

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
held in Committee Room I, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney,
at 6.30pm on **Thursday 24 January 2019**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Hilary Fenton (Vice-Chairman); Laetisia Carter, Andrew Coles, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Andy Graham, Nick Leverton, Michele Mead and Neil Owen.

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jake Acock, Ted Fenton and Peter Kelland, and the following resignation and temporary appointment was reported:-

Councillor Andrew Coles for Councillor Rosa Bolger.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers in items to be considered at the meeting.

60. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

61. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

62. PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION ON THE EAST CHIPPING NORTON DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, to which was attached the report to the Cabinet meeting of 16 January and the associated issues paper which had been approved for consultation and on which the Committee was invited to comment.

The Senior Planner (Policy) introduced the report and consultation paper, referring to the adoption of the Local Plan and the subsequent need for work in relation to the development of the strategic housing sites provided for in the Plan. In relation to East Chipping Norton, the consultation the Committee was now considering would last until Friday 8 March, and would hopefully help to draw out issues and concerns for which potential solutions could be developed. During the consultation there would be two staffed public exhibitions, between 2 pm and 8 pm on 6 and 25 February, details of which would be circulated.

The next stage in the process would be a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and the aim was for adoption of the SPD around September. Once adopted, the SPD

would become a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

Prior to the Committee considering the questions posed in the consultation document, Councillor Graham referred to the constraints summary section relating to transport and air quality, stating that he had not noted any attempt to address the lack of cycling links. In response, the Senior Planner stated that looking at provision for both pedestrians and cyclists was a key intention of the SPD process, and also explained that the Council, obviously, had greater control in this regard over the allocated strategic housing site than it did elsewhere, but that the County Council as Highway Authority would also be considering these aspects.

The Committee then went through the questions in the consultation document, and members were given the opportunity to comment generally, but specifically in relation to the explicit consultation questions:

Questions 1a) and 1b) (Site Constraints)

The Committee made no comments.

Questions 2a) to 2d) (Type and size of new homes needed)

Councillor Leverton considered that provision for bungalows needed to be included, as they were popular and appropriate for some elderly residents. These should be provided close to new pedestrian/cycle/disability scooter routes into the town centre.

Questions 3a) to 3d) (Affordable Housing)

Councillor Doughty considered that the final SPD should provide clear guidance on the Council's requirements for affordable housing, including house prices.

Questions 4a) to 4e) (Meeting specific housing needs)

In response to a question from Councillor Graham, the Senior Planner explained that the figure of 5% for self-build properties had been put forward and accepted through the Local Plan examination as a reasonable 'starting point' in terms of the level of provision required. The figure was therefore now included in the Local Plan, but the SPD process provided an opportunity to vary that for this site if there was justification for doing so.

In relation to affordability and a query from Councillor Doughty as to whether properties would be affordable for young families, the Senior Planner acknowledged that affordability was likely to be a key issue in the consultation. In this context, Councillor Carter emphasised the waiting list demand for one and two-bedroom homes.

Arising from 4d) concerning provision for the travelling community, Councillor Eaglestone queried the possible extent of such provision, and was advised that there was insufficient provision in Oxfordshire as a whole, which contributed to the complications involved when public authorities sought to remove people from unauthorised sites. The Local Plan had not made specific site provision, other than for travelling showpeople, but stated that potential provision would be looked at in respect of all the strategic development areas. It was not envisaged that these would be large sites.

Councillor Graham queried the wording of 4d), considering that a lack of context could lead to negative responses. The Senior Planner confirmed that the Local Plan set out the criteria.

Questions 5a) to 5f) (Business land provision)

Councillor Beaney articulated the need for business land to be protected as such, and also stressed the need for business units to be of suitable design, scale, quality and appearance, particularly because of the context being the approach to the Cotswolds AONB and Conservation Area.

Questions 6a) to 6d) (Character and Form of Development)

Councillors Beaney and Coles considered these to be good and useful questions, and that it was important to retain and enhance existing local characteristics. In relation to 6a), Councillor Graham felt that local skills should be utilised where possible.

Questions 7a) to 7f) (Vehicular access including the eastern link road)

Councillor Graham expressed concern at the possible consequential displacement of allotments, and hoped that there would be alternative provision, not least because demand was likely to increase. Councillor Coles pointed out that alternatives were not always regarded as appropriate because of work which allotment tenants had put in, sometimes over many years, to their existing plot.

The Senior Planner assured the Committee that officers were aware of the importance of and sensitivities around allotment provision, which would be taken into account during the SPD preparation process, including in the context of any consultation responses on the topic. Any relocation site should be local and accessible.

Questions 8a) to 8e) (Active Travel)

Councillor Graham stated that he was sceptical about the likely development of a network linking the development to the countryside and to bridleways, and the Senior Planner confirmed that to be the intention, and referenced contact from the British Horse Society. Councillor Graham also questioned how feasible improving provision for cyclists would be along London Road and Banbury Road.

Questions 9a) to 9e) (Mitigation of impacts on the landscape)

Councillor Beaney again referred to the desirability of industrial/business buildings being in keeping and not detrimental to the landscape.

Questions 10a) to 10d) (Achieving a net gain in biodiversity)

Councillor Coles stressed the importance of this and the need to ensure the implementation of protection and enhancement measures, given that the Council had an obligation to secure a net gain.

Questions 11a) to 11e) (open space provision)

Councillor Mead underscored the need for appropriate provision for youth, and for accessibility for all to be appropriately considered, both at the site and in the town as a whole. Councillor Leverton suggested that it was desirable to consider the provision of an artificial turf pitch; and Councillor Carter felt that improvements to the New Street Park were much needed.

