

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney,
at 6.30pm on **Thursday 10 October 2019**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Laetisia Carter (Vice-Chairman), Joy Aitman, Jill Bull, Julian Cooper, Suzi Coul, Jane Doughty Harry Eaglestone, Andy Graham, Nick Leverton, Neil Owen and Carl Rylett

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mike Cahill

Officers in Attendance

Chris Hargraves and Paul Cracknell

32. MINUTES

With regard to Minute No. 35.4, the Chairman advised that Councillor Colston, the Council's representative to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Board, had informed him that the Board's new Chief Executive was not due to take up the post until December. Accordingly, he suggested that the Board's position in relation to seeking National Park status be considered by the Committee in January 2020.

In relation to Councillor Acock's suggestion that the proposed revisions to the Visitor Information service should be considered by the Committee, having considered the available information, he did not believe that it was necessary for it to be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Luci Ashbourne and Hilary Fenton. Councillor Julian Cooper attended for Councillor Jake Acock

There were no other apologies for absence or temporary appointments.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

35. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

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

36. OXFORDSHIRE COTSWOLDS GARDEN VILLAGE PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Localities which invited Members to consider submitting a response on the Oxfordshire Garden Village Preferred Options Consultation Paper.

The Planning Policy Manager, Chris Hargraves, reminded Members that an initial consultation regarding the development of this site which had been allocated in the Local Plan had taken place during summer 2018. The Preferred Options Consultation Paper was intended as a means of shaping up that initial vision and setting the future direction of travel. Work on producing the supporting evidence base was ongoing.

The consultation document was in three parts; the introduction and background, vision and objectives and the strategy for delivery. The current consultation would inform the production of a formal document that would form the basis of a further statutory consultation and Examination in Public.

Councillor Rylett advised that he had recently attended an event in the village hall during which local children had been invited to put forward their aspirations for the new development and welcomed such events which sought views from a wider demographic.

Councillor Rylett sought clarification of the potential chronology and timescale for the project. He asked whether the timing of the Area Action plan (AAP) process was such that the final action plan would be in place in time to determine any planning application submitted by the site promoter.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that, ideally a planning application would follow on from adoption of the AAP. However, as was often the case, the developers were keen to make progress and were therefore working up an outline planning application in parallel to the AAP process, albeit this included an element of risk.

The current consultation was to close the following day and responses received would be considered and preparation of the necessary evidence base concluded. The final version of the plan would be subject to a six week statutory consultation process which would culminate in an Examination in Public. The final Action Plan could be adopted by the summer of 2020 and a planning application could have been submitted at that time. Any planning application lodged at that point would need to be determined in accordance with the Action Plan as required by the Local Plan.

Councillor Rylett questioned whether the Area Action Plan would be approved by Members at Council with the Masterplan and outline application being considered by the Development Control Committee. The Planning Policy Manager advised that the outline application, supported by the Masterplan, would be considered by the Development Control Committee but it would be difficult to determine the application without the Area Action Plan being in place as it was specified in the Local Plan that development would be led by the Area Action Plan.

Councillor Rylett indicated that the plan set out good aspirations but expressed concern that these were subject to various caveats including viability. He questioned how that viability would be assessed.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that there were still lots of issues to be worked through. This was an initial document and work was ongoing on a raft of associated technical issues. There would be a need for greater certainty when the final draft was published and the Council would need to be clear as to what could be achieved when it came to the Examination in Public. Viability was a genuine issue and, whilst development such as this on a green field site could deliver significant community benefit, there was a perception that it could provide unlimited funds which was not the case.

It was necessary to acknowledge legitimate constraints such as the requirement for affordable housing, the cost of construction and supporting infrastructure, developer profit and the returns to the landowners. The current consultation sought views on what was thought to be desirable in principle but further work would be necessary to determine deliverability and viability.

Councillor Rylett asked whether it was possible to be absolutely specific as to the percentage enhancements to be delivered. The Planning Policy Manager advised that it would be necessary for the Council to demonstrate deliverability. For example, in terms of biodiversity, the plan sought to deliver a 25% net gain. This figure was higher than that sought in other areas and would be challenging to achieve given that there was already a significant level of biodiversity on some parts of the site.

