

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 January 2020
5.30 - 7.00 pm

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

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

Officers:

Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Assistant Director: Sharon Brown

Principal Sustainability Consultant: Emma Davies

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

19/45PnT Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Hipkin.

19/46PnT Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

19/47PnT Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 07 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19/48PnT Public Questions

There were no public questions.

19/49PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces

19/49/PnTa Housing Trajectory, Five Year Supply Land Supply Calculations for Greater Cambridge.

The decision was noted.

19/49/PnTb Greater Cambridge Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Content, Participation and Engagement Activities

The decision was noted.

19/49/PnTc Amendments to SA and HRA Dec 2019

The decision was noted.

19/49/PnTd ROD Mins and Waste Dec 2019

The decision was noted.

19/50PnT Adoption of the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Matter for Decision

The report provided responses to the representations received along with recommendations for amendments to the Supplementary Planning Document ahead of adoption with several consequential proposed changes.

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

- i. Considered the main issues raised in the public consultation; agree responses to the representations received and agreed consequential proposed changes to the SPD as set out in the Consultation Statement and tracked changed version of the SPD for adoption (See Appendices A and B of the Officer's report);
- ii. Subject to i), agreed to adopt the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD; and
- iii. Approved the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development is granted delegated authority, in liaison with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, and the Chair and Spokes for the Planning Policy and Transport Scrutiny Committee, to make any editing changes to the SPD prior to publication.

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 Principal Sustainability Consultant which referred to the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD having been developed with input from officers from across both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The document provides technical guidance for developers on the information that needs to be submitted with planning applications to demonstrate compliance with adopted planning policies related to climate change and sustainable design and construction.

In response to Members' questions and comments the Principal Sustainability Consultant said the following:

- i. Did consider moving the reference to gas combined heat and power; but where it had been referenced it had been correctly specified (as stated in paragraph 3.2.2.9 & 3.2.3.2). If used in the right sort of development this was considered a good low carbon option.
- ii. Gas combined heat and power could enable the delivery of community scale energy schemes; was cost effective and low risk compared to a bio-mass fuel system. Therefore, considered a useful system as the technology could be changed in the future when more zero carbon options available
- iii. Project work was being undertaken to explore injecting hydrogen into the gas grid to reduce carbon admissions. This could also be a future option for consideration.
- iv. The guidance in the document made it clear that where the technology was being proposed, it was being proposed in the right situation and following industry code of practice.
- v. Have asked developers to think about what they could implement now which would benefit residents' long term; such topics were heating which could operate at lower temperatures.
- vi. From the 2025 no gas boilers would be permitted in new residential developments and would have to look at alternatives such as electric heating; by installing a system which could operate at a lower temperature this would allow residents to change their boiler at a future date without installing a new heating system.
- vii. Reference to the installation of the correct pipework to rainwater harvesting tanks had been made so residents would not have to pull up the floors and new pipework in the future.
- viii. New building regulations would be issued later in the year so there would be an opportunity to add technical notes to the document when those changes to the regulations were published.

- ix. Section 4 of the document referenced food growing and aimed to encourage developers to go further than the current policy; encouraging integrating food growing into developments in a less formal way.
- x. Had aimed to make the document as simple as possible, however a certain level of detail was necessary based on the current Local Plan; some of the topics in the SPD were complex, particularly the environmental health issues which had been streamlined as much as possible.
- xi. Many consultants were aware of the detail that the City Council had referenced in the document as they had been working with Officers since the current Local Plan had been adopted.
- xii. Noted the Committee's frustration of wanting to achieve net zero carbon.
- xiii. Procurement had begun on the evidence base for net zero carbon in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan; already seven consultancies had expressed an interest since Friday 10 January.
- xiv. Had seen developers start to respond to net zero carbon in the absence of policy.
- xv. The sustainability checklists had been developed to provide a simple process for developers to give to applicants at pre-application stage. Different checklists had been produced for the City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as their policies were different. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan would look to bring the policies together for both authorities.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces thanked the Principal Sustainability Consultant and the planning team for their work on such a comprehensive document. Taking the Council forward from the adopted Local Plan to the next Local Plan while thinking of the environmental and climate predicament.

The Committee unanimously endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

19/51PnT Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Staffing Update

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update on the staffing position within the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.

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

- i. Noted the content of the report and ongoing work to secure appropriate staffing to support the work of the team.

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 and Assistant Director which provided progress of the delivery of recruitment to the Shared Planning Service.

An updated staffing structure was handed to Members for their information.

In response to comments and questions from the Committee the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Assistant Director said the following:

- i. Reasons that staff had given in exit interviews for leaving had included a range of matters though workloads, career progression, change of direction such as work in the private sector and the cost of living issues; there had also been several retirements in the service.
- ii. A development programme was now in place developed from the feedback of the exit interviews, allowing a structured approach to learning and development.
- iii. Generic job description had been introduced giving flexibility to officers to move around the service with internal processes simplified, again based on feedback received from staff. This would allow staff to gain experience in different disciplines of the planning service without having to look externally.

