

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 November 2019
5.30 - 8.00 pm

Present: Councillors Smart (Chair), Baigent, Bick, Collis, Davies, Green, Hipkin, McGerty and Lord

Executive Councillors: Massey (Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety) and Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces)

Officers:

Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly
Assistant Director, Planning: Paul Frainer
Strategy & Economy Manager: Carline Hunt
Planning Policy Manager (Interim): Philip Bylo
Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport): Jonathan Dixon
Principal Planning Policy Officer (Strategy): Stuart Morris
Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Others Present:

External Planning Consultant: John Williamson

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

19/35PnT Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Chadwick, Councillor Lord attended as the alternate.

19/36PnT Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

19/37PnT Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 06 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19/38PnT Public Questions

There were no public questions.

19/39PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces

19/40PnT Housing Trajectory, Five Year Supply and Statement of Common Ground

The decision was noted.

19/41PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety

19/42PnT A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet: Detailed Design Consultation Response

The decision was noted.

19/43PnT Shared Planning Service Budget and Programme Update

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the implementation of the shared planning service and its business plan programme and highlighted how the service was seeking to respond to the issues and challenges that impact planning at a national, and a local level.

Decision of Executive Councilor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces and the Executive Councilor for Transport and Community Safety

Noted the content of the report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development which outlined how the service was operating to a

Business Plan approved by the Environment Scrutiny Committee in March 2018.

Significant progress had been made on delivery of the Business Plan outcomes and work on effective income growth (outlined in the MTFs) was underway, although the pace of that programme has been impacted by the transformation process and management capacity.

The Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted the request to bring a report to the January meeting on the shared planning service staffing, the challenges, areas of improvement, the progress achieved, and the lessons learnt.
- ii. Information on planning applications consultations could be found in the Statement of Community Involvement which had been revised in the summer 2019; there was a table in the document which showed when a letter would be issued or a site notice for each application, as examples.
- iii. It was difficult to provide specific detail whether a notification letter should go to three or five neighbours; if it was an immediate adjacent neighbour, a letter would be sent, the assessment of impact was dependent on what the scheme was after that. Agreed to think about the approach taken and how this could be shared with members.
- iv. The Shared Service Agreement signed in 2015 set out an objective of a target saving of 15%. No specific target had been set for planning which provided long term capability and resilience that the City Planning Department would not have had if left the shared planning service.
- v. The number of planning applications in the City has declined which meant the fee income had also dropped significantly. The Council would not have been able to sustain specific areas of expertise if changes had not been made.
- vi. Sharing the capacity with an appropriate recharge cost had allowed recruitment and expansion.
- vii. The objective of the business plan for a shared planning service was not to save money but to support and provide a quality service.
- viii. Before the service could be expanded with other local authorities' further work was required to provide a fully resourced functioning service working to full capacity.
- ix. It would be possible to offer certain areas of expertise to smaller local authorities in order to offset the cost of providing the service. This would also give career development to officers.

- x. Correspondence had been sent to all Members and local agents outlining the changes that the planning service was undertaking; highlighting practices such as high frequency amendments to planning applications would have to cease as this was inefficient use of staff time.
- xi. There had been seven rounds of recruitment in twelve months.
- xii. Meetings had also taken place with Agents to reiterate what services could be provided.
- xiii. Work was being undertaken to re-evaluate the hourly rates of the services provided such as pre application advice.
- xiv. Private practices were able to charge a higher hourly rate, but local authorities had to follow the national accountancy rules for public bodies; therefore, could only charge what it cost to provide a planning officer.
- xv. An accountant had been recruited into the Planning Service to look at the implementation of cost-effective processes and cost recovery.
- xvi. Agreed improvements were needed in communications, effectiveness and responsiveness of the service.
- xvii. Acknowledged that staff had been through a disruptive time; some had felt that future positions were not for them.
- xviii. Tighter performance management had been introduced to manage agency staff due to the premium rates that were being paid. In some cases, those staff had been let go which did have an impact on the service but in the short term.
- xix. There was a vast number of changes still to be made from changing workflows, ICT systems, communication with agents to engagement with the customer.
- xx. Current performance figures were not vastly different to previous figures. The service had not been failing in terms of speed of decision making against national targets, but this did not make the service a good service or where it needed to be.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces reminded the Committee of the survey that had been sent asking for their views on the planning service. Building Control had undertaken a similar transition, which had been 'painful' at times with staff leaving and then coming back. The service now had a solid reputation throughout the industry.

The Committee **unanimously endorsed** the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillors approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillors (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillors

19/44PnT Greater Cambridge Local Plan Issues & Options Report

Matter for Decision

The report sought agreement on the proposed content of, and the participation and communication strategy for, the first formal round of consultation for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, known as the Issues & Options consultation.