Councillor Rylett advised that the Climate change working Party had stressed the importance of this site being seen as an exemplar and the Planning Policy Manager acknowledged that this site should be looking to provide enhancements beyond the norm. This would be the subject of further debate but it was important to recognise that the site could only provide a finite sum. Whilst the Local Plan sought provision of 50% affordable housing, this too would need to be subject to an assessment of viability. Although it was important to set out clear expectations, it was necessary to retain a degree of flexibility and the Local Plan acknowledged the need to recognise viability as a factor.

Councillor Doughty welcomed the idea of making land available on which to grow food and suggested that provision should also be made for a 'farm shop' from which to sell produce. The Planning Policy Manager agreed that the plan could make provision for a range of innovative options and that strong support had previously been expressed by stakeholders in relation to community growing space.

Councillor Graham indicated that the question of financial viability could be subjective unless it was evidence based and expressed concern that environmental improvements could be slimmed down if the question of viability was left with the developers. Accordingly, financial information needed to be shared and agreed so as to avoid setting high but unrealistic expectations. Viability had to be defined and the developers needed to be made aware that the Council was considering the viability of the whole plan and viewed environmental factors to be of equal if not greater import. In response, the Planning Policy Manager advised that the Council would have to present independent viability advice at the Examination in Public.

Councillor Beaney asked if the Council could require developer contributions in excess of those levels specified in the Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that it would be possible to do so but that this would have to be supported by evidence at the examination. The Local Plan included the optional national standard for water efficiency but, in relation to matters such as sustainable construction, did not set specific standards as it was unable to do so in light of national policy in place at the time.

Councillor Levertton saw the plan as a utopian document but stressed that the environmental standards set should be viewed as sacrosanct. The Council should not compromise on its sustainability credentials and had to remain robust but reasonable. If it were to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030 it could not afford to compromise.

The Committee then turned to consider the Vision and Objectives. The Draft Vision and Core Themes and Objectives set out at pages 22 and 24 of the consultation document were considered and endorsed. Members then made comment on the following core objectives:-

GVI 1- To achieve a shift towards the 'prevention' of health related problems, whilst ensuring the provision of quality health care infrastructure and capacity to address those issues that cannot be prevented.

Whilst she welcomed the thrust of the objective, Councillor Doughty questioned how it would be achieved.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that this would tie in with a variety of elements within the healthy place shaping theme and involve a crossover with issues such as green infrastructure, transport, housing and active travel. It was important to provide facilities to address the needs of the wider demographic. Councillor Doughty noted that the development offered a great opportunity to put proper solid health care arrangements in place for residents of the new development and existing residents of Eynsham but expressed some concern over the Clinical commissioning group's ability to deliver these.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that the Clinical commissioning Group and the local GP practice were engaged in the consultation process and the supporting Eynsham Area Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) recognised the need to provide additional space for primary healthcare to cater for the anticipated increase in population. However, there were differing views as to how this should be achieved either by expanding or replacing existing facilities. The intention was to maximise the benefits for both new and existing communities.

In response to a question from Councillor Owen he advised that discussions were ongoing as to how best this could be achieved.

Councillor Rylett questioned what progress had been made in relation to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) produced in May. The Planning Policy Manager advised that this had been a baseline document and work was ongoing to identify various requirements in more detail, such as open space, education and transport. Transport consultants had been employed to model the impacts of the development and identify transport infrastructure requirements and this work would feed into the next iteration of the IDP. It was anticipated that the final draft IDP would be published alongside the formal draft Area Action Plan. The Planning Policy Manager agreed to consider whether there would be any benefit and whether indeed it would be possible, to publish a partial update of the IDP in the interim period.

Councillor Rylett noted that the plan set out how services would be run and indicated that residents expected that it would address how the new development would impact upon Eynsham itself and the West Eynsham site. The Planning Policy Manager advised that, whilst the Area action plan related to the Garden Village site itself, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan considered the impact on the wider area. The site could not be viewed in isolation.

Councillor Rylett stressed that transport was the key issue and, to date, the only concrete proposal was the provision of a park and ride. There was a need for clarity as to how infrastructure requirements were to be met. The Planning Policy Manager concurred and explained that this was exactly why additional technical evidence was required. Transport would be the key issue at the examination in public. He acknowledged the constraints and challenges presented by the A40 and explained that the District Council had to work within the context of the County Council's short and long term strategic plans, working with these to maximise the potential opportunities and benefits.

