provision.

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Councillor K Thomas advised the meeting that for residents the SCH housing list waiting times was the most important of all KPI's, which currently appeared to cover a timescale of between two to five years. Councillor K Thomas queried what actions were being undertaken by SCH in order to reduce waiting times. The Chief Executive (SCH) stated that the key question to be addressed related to housing supply, for which SCH had no control. Housing supply in relation to waiting list times was a national issue and further factor which had to be considered within that was provision of social housing. Fundamentally this issue of addressing waiting list times was attributable to establishing adequate social housing supply nationally.

Councillor Qais sought confirmation for whether the SCH Tracking KPI's would be subject to review on a quarterly basis by the SCH Monitoring Board and was advised that this was to be the case.

Councillor K Thomas noted that reference was made within the SCH Delivery Plan to building sustainable housing supply, but that no detail seemed to be included in the Strategic Plan as to how current housing stock availability would be improved and queried whether this should be included within the stated Sustainable Aims section of the Delivery Plan. The Chief Executive (SCH) confirmed that sustainable housing stock supply could be looked at further within the Delivery Plan documentation. However, Members were advised that to do so had the potential to replicate Council priorities addressing the provision of new housing stock and reaching Net Zero targets.

Councillor K Thomas queried the apparent IT focus of the SCH Delivery Plan strategy in light of the ageing housing stock and of the available investment seemingly geared towards improving IT infrastructure across SCH. Councillor K Thomas sought confirmation as to how many properties within the SCH social housing stock were yet to meet Net Zero requirements and was advised further information would be provided to Members outside of the Scrutiny Board meeting.

Councillor Mackiewicz advised Members that the Council had applied for funding to insulate homes and was seeking to progress provision of insulation not only across the SCH housing stock but also in the private rented housing sector and privately owned sector. The Council was seeking to secure an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C across its housing stock.

The Head of Stronger Communities (Housing and Communities) further informed Members that when reviewing the SCH housing stock, it was generally in a good place when reviewing its EPC ratings, whereas the private rented sector and private home ownership was more problematic. Significant work was being undertaken to address these areas, which would be apparent over the forthcoming year.

Regarding Decent Homes Standards, Members were advised that national changes to the standards were expected. In terms of the SCH KPI Suite and Housing Waiting List, the Scrutiny Board was informed that the Council was working in partnership with SCH to monitor the KPI Suite to ensure the right KPI's were included. Consideration

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was currently being given to the inclusion of a Green Homes KPI within the KPI Suite, subject to further confirmation.

Housing allocations policy was scheduled for review later in 2022, as well as a review of prioritisation of priority groups within the Housing Waiting List. Further performance aspects relevant to SCH would be included later in 2022.

Councillor Howell sought further information pertaining to the Net Zero targets by 2030 and whether the Council and SCH was on target to meet them.

The Head of Stronger Communities (Housing and Communities) advised that the Council was currently reviewing the Green Homes Scheme in order to update energy efficiency ratings to C. Many properties within the housing stock were already rated at A – C. A total of 88 SCH properties were to receive a new energy rating, with £850K of funding being made available in 2023 in support. Moving forward, Capital investment into 2023/24 and beyond will have a significant role to play in meeting the stated objectives. The Head of Stronger Communities (Housing and Communities) stated that he was confident a great deal could be achieved and delivered with the current housing stock by 2030.

Councillor Howell noted that the Delivery Plan appeared to suggest the Tracking KPI's were not scheduled for future monitoring and that it would be beneficial if further commentary and detail could be provided for them within the Delivery Plan. The Chief Executive (SCH) advised that the Tracking KPI's would form part of the overall KPI Suite to be collected. The Tracking KPI's were new and were expected to form part of the new regulatory framework. Furthermore, the Tracking KPI's needed to be tracked and better understood before hard targets and objectives were set against them. The Tracking KPI's would be reported to the SCH Monitoring Board, but with no performance targets set against them at this point in time. The Chief Executive (SCH) confirmed that the commentary for the Tracking KPI's within the Delivery Plan 2022/23 would be reviewed further.