Decision of Executive Councilor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces and the Executive Councilor for Transport and Community Safety

- i. Noted the Lessons Learned and Good Practice review (Appendix A)
- ii. Noted the Statement of Consultation – Report on Local Plan Workshops (Appendix B – chapters 2-5);
- iii. Noted the feedback from the Joint Local Plan Advisory Group (Appendix I); and
- iv. Approved the Local Plan Issues & Options report text (at Appendix E) and supporting documents (at Appendices F, G and H) and consultation process (at Section VIII and Appendix B, chapter 6).
- v. Approved the consultation with the Chair and Spokes for the Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee, in liaison with the South Cambridgeshire Lead Cabinet Member for Planning and in consultation with members of the Joint Local Planning Advisory Group, to consider and agree, as is consistent with this Council's Corporate Objectives, any material changes to the Local Plan Issues & Options report text (at Appendix E) and supporting documents (at Appendices A, B (chapter 6), F, G and H) prior to the commencement of the consultation period, including any proposed by South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- vi. Delegated authority to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in liaison with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces and South Cambridgeshire District Council Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, and the Chair and Spokes for the Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee, and in consultation with members of the Joint Local Planning Advisory Group, to

- make editorial changes to the Local Plan Issues & Options report text (at Appendix E) and supporting documents (at Appendices A, B (chapter 6), F, G and H) prior to the commencement of the consultation period (to comprise minor amendments and factual updates and clarifications).
- vii. Delegated authority to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in liaison with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces and South Cambridgeshire District Council Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, and the Chair and Spokes for the Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee to update the Local Development Scheme to reflect the amended consultation period.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development which formed part of the early stages in preparing the next Local Plan which was being prepared jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Committee received a presentation to the report with an introduction from the Strategy & Economy Manager, followed by an External Consultant who presented 'Lessons learnt' from the recent local plan.

The Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development and External Consultant, Planning Policy Manager (Interim) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The issue of affordable housing was a challenging one, particularly in Cambridge. Plans had to reflect national guidance which does not support providing affordable housing on schemes of ten or less dwellings.
- ii. Officers would be talking to various government agencies such as the Environment Agency to take into consideration climate change issues.
- iii. Every year the City Council published an annual monitoring report which provided information on the number of affordable houses delivered

through the planning process. Evidence from this report would also help to assist in developing new policies

- iv. A policy review had begun on the adopted Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans 2018. Discussions had started with officers on their views on the performance of these policies. An external consultant was also being used on this matter. Discussions would also be held on what new policies would be required.

The Planning Policy Manager gave an introduction on the stakeholder workshops undertaken ahead of the issues and options stage.

In total eight workshops had been held with members of the council, stakeholders, statutory consultees, landowners, developers, resident associations, parish councils, officers and local businesses.

The outcome of the discussions from the workshops was then fed into the Issues and Options document.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer then provided a brief presentation on the issues and options draft document (Appendix E), highlighting the headline themes, presentation, and context of the plan and consultation.

In response to Members' comments and questions Officers said the following:

- i. Any minor editorial amendments could be sent to the Officers after the meeting.
- ii. Noted the comment that the section titled 'getting involved' be moved to the end of the section 'what happens next'.
- iii. Noted the comment that consistency was required throughout all sections to highlight what would happen if the plan did not come to fruition and highlighted 'jobs, housing and infrastructure'.
- iv. Agreed clarification was required on the explanation of item 3.40 of the document.
- v. The sustainability assessment was an important requirement which would need to demonstrate that a sufficient and suitable evaluation had been undertaken; this would test the options available and the information would be made available throughout the process which would include the assessment of locations and the impact on the historic core of the city.
- vi. As we move through the plan making process, strategy options and sites would be tested and brought to committee for consideration; at this stage

- a precautionary approach had been taken by the Sustainability Appraisal and further exploration was required.
- vii. Officers were working to national definition of sustainable development, asking communities to consider the economic, social and environmental impact.
 - viii. As the plan was developed some outcomes would be improved around the definition of sustainable development and some will be harmed.
 - ix. Acknowledged the City Council had declared a climate emergency, the Local Plan was separate to that decision, public engagement was needed on how issues should be prioritised.
 - x. The public consultation should assist in the decision-making process of the local plan; some members of the public may not agree that climate change was a priority which would then be weighed alongside other views.
 - xi. The sustainability appraisal process would consider the subject of climate change.
 - xii. If the committee decided the Local Plan should take the climate change agenda as a priority over all other matters, the spatial choices would potentially focus on densifying the city and developing the green belt.
 - xiii. The Plan would have to evidence how it would accomplish the UK's declared climate commitment to achieve net zero carbon.
 - xiv. Confirmed that climate change was the first theme to be mentioned in the document.
 - xv. The web version would be headline grabbing; the user could go straight to the issue which was important to them such as climate change.

The Assistant Director and Principal Planning Policy Officer then provided the Committee with information regarding how the consultation process would engage with local communities.

In response to Members' comments and questions the Assistant Director and Principal Planning Officer said the following:

- i. Issues raised within the workshops revolved around the following seven themes: Climate Change, Biodiversity, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion, Jobs, Infrastructure and Housing.
- ii. These themes would be carried forward in the public consultation asking the community what is important to them; the 700-pages of documents which had been presented to the committee, would be broken down into bite size chunks.
- iii. Recognised that communication was a key factor throughout the entire process and different approaches were being considered.

- iv. In conjunction with the workshops and various social media platforms, pop-up events would be taken to locations such as schools, community centres, and resident and housing associations.
- v. Members and staff would be asked to identify places and events where the pop-up events could take place during January and February.
- vi. Part of being able to engage effectively was to ensure simple accessible dialogue which did not intimidate the reader.
- vii. Currently in the process of recruiting a communications officer to work on event management, logistics and communication.

The Committee **endorsed the recommendation** as set out in the Officer's report by 7 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillors approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillors (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillors

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

CHAIR

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