Councillor Rylett indicated that it was important to set out specific proposals that had a commitment from the County Council. The Planning Policy Manager concurred, indicating that there was a need for a clear process as to how, what and when the required infrastructure would be put in place. This would be addressed through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Councillor Rylett asked whether West Oxfordshire could ask the County Council for additional funding. The Planning Policy Manager advised that, should the Council identify anything that the County's consultants did not, it could do so but, once again, any such request would have to be evidence based. He reiterated that this was the primary issue and advised that the work currently underway was intended to produce an acceptable and deliverable set of solutions.

Councillor Bull suggested that the site should be level access without kerbs or other constraints. The Planning Policy Manager advised that the current document did not extend to this level of detail but confirmed that it did reflect the need for inclusivity and high quality pedestrian and cycle routes including safe routes to schools. The requirement for inclusive access could be the basis for further detail at the design stage.

GVI2 - To deliver a healthy, safe and crime free environment with a high standard of amenity for all and bringing together the best of the urban and natural environment.

Councillor Leverton questioned whether it was realistic to achieve a totally crime free environment and suggested that this aspect of the Plan be qualified.

GVI6 - To ensure that any flood risk mitigation including surface water drainage is effective, does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and maximises the opportunity to deliver environmental benefits.

Councillor Graham expressed concern that, whilst the question of surface water flooding was addressed at this point, no reference had been made to the need to improve the sewage infrastructure. The Planning Policy Manager referred Members to Preferred Policy Approach 13 – Water Environment as set out at page 68 which addressed the question of waste water infrastructure capacity. It had already been established that improvements would be required at Cassington and further work was underway to identify appropriate solutions in relation to the new properties and the cumulative impact taking account of existing dwellings as well.

Transport, Movement and Connectivity – Transport Habits

Councillor Leverton indicated that, regardless of improvements in vehicle technology, people would still have to park their vehicles whatever fuel was in use. He considered that the on-plot parking standards were inadequate and would result in on-street parking and congestion. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the consultation document set out the normal parking standards used by Oxfordshire County Council but that the Area Action Plan provided an opportunity to determine whether these were appropriate or not. He stressed that it would be a challenge to identify and set appropriate alternative standards whilst recognising the need to reduce the car use base but acknowledging that many residents would still choose to drive.

Councillor Coul noted that this remained a rural site and that public transport facilities were not yet in place. It would be impractical to reduce parking provision without appropriate public transport infrastructure being put in place and Councillor Coul agreed that the proposed parking standards were inadequate.

The Committee then went on to consider the three development options identified from page 35 onwards. The Planning Policy Manager advised that these had derived from a design workshop event held in May 2019 and acknowledged that each had its own merits. The Consultation sought views on these options to enable one final, or potentially a combination of options, to be taken forward.

Councillor Coul indicated that she favoured option I, a single centre development, as this would be more economically viable for businesses choosing to locate at the site and provide a focal point for the community. She felt that the creation of three neighbourhood sites could result in further divisions.

Councillor Leverton expressed his support for Option I but suggested that the school should be located further away from the A40 to the north-east of the site so as to minimise the risk of air quality issues arising. He considered that a wide green belt should be provided along the boundary with the A40 so as to minimise air quality issues.

Councillor Rylett advised that it was anticipated that the new school was to be a sixth form facility associated with the existing Bartholomew School and the proposed location had been chosen for convenience as it was close to the existing premises.

Councillor Carter suggested that the school site should be well provided with landscaping and green space. Councillor Carter also considered that, as people were 'time poor', Option I should be seen as the preferable alternative.

Healthy Place Shaping

The committee endorsed the core objectives related to healthy place shaping set out at page 43.

Protecting and Enhancing Environmental Assets

Councillor Rylett questioned how the green infrastructure spaces to the north and west of the site would be protected from the threat of future development and how the potential for further development to the north resulting in coalescence with Long Hanborough and Freeland could be resisted. In response, the Planning Policy Manager advised that Officers were aware of the concerns raised in relation to potential coalescence. In addition, the land to the north was of particular environmental significance. The framework plan showed an extensive green space to the northern boundary of the site, the exact nature and extent of which had yet to be determined.

It was anticipated that there would be a combination of informal green space and active green corridors within the site itself as shown on the framework plan options within the Area Action Plan. The long-term management and maintenance of these would be addressed through an appropriate mechanism such as a legal agreement at the application stage. Councillor Beaney suggested that ensuring a change of ownership of green areas made their retention far more likely.