Councillor Howell noted that the KPI targets for 2021/22 to 2022/23 remained largely the same, or in some cases performance objectives had been revised downwards, for example in the case of SCH housing repairs, and questioned why this was the case. The Chief Executive (SCH) clarified that performance targets had been discussed by the SCH Board and Executive whereby it was considered that the KPI's in place were challenging post Covid-19 pandemic. The SCH Board and Executive were of the opinion it was important to be realistic in setting performance targets. Some areas were particularly challenging, for example repairs satisfaction targets, and although SCH held an ambition to exceed targets a sense of realism was also required, hence the performance adjustment to some of the KPI's. Councillor Howell noted that some form of narrative or commentary included in the Delivery Plan 2022/23 would be helpful to explain the above.

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In summary, Councillor Howell noted the following significant points arising through the Scrutiny Board's review of the draft SCH Delivery Plan 2022/23:

- a. The Scrutiny Board accepted that SCH IT investment was critical to continued successful delivery of objectives, but hoped to see this investment translated in outward facing / customer orientated services.
- b. Stronger focus was required within the draft Delivery Plan in respect of attaining Net Zero objectives.
- c. Members noted that Officers were confident net zero objectives would be delivered by 2030.
- d. Tracking KPI's required further narrative/commentary within the Draft SCH Delivery Plan.

Having considered the report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the SCH Draft Delivery Plan 2022/23; and,
- (ii) To recommend to Cabinet that points a. – d. above be taken into consideration at the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 7th April 2022 where the Draft SCH Delivery Plan 2022/23 is to be considered for approval.

6. INCLUSIVE GROWTH UPDATE

The report before the Scrutiny Board provided a progress update on the Council's Inclusive Growth Programme. The report was introduced by the Head of Inclusive Growth.

Members were informed that the Council was using its role as an employer and was creating opportunities for both young unemployed people and people with learning disabilities. The Council had also created 36 Kick Start opportunities within the Council itself

The Council continued to better deliver social value outcomes through its procurement arrangements. The Council had agreed a Social Value Policy in December 2021 and continued to work towards delivering its objectives.

The Council continued to work with other institutions and partners to deliver inclusive growth opportunities, such as with the Birmingham Integrated Care System (ICS) to deliver pathways to employment within the NHS. The scheme commenced in December 2021 and to date 170 people were scheduled to commence with training opportunities. The Social Care sector would shortly be included as a sector providing pathways to employment.

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Members were informed that a number of Place based frameworks were in place nationally, with which the Council was seeking to align and integrate into the refreshed Council Plan to drive forward inclusive growth outcomes.

The economic agenda continued to be implemented through projects such as UKC, and the Health and Wellness Hub in Kingshurst.

The recently published Government Levelling Up White Paper was consistent with the Council's approach to addressing inclusive growth and economic development, which also prioritised a number of opportunities for the Council, such as:

- How to attract further investment into the borough.
- Using place based leadership and attracting additional investment.
- The WMCA / Greater Manchester had been invited to develop a Devolution Deal for their respective regions.
- Through the Levelling Up White Paper, the WMCA will manage the Shared Prosperity funding locally.

The Council was continuing to work in close partnership with the WMCA to attract further investment into the borough and deliver the objectives of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy, for which good progress was being made.

Having received the report presentation from the Head of Inclusive Growth, Members of the Scrutiny Board raised a number of questions in relation to the report, which in summary included the following matters:

Councillor Howell sought confirmation as to when embedding inclusive growth outcomes into the refreshed Council Plan were due for publication, which the Head of Inclusive Growth confirmed was scheduled for April 2022.