Questions 12a) to 12e) (A new “Local Centre”?)

Councillor Leverton stated that the provision of a “local centre” was a good idea, provided it was done well, and emphasised the need for such a centre not to have an undue impact on the use and viability of the town centre.

Questions 13a) to 13d) (School provision)

The Committee considered the proposed location for the new primary school to be appropriate, and Councillor Beaney queried whether some special needs provision would be possible. Councillor Carter felt that the desirability of nursery provision should be mentioned, in the context of existing provision and the loss of the family centre.

Questions 14a) to 14d) (Supporting Infrastructure)

In the context of a comment from Councillor Coles, the Committee was supportive of the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

Councillors Beaney and Carter referred to the inadequacy of parking provision at the school and leisure centre and hoped that the consultation would draw out views and comments on that aspect.

Councillor Beaney asked for consideration to be given to 20mph zones in the development and also the implications on the development of those zones already being introduced in the town.

Councillor Leverton asserted the need for a complete assessment of roads into Chipping Norton; and queried the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy on the development area. The Senior Planner commented that that would become clearer as a better picture of the form and characteristics of the development emerged.

Finally, in response to a comment by Councillor Beaney, the Senior Planner advised that the consultation was intended to be as open as possible, in order to seek to encourage ideas and input and avoid the possible perception that the various issues had already been decided.

RESOLVED: That the comments set out above be conveyed as the Committee's response to the consultation.

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services which gave an update on progress in relation to its Work Programme for 2018/2019.

63.1 RAF Brize Norton

The next meeting of the Civilian-Military Partnership Group was expected to take place in May, with an update provided thereafter, or sooner if there were any developments in relation to the REEMA sites. The Executive Director (Commissioning) also advised that a meeting had taken place with Homes England prior to Christmas, at which the point had been made that the displacement of personnel from RAF Fairford would have an impact on others, including West Oxfordshire, although the timescales were not yet known.

63.2 Oxfordshire Health Care Transformation Programme

Further to the request to Councillor Lawrie Stratford for him to attend this or the following meeting of the Committee, the County Council's Assistant Director (Commissioning) had been in touch and had suggested a meeting with the Chairman of the Committee, in order to be clear about the Committee's wishes and to ensure that appropriate input was provided by the correct person.

In this context, the Executive Director (Commissioning) considered that there had been a number of changes since May 2018, including the retirement of the previous Director of Public Health, the different and improved approach of the new Chief Executive of the

Clinical Commissioning Group, and the decision of the Oxfordshire Growth Board to include the Healthy place making initiative in its work. The Executive Director suggested that once the new Director of Public Health was in post, they and the Chief Executive of the CCG should be invited to attend and report on relevant matters, at which point the Growth Board matters could also be considered. This would hopefully be possible for either the May or the July meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the suggestion of the Executive Director (Commissioning) be agreed.

63.3 Leisure Management Contract Working Party

As stated in the report, the Working Party was in abeyance, but the Executive Director (Commissioning) reminded the Committee that representatives of GLL generally attended one meeting of the Committee each year, and undertook to ensure that that was in hand.

63.4 Affordable Housing and Housing Need

In view of the report considered at the previous meeting of the Committee, and of the decision to remove completed items from the report presented at each meeting, this item would not be included in the next Committee Work programme report.

63.5 Review of Outside Bodies

In response to a query from Councillor Graham, the Head of Democratic Services confirmed the stated intention for this to be the subject of a report to the meeting of the Committee on 28 March.

63.6 Oxfordshire Garden Village Area Action Plan

It was anticipated that further consideration of this would take place in mid-2019.

63.7 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Executive Director (Commissioning) referred to a query about this which had been raised at the briefing which had followed the Council meeting the previous day, and confirmed that a short briefing/update note would be sent to all Councillors in the near future, and that a report would be prepared for the March meeting of this Committee. Further, she briefly explained the combination of circumstances which had contributed to the lack of recent progress with the approval and introduction of the Levy.

63.8 Domestic Abuse

The minutes of the previous meeting recorded Councillor Carter's wish for this to be included in the work programme. In this context, the Executive Director (Commissioning) suggested that an event for all members of the Council might be appropriate, and suggested an informal meeting with a small number of councillors to give consideration as to the desired outcomes and the best approach to be taken.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Director (Commissioning) be requested to convene a meeting with Councillors Beaney, Carter, Doughty and Leverton to address this matter, and identify the role of the Council in relation to Domestic Abuse.

63.9 Anti-Semitism

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting the previous day, Council had requested it to give future consideration to the possibility of the Council adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-semitism. This would be included on the agenda for a future meeting.

64. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which gave members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 15 January 2019.

Councillor Graham considered that the draft Homelessness Strategy required amendment as it offered no clear timescale for implementation, and there was no accurate information on the number of persons who were homeless or who were rough sleepers. Further, there were gaps in the appendices and inconsistencies around dates, which needed to be addressed. He was also concerned about the timescales for the completion and opening of the accommodation for homeless people in Chipping Norton.

The Committee noted that the amended draft strategy was due to be considered by Cabinet on 13 February, and was anticipated to be the subject of a recommendation to the Council meeting on 27 February, the latter being an obvious opportunity for input from any member of the Council.

In a general sense, the Committee was dissatisfied with the available information on rough sleepers, considering that the figures did not necessarily reflect reality, and in this context suggested that representatives of “Homes for All” were invited to a future meeting to address the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and consideration given to inviting “Homes for All” to a future meeting.

65. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were none.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm

CHAIRMAN