Councillor Rylett questioned whether initiatives within the site could be used to enhance the environmental designation of land to the north. The land at the north of the site was the most environmentally valuable and the Planning Policy Manager explained that the boundary of the Area Action Plan could be extended to include these more sensitive areas and thereby help to ensure their enhancement. Councillor Rylett expressed his support for such an initiative and questioned how it could be achieved.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that the general requirement for net gain in biodiversity was a reflection of national policy, and that further work would be required to determine the level of gain that could be achieved at this site, having regard to its 'garden village' status. There was a basic sequential approach to avoid harm, mitigate the impact of development and enhance biodiversity. It was important to identify the most valuable parts of the site and then establish what measures would be best to secure their protection and where possible, enhancement. Whilst there were significant complexities associated with this process, the Council's proposals were ambitious when compared with other sites; the key now was to establish how they could be achieved.

Councillor Doughty emphasised the need to learn from earlier developments where trees planted at the time of their construction had subsequently caused root damage to nearby properties. She stressed the need to ensure that responsibilities were clearly defined and that robust tree management arrangements were put in place. Councillor Doughty also suggested that a small lake could be incorporated as part of the development. Councillor Aitman noted that it was also important to ensure that new dwellings were not located too close to existing trees as this too had caused problems in the past.

Councillor Leverton suggested that consideration should be given to ensuring public transport timetables took account of the shift patterns of key workers such as NHS staff and teachers.

Councillor Bull highlighted the importance of providing an appropriate mix of dwellings (including bungalows) and ensuring that they met the standards for homes for life. The Planning Policy Manager advised that the Local Plan required a percentage of dwellings on larger residential schemes of 50 or more homes to comply with accessibility and adaptability standards (formerly lifetime homes) and drew attention to Preferred Policy Approach 20 – Specialist Housing Need at page 87 which included a requirement for all new homes at the garden village to be designed to meet this accessibility standard.

GV25 - To provide a balanced range of employment opportunities within easy commuting distance of new homes, providing flexibility to adapt to changing economic needs.

Councillor Leverton asked what employment opportunities were envisaged and how it was anticipated they would be delivered. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the consultation sought views on the way in which employment space should be provided including the proposed science park identified in the Local Plan. Evidence had been sought to see how this would relate to the Oxfordshire economic context including the local industrial strategy. In the Local Plan some 40 Hectares of this 215 Hectare site had been set aside for the science park and there was a need to consider the implications. The proposal had the 'in principle' support of the Local Enterprise Partnership and had formed part of the original expression of interest in the bid for Garden Village status.

The development would also give rise to other employment opportunities across the site for example potentially in any specialist housing provision and retail as well as potential for home working which would help to reduce the impact of the development on the A40. Councillor Bull reminded the planning Policy Manager that extra care housing catered for all age groups.

Councillor Leverton questioned whether the potential for home working was realistic as it was his perception that it was in decline. The Planning Policy Manager suggested that this was in fact a burgeoning market and stressed that the key was to provide a balance of employment possibilities including co-working space as part of mixed-use community 'hubs'.

Councillor Graham made reference to the science park in Abingdon, pointing out that this was by no means an attractive development. He asked whether there was any data general on employee numbers to help ascertain how many lived locally and how many travelled to work at the site. Such a comparator was necessary to assess the likely traffic impact arising from the facility. Councillor Graham also questioned the feasibility of home working but stressed the importance of community hubs.

Councillor Coul stated that, whilst she considered home working and tele-commuting to be a brilliant idea, in her personal experience, it did not work in practice. She sought clarification as to the evidence base upon which the likely level of home working was predicated. The Planning Policy Manager advised that the likely level of demand had to be quantified where possible as it would relate to the traffic impact. If employment could be generated within the site then the traffic impact would be reduced. It would be necessary to ensure that the necessary infrastructure was in place in terms of property size, access to technology and the availability of a reliable mobile telephone signal. On the basis of the garden village principle of providing generous green space it was important that the most effective use was made of the built space.

GV28 - To provide a range of education and training opportunities for local people to improve skills and 'work-readiness'.

Councillor Leverton asked how this would be achieved and the Planning Policy Manager advised that through the use of a Community Employment Plan, skills and training opportunities could be provided during the construction phase and potentially through ongoing commercial activities once the development had been completed.