Councillor K Thomas welcomed the initiatives in the Inclusive Growth Strategy supporting pathways into employment and re-training, which Councillor K Thomas noted was particularly helpful for the long-term unemployed, but which also had the potential to act as unpaid work. With respect to the Levelling Up White Paper and entry level jobs, Councillor K Thomas noted that the salaries offered were not the best and that those taking up such employment were likely to still remain in some financial difficulty.

Councillor K Thomas further queried what actions were being taken to address the prospects of those already in employment, but working in those sectors which were traditionally lower paid, such as in the hospitality, social care and retail sectors and how would the Inclusive Growth Strategy support such people. Councillor Howell added to this point that in respect of entry-level jobs she would hope to see some form of career progression / pathway included within the programme.

The Head of Inclusive Growth advised Members that with specific regard to the NHS Trust, attention was being given to address how entry level jobs could lead to a longer-term career path. This included reviewing the devolved education budget managed by

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the WMCA, specifically in terms of what flexibility it may have to support those already in work and looking to progress towards some form of recognised career path. With regard to pre-employment training, Members were informed that in some cases it was possible for individuals to enter directly employment post training. The Birmingham ICS Trust, for example, assessed individuals training needs whilst retaining the option of recommending appropriate individuals to go forward directly to an interview stage for prospective employment.

Councillor Pinwell welcomed the rate of progressing the Inclusive Growth Strategy objectives. With specific reference to Community Voice and its involvement in inclusive growth, Councillor Pinwell noted it was vitally important for the Community Voice to be involved with the Inclusive Growth Programme and questioned whether the current Inclusive Growth framework did include representatives from neighbourhood level Community Voice.

The Head of Inclusive Growth that was further work to be undertaken in relation to the points raised by Councillor Pinwell, but further advised that possibilities were being explored through the WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework for using a portion of budget to undertake listening exercises with local communities. Furthermore, such opportunities would be used within the context of Local Place Surveys.

In terms of delivery of social value through the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Council was seeking to clarify which local projects were best positioned to deliver tangible social value. For example, the Kingshurst project has seen extensive community consultation undertaken as to establish what residents wish to see delivered for the community. The Council will be seeking to embed further opportunities via the Inclusive Growth Strategy and Council Plan to engage with local communities across the borough.

Councillor Pinwell referenced the paragraphs within the report before the Scrutiny Board which highlighted the importance of social value and strong place leadership, noting that community capacity building should be a key feature alongside Community Voices. Councillor Pinwell stated that across the borough there were many bodies with strong community capacity capabilities. The Council's Social Value Policy had the potential to help raise the capacity building level across some areas, for example, through Council appointed contractors supporting community development opportunities via volunteering exercises. Such opportunities could include community capacity building in skills training, mentoring and for the public and private sectors to jointly support the successful delivery of the aims of the Social Value policy.

The Head of Inclusive Growth advised Members that in respect of priority themes, one area addressed the construction sector offering volunteering opportunities. It was key to ask communities directly how they would wish to work with Council contractors to deliver such opportunities and which areas would be useful for communities to engage with and take forward. The Council was currently identifying specific projects / areas the Council would wish to be addressed around social value delivery.

Councillor Qais noted that implementing the Inclusive Growth Strategy would require established oversight structures to be put in place and questioned what plans were in place to deliver the right outcomes and how did the Council propose to track partners and other organisations delivery of the inclusive growth objectives.

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The Head of Inclusive Growth advised that the Inclusive Growth Programme status was reported to the Inclusive Growth Board. The Inclusive Growth Outcomes Framework was also embedded in the Council Plan, which was reviewed and monitored in respect of its delivery objectives by the Corporate Leadership Team, respective Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Full Cabinet. The Council was also seeking to deliver Inclusive Growth objectives through wider partnership working with such partners as Solihull College and the ICS.

With regard to the Kingshurst development project, Councillor Howell questioned how the project would be used as a meaningful contributor to the wider Inclusive Growth Programme. The Head of Inclusive Growth confirmed to Members that the Kingshurst redevelopment project had a Community Sub Group in place, as well as a community/engagement plan. A significant conversation around public health was also planned for Kingshurst, which would involve multiple organisations and not solely the Council.