- iv. There was a national shortage of planners; neighbouring local authorities were facing the same recruitment challenges, particularly at senior and principal level.
- v. There was a large variety of work within the service that was attracting people's interest.
- vi. Acknowledged that 2019 had been a very challenging year for the planning service.
- vii. A vast number of additional hours had not been focused on service delivery as the service was transformed and merged into one single service.
- viii. An improvement in the service would be seen this year; there was several changes to assist officers which were:
 - A new ICT system and workflow which would be rolled out in February which would offer an improved self-service capability. This would also show the live progress of the application.
 - Additional staff would be joining the service in January which would improve the contact access for members of the public.
 - Alongside the enhanced "workforce management" the service was also the first large shared service to roll out "Council Anywhere".
 - An investment had been made in issuing mobile phones to all professional officers to enable fully flexible working and making them more contactable.
 - Agile management and a progressive approach to delivering work outcomes meant that some specialist staff had been enabled to work remotely. This had retained their skills when personal commitments would have otherwise prompted them to leave.
 - Continued dialogue with 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 and created long delays for residents.
- ix. Acknowledged there was a back log of outstanding planning cases. Target days had been introduced to reduce these cases.
- x. A current recruitment campaign was live to target more senior staff.
- xi. Infrastructure was being put in place to retain staff for career progression.
- xii. There were no junior planner vacancies as young graduates wanted to come to Cambridge; the challenge was they could not progress fast enough to meet the needs of the business.
- xiii. Recruitment of more experienced planners who had families raised the issue of affordability of living in Cambridge. Relocation was an issue.

- xiv. Exploring the possibility of recruiting overseas with a view to advertising this year; South Cambridgeshire District Council held a licence with the Home Office to recruit overseas.
- xv. Had engaged with unions regarding pay but there were issues with single status legislation. Neighbouring authorities which did not have union recognition were able to offer higher salaries for the same job.
- xvi. Working with the unions had allowed the planning services to offer other financials benefits such as golden hello process and market factor supplement.
- xvii. Education and training were also enticements that staff would benefit from.
- xviii. A Performance and Improvement Officer would work to produce new indicators to highlight long standing planning cases much quicker and procedures were in place on how they could be dealt with.
- xix. Reiterated the changes to the recruitment policy and practice.
- xx. Confident that there would be improvements in the 'turnaround time' and the capacity to respond to queries from the public.
- xxi. Work was being undertaken for staff to understand the priority and importance of customer engagement.
- xxii. There were some outstanding applications which were unusual as they had not been progressed by the applicant for numerous years.
- xxiii. Data could be provided on the backlog to the Committee and the level of work that was being undertaken and completed.
- xxiv. Agreed to publish in a monthly information sheet / e-mail on the following statistics to show how the service was evolving:
 - Number of permanent number of staff in service
 - Number of agency staff in service
 - Number of vacancies.
 - Contact details of staff.
 - A focus on communication and how information was communicated to residents.
- xxv. Moving to more digital platforms to raise the profile of the planning service; there was a post for an Engagement and Marketing officer to assist with this service.
- xxvi. New team leaders would increase communication with communities and residents increasing the personalisation of the service.
- xxvii. Thanked the Committee for their continued support.

The Committee then spoke of the incredible work that those in the planning services undertook and were aware of the immense pressure that they must be under. It was important to note the Committees' thanks to all staff and understand that the report had been brought forward to ensure that

improvements were being made for both staff and residents. Would expect a mid-year report on the service.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces reminded the Committee that Building Control had undertaken a similar transition, which had been through some 'terrible' times. The service now had a solid reputation throughout the industry and was deemed as one of the best in the Country, winning awards and setting new standards.

There were positive comments coming through on the forums.

The planning team and planning officers were an integral part to all the schemes taking place in the city and south Cambridgeshire and didn't get the recognition when awards were won. Moving forward when awards were won, those officers involved will be recognised internally.

The Committee unanimously endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor

19/52PnT Waste Water Treatment Works

Matter for Decision

To agree the Council's response to Anglian Water proposed arrangements for public consultation in respect of the project to relocate the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment works.

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

- i. Noted the details of the proposed statement of community consultation.
- ii. Delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development the submission of the Council's response to the proposed statement of community consultation set out in Appendix 2 of the Officer's 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 explained how the project was an important part in the Councils Joint Area Action Plan for North East Cambridge which sees the area become a major area for change. The proposed Statement of Community Consultation (attached as an exempt appendix 1 of the Officer's report) had been the subject of informal engagement with Anglian Water's team prior to its submission.

The Council had a period of 28 days to reply with its view on the proposed consultation.

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

CHAIR

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