He advised that similar arrangements had been put in place in relation to the Westgate Centre in Oxford, offering 'up-skilling' and future training and employment opportunities. The consultation was looking to establish whether such an approach would be welcome in respect of the garden village.

Transport and Connectivity

Councillor Doughty indicated that she was not convinced of the merits of the proposed 'Park and Ride' as many people did not travel to the centre of Oxford but passed through it to its outskirts and beyond. The Planning Policy Manager accepted that this was true in some instances but that some would only wish to travel into the City centre. Councillor Doughty considered that it was imperative to provide a bus lane and the Planning Policy Manager acknowledged that the provision of the park and ride and eastbound bus lane was seen as a priority with a current planning application pending determination by Oxfordshire County Council. In the longer term it was intended to provide a westbound lane and resolve a number of pinch points on the route. This was however subject to a bid for Government Funding through the Homes from Infrastructure Fund (HIF).

Councillor Doughty expressed her concern over the potential impact upon the village of Eynsham. The Planning Policy Manager advised that a package of measures would be put in place to ameliorate the impact including reducing the need to travel as a general principle, but particularly by car, providing a segregated pedestrian/cycle route to Hanborough station, applying appropriate car parking standards and introducing vehicle sharing arrangements such as a car club.

Councillor Rylett noted that the provision of the park and ride had not been finalised and asked whether there was a 'Plan B'.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that it was anticipated that the planning application would be considered in December so the position should become clear by January. Should the application fail it would be necessary to reassess the situation and devise a reasonable, deliverable alternative.

Councillor Rylett noted that there had been a proposal for a 'green bridge' over the A40 between the site and Eynsham and asked if there was scope to ask for two. The Planning Policy Manager advised that a 'green bridge' would cater for people and wildlife but indicated that there were conflicting opinions as to the desirability of such a link and no clear cut view with some welcoming the idea and others supporting at-grade crossings or underpasses as an alternative. Whilst it was possible to look at the opportunities as to what could be done and where, the cost and viability of providing two bridges would need to be assessed.

Councillor Eaglestone noted that provision had been made to link the A40 to the B4449 through the west Eynsham site. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the allocation of the site in the Local Plan made provision for a link and that the transport modelling of the garden village would therefore need to consider it and other wider transport measures accordingly.

With regard to the provision of a link to Hanborough station, Councillor Coul noted that many passengers travelled through rather than to Oxford. It was difficult to get to or to park at Hanborough station and the key was the provision of suitable connectivity. The Planning Policy Manager acknowledged that there were difficulties but noted that passenger numbers through Hanborough had declined since the opening of Oxford Parkway station and that a lack of car parking did not seem to be a problem at the current time.

Car Parking Strategy and Standards

Councillor Leverton suggested that paragraph 10.17 should be deleted as he was concerned at the suggestion that the number of car parking spaces could be reduced, particularly as it was recognised that this could give rise to on-street parking and potential conflict. He also reiterated the view that current parking standards were inadequate.

(Councillor Owen left the meeting at this juncture to undertake other official business)

Public Transport

Councillor Beaney noted that travel to work data had been taken from the 2011 census which was now well out of date. The Planning policy Manager undertook to contact the County Council to establish whether more recent data was available.

Climate Change and Resilience

Members of the Committee joined Councillor Leverton in his endorsement of GV37 - To adopt an ambitious approach towards low and zero carbon energy - maximising opportunities to draw energy from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems – recognising this to be of the utmost importance.

Policy EWI – Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village Strategic Location for Growth (2,200 homes)

Assuming that a significant proportion of this development was required to address Oxford City's unmet housing need, Councillor Cooper questioned whether the development was likely to place a greater strain on the A40 as a result of former residents travelling back to the City to work.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that it had been calculated that some 13,200 new homes would be required to meet West Oxfordshire's own housing need during the local plan period. Added to this, in accordance with the duty to co-operate, the Council had agreed to accept a further 2,750 new homes as its share of the 15,000 required to meet the City's unmet need.

The 2,200 properties in the Garden Village, together with an additional 550 as part of the 1,000 home allocation at west Eynsham would address this requirement and discussions were taking place with Oxford City regarding the affordable housing element. However, in terms of open market housing, this was essentially down to market forces. The District Council had no control over who was to occupy these hence it was impossible to quantify the impact in the way Councillor Cooper suggested.

