

FIVE YEAR HOUSING SUPPLY SCRUTINY PANEL - ACTION NOTES

MEETING 1: 6th June 2018

ATTENDED BY: Councillors Gaskell (Chair), Hamilton, Pacey, Seaton, Snartt.

Officer: N. Ansari

WITNESSES: Councillor Terry Richardson – Blaby District Council

1. APOLOGIES: Councillor Hayes

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None

MATTERS CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:

WITNESS INFORMATION PROVIDED

Councillor Richardson explained the current situation at Blaby District Council regarding the 5 year housing supply and made the following points:

- Currently using the Liverpool model to calculate the housing supply. There was some pressure to use the Sedgefield but the Council had a robust policy in place to defend planning applications and put sufficient time and effort into ensuring that the lack of 5 year housing supply could not be used as a reason to refuse an application.
- A lot of time and effort was also spent on pre-applications and talking to developers to agree on how a development would progress. Communication was seen as important as it created understanding and ultimately success for all parties involved. It was good to engage the developers as they understood the look and feel of the developments and what would be attractive.
- Extensive training was provided for the Council's Planning Committee to ensure they were sufficiently informed to make decisions. As well as the standard training master classes were offered for members which were well received.
- An example of a development in New Lubbethorpe was given to explain how the development worked from start to completion. The infrastructure had been provided by the land owner who wanted to create a legacy for the area and which provided an advantage for developers who could start work quickly. There were dedicated officers at the Council working on the development as well as interacting with the highways authority and a community worker onsite who generated a community feeling which could be sold to potential owners. There was a cohesive approach to the development which helped towards the success.
- There was an issue nationally with losing Planning Officers to the private sector but the Council believed they offered good scope and experience for its employees to retain staff. When officers did leave the word of

mouth was positive for a Council that offered support and training so recruitment was not an issue.

- There was a good working relationship with the County Council which was in part due to understanding their limitations and to compromise to make things work. Talking to County was always seen as a challenge and more needed to be done to bring the District Councils and the County Council together.
- One of the initiatives set up was to create a trust for the residents on the development currently paying a service charge. The idea was to create a community feel to the development and was proving popular.
- The idea of community was thought to be particularly important for new developments. Councils should be creating a vision for their area that would be part of the Strategic Growth Plan. Councils also needed to be more commercial but still ensure that developments met the needs of the residents.
- Rural exception sites were used as a means of meeting the housing supply. Seed funding was provided by the Council to help establish one in the local area which could provide housing for local residents.
- There was an ongoing calculation of the housing supply to take into account the start and completion of developments and to ensure it was up to date. The calculations were also used for planning applications and appeals so it was necessary to have the figures available. The Council had employed an Economic Investment Manager to manage the developments and oversee the housing supply. The salary for the post was paid for out of the increased planning fee income which was re-invested into the department.
- The Lead Member for Planning was more involved in supporting the team rather than being actively involved in the development process. They also attended the Cabinet meetings every 6 weeks where they developed an understanding of each member portfolio and gave support to upcoming projects.
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Councillor Richardson's main point was the importance of communication with partner agencies and developers to ensure that developments are successful for the residents and create a community that will thrive.

ACTIONS

- Democratic Services Officer to invite the Lead Member, Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services and the Head of Planning to the next meeting.

Timetable for review – it was agreed that information be considered at future meetings as follows: Wednesday 4th July 2018.