Councillor Howell observed that good progress had been made with taking the Inclusive Growth Programme forward and that the Scrutiny Board would welcome further Inclusive Growth Update reports in 2022/23. The Scrutiny Board was keen to see meaningful outcomes being delivered through the strategy, such as employment opportunities leading to further career progress and the further development and embedding of the Community Voice within Inclusive Growth projects going forward.

Having considered the report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the progress made to date of the Inclusive Growth Programme.

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

Members considered reporting arrangements pertaining to the Air Quality Strategy and air quality monitoring for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Having read the Clean Strategy and Air Quality Monitoring Briefing Note Update as supplied by the Senior Public Health Specialist, Councillor K Thomas queried whether the Council should consider reducing monitoring and instead increasing action to address problematic areas directly.

The Senior Public Health Specialist advised the Scrutiny Board that moving forward the Council was keen to deliver air quality monitoring for sensitive sites such as schools and hospitals, with relevant accompanying actions; for example, to work in partnership with schools to deter idling vehicles in the vicinity of schools, encouraging active travel and developing electric vehicle infrastructure all to underpin the Air Quality Strategy.

The Council was also working in partnership with the WMCA with regard to the Regional Air Strategy and the Commonwealth Games Air Strategy. The Councils approach was a combination of actions, including monitoring and seeking to encourage positive behaviour change, all of which were to be reflected in the refreshed Air Quality Strategy.

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Councillor Qais questioned what Communications Plan would be put in place to support public engagement for the refreshed Air Quality Strategy.

The Senior Public Health Specialist confirmed that a Communications Plan was in place, with a number of key themes remaining relevant for the refreshed Air Quality Strategy, such as the anti-idling campaign, supporting electric vehicle uptake and infrastructure, supporting modal shift and using a systems wide approach to deliver objectives; for example, through joined up working and delivery through planning and development services.

The Assistant Director (Growth and Development) informed the Scrutiny Board that the Council had adopted a Walking and Cycling Strategy, which included substantial data, which helped inform the strategy as well as the Sustainable Travel Plan. Significant amounts of learning had been involved with the development of the Air Quality Strategy and Net Zero Strategy for example, all of which contributed towards achieving the strategic goals of the Air Quality Strategy. As such, the Council was not in effect 'starting from scratch' and that substantial amounts of work was already in progress to deliver the Air Quality Strategy objectives, which cut across both strategies and geographic boundaries.

The Deputy Director of Public Health informed the Scrutiny Board that it was too early to advise Members when the refresh for the Air Quality Strategy would be scheduled for approval by Cabinet, but did state that she would like to have the Scrutiny Board's oversight and input into the refreshed strategy at the pre-Cabinet decision, drafting stage (also incorporating the draft, supporting Consultation Plan).

Having discussed and considered the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board Draft Work programme 2022/23 report, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To include within the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board Work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year, the following matters:
 - a. Air Quality Strategy Refresh and supporting Communications/ Engagement Plan at the pre-Cabinet decision, draft stage prior to submission to Full Cabinet (Assistant Director Public Health to advise the Scrutiny Board as regards timescales when confirmed for scheduling the report to the Scrutiny Board);
 - b. Town Centres Framework Update Report: To review progress, impact and outcomes to date arising from the Town Centres Framework and for Members of the Scrutiny Board to contribute further to the on-going policy development for the Town Centres Framework. Schedule for 13th September 2022; and,
 - c. Draft Refreshed Solihull Connected Strategy: Schedule for 13th September 2022.
 - d. Members of the Stronger Communities and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board to be invited to the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for 13th September in respect of agenda items b) and c) detailed above.

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- (ii) Subject to the inclusion of the above reports detailed in a-c above, to agree the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2022/23 as detailed in Appendix A to the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board: Draft Work Programme 2022/23 report.

The Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board
meeting closed at 7:41 p.m.