Councillor Beaney questioned whether those housed from Oxford City's waiting list would want to travel back and went on to question what was thought of as an appropriate balance in the allocation of the affordable housing. The Planning Policy Manager indicated that it would be difficult to determine how many would continue to travel into the City and advised Members that discussions in relation to affordable housing provision remained ongoing with the City Council.

Given the volume of construction currently underway in Oxford, Councillor Eaglestone questioned whether additional properties would be required in West Oxfordshire. The Planning Policy Manager advised that the level of unmet need was so great that it was highly likely that it would.

Councillor Carter asked whether any discussion had taken place with major employers in the City such as BMW regarding the housing needs of their staff. Councillor Leverton suggested that this was a problem for the councils to resolve, not one for the employers. The Planning Policy Manager advised that there were methods such as workplace parking charges and car share schemes that could be applied to address such issues. Councillor Carter maintained that the Council should discuss the matter with employers and the Planning Policy Manager agreed that it was useful to try and understand movement patterns but that data was difficult to obtain. Based on past surveys of housing areas, the District Council had tended to find that employment trends change over time and those moving to another area whilst initially working way, tended to then find employment closer to where they now lived.

Councillor Leverton expressed some concern as to the impact of moving people away from their own local area and support network and Councillor Carter indicated that this could be a particular issue for those with particular health or social needs.

Councillor Rylett asked whether there had been any progress on the suggested rehabilitation centre and the Planning Policy Manager advised that this idea had yet to be supported by a detailed business plan. Nothing of any significance had been heard since the initial approach and, whilst this had been seen as an idea worth exploring, there had been no follow up to the District Council regarding the initial concept. In response to a further question from Councillor Rylett, the Planning Policy Manager advised that the consultation responses received should be available to view on the Council's website within the next couple of weeks.

Councillor Beaney thanked Mr Hargraves for his report and Members for their contribution to the debate.

RESOLVED: That the comments set out above be submitted as the Committee's response to the Consultation Paper.

37. CARE QUALITY COMMISSION INSPECTION REPORT – OXFORD UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, together with the Care Quality Commission's Inspection Report on the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Councillor Cooper expressed his concern over certain aspects of the Care quality Commission's findings as set out at pages 4 and 7 of the report and proposed that the Council write to the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to express its concern and to ask how the issues identified were to be addressed.

It was explained that the report was part of an ongoing process in which the Care Quality commission would undertake further inspections to ensure that the concerns that had been raised had been addressed.

Councillor Aitman questioned how the overall findings appeared contradictory to elements of the findings and Councillor Bull explained to Members how the assessment process operated.

Councillor Coul questioned whether there was any merit in the Council seeking to duplicate the work of the Care Quality Commission.

In seconding the proposition, Councillor Graham suggested that it demonstrated that the Council was aware of and concerned over the findings.

Councillor Coul felt that the Care Quality commission had the matter in hand and that raising this issue would do little other than add to the workload of an already over-stretched NHS.

On being put to the vote the proposition was lost

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

38. EQUALITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Strategic Support which invited the Committee to consider the suggestion that the Equal Opportunities Working Party be revived.

Councillor Beaney suggested that, as the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy was to be reviewed in the foreseeable future, rather than reconstitute the Equal Opportunities Working Party, it would be more appropriate for the Committee to take that opportunity to comment on the draft.

Councillor Graham expressed concern that this item of business had not been given adequate time or sufficient prominence by being placed at the end of a full agenda. He considered that the Working Party should be re-established with a remit to review the Policy, consider a reporting mechanism, training and recruitment and retention.

Councillor Beaney remained of the view that, as the Policy was to be subject to review, it would be more appropriate for the Committee to consider the matter at that juncture.

In response to a question from Councillor Coul, it was explained that, whilst the current Policy 'expired' in 2020, the timescale for the review was uncertain at present.

Given that he had concerns over the current Policy, Councillor Graham suggested that Members should be invited to raise any issues they may have with Officers to inform the review process which should take place as soon as possible.

Members concurred and it was:-

RESOLVED: That:-

- (a) consideration of the review of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy be added to the Committee's Work Programme;
- (b) Members be invited to raise any issues they may have in relation to the existing Policy with Officers; and
- (c) Officers be requested to initiate the review process as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 8:40pm

Chairman