

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

14 March 2023

7.30 - 8.56 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor Colleen Morrison
Councillor Kay Morrison
Councillor Matthew Sagers

Also Present

Councillor Joel Charles, Portfolio Holder for Business and Community Resilience
Councillor Nicky Purse, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Officers

Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment
Julie Houston, Assistant Director - Community Resilience
Norah Nolan, Assistant Director Environment
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

51. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Edwards, Ash Malik and Lanie Shears.

52. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 9, Allotments, as a site rep for Harlow Allotment Association.

53. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2023 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

54. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

55. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

56. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

57. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

58. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Vice Chair invited Councillor Charles to speak on the Economic Development Strategy.

Councillor Charles highlighted that the Strategy took an evidence-based approach. He noted that there were skill and educational attainment challenges within Harlow.

He was pleased with the strong SME business base that existed within Harlow and that 94 percent of new businesses survived their first year of trading. Harlow had a good story to tell.

In response to questions by the Committee, Councillor Charles said that the Council aimed to attract businesses which would enable retrofitting. The Council would act as a facilitator.

There was a long debate to be had about the type of growth the Council should look to attract. He favoured rapid growth, in part because of the challenges caused by the pandemic.

People commuted out of Harlow to higher paid jobs. This would always be a factor because of Harlow's connections to London. However, Harlow could use its strategic placement near Stansted Airport to attract internationally focused businesses.

Councillor Charles said that the Strategy wouldn't lose sight of the existing employment base. The Council had supported HGV drivers throughout the pandemic and the Strategy identified HGV drivers and logistics as a sector important to Harlow.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to Cabinet that, subject to consultation, the draft Harlow Economic Development Strategy covering 2023 to 2028 (attached as Appendix A to the report) is adopted.

59. **ALLOTMENTS**

The Committee received a report on allotments.

RESOLVED that the Council promotes opportunities to work with suitable community groups to develop alternative compatible uses for unpopular allotment sites whilst retaining availability of traditional allotment lettings as described in Proposals section in the report.

60. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2022/23.

The Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to oversee the review on Housing Repairs. The Group would report back to the Committee meeting in September 2023. The Group would comprise of Councillors David Carter, Tony Edwards, Matthew Saggars and Lanie Shears.

RESOLVED that:

A The work plan be noted.

B A housing repairs task and finish group be established to report back to the September Committee meeting comprising Councillors David Carter, Tony Edwards, Matthew Saggars and Lanie Shears.

61. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

62. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE