Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 9 July 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **9 July 2018** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr N J Hookway
Cllr G J Ioannou
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr I H Ward

OFFICERS PRESENT

N Hayward - Team Leader, Strategic Planning & Economic Regeneration
D Goodman - Planner
S Worthington - Democratic Services Officer

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr G J Ioannou declared a non-pecuniary interest in the items on the agenda by virtue of being the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Cllr I H Ward also declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

Prior to considering any of the scheduled items on the agenda Cllr D J Sperring read out the following statement:-

'As Members will have noted, there have been documents published which make reference to strategic planning and the delivery of a Joint Strategic Plan across South Essex. The Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the five other South Essex authorities of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Southend and Thurrock in January 2018. This is being followed by a Joint Statement of Common Ground which is to be considered at a meeting of Rochford Full Council on 17 July 2018. Members will also note, that the Local Development Scheme sets out a proposed timetable for the preparation of a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex.

Whilst it is not an agenda item for this meeting, as the Statement of Common Ground is to be taken to Full Council, I thought it would be useful to provide some brief context underpinning this work.

When the Council reviewed the statutory timetable for preparing its new Local Plan, it was envisaged that policy-making would follow the traditional three staged approach to enable an aspirational, but deliverable, plan to be formulated. The review of the Council's current planning policies started with an early engagement programme where the strategic planning team went out into local communities to involve them in consideration of the issues that the district faced and potential future

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opportunities. This programme was followed by the more recent consultation on an initial Issues and Options Document earlier this year.

However, the plan-making climate has changed considerably over the last 5 to 10 years with the removal of the regional planning system, publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), legislative changes, case law and more recently proposals to amend the NPPF and PPG. Most significantly for plan-making the latter relates to how the need for new homes is calculated and, ultimately, met across the country.

Subsequently it has been recognised that there is a need to deal with a number of key strategic issues in partnership with our neighbours to ensure that they are effectively addressed and planned for. Such strategic issues fall within the remit of the Duty to Co-operate which is a legal requirement that the Council would need to demonstrate to an independent planning inspector had been met. Joint planning across South Essex, however, is in its infancy and will evolve as its progresses. Should Members have any questions, these will be noted today and a written response will be provided in due course.'

It was noted that a copy of the statement would be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee. There was debate about the volume of documents that had been circulated for this meeting of the Sub-Committee with concern expressed that there had not been sufficient time to read them in detail, given the volume and length of documents circulated for this meeting. Members concurred that regular meetings of the Sub-Committee should be scheduled to enable less documents to be considered at each meeting.

2 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2018 - 2021

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services recommending adoption of the draft Local Development Scheme 2018 – 2021.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question, that the Council's proposed timetable for the preparation of emerging statutory planning policy documents was in line with what other Essex Authorities are doing.

A Member expressed the opinion that summer/autumn 2019 was not ideal timing for public consultation on the Preferred Options Document and that October 2019 would be preferable. It was further emphasised that extending the consultation period would not help the situation; however, choosing the right time to launch the consultation was a key factor. It was also pointed out that there was every possibility that the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) may not be delivered by spring 2019; accordingly, a public consultation launching in October 2019 could help in the event of a delay in delivering the JSP.

Officers advised that this timetable had been developed taking into account the need to align with the timetable for the JSP, taking care that there should be no overlap in consultations on the documents. They confirmed that the

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timetable could be adjusted to allow public consultation to take place in autumn/winter 2019, rather than allocating a specific month for the consultation launch; there was a need for evidence to be available as part of the consultation process, as well as capacity, and not specifying a particular month would allow more flexibility. If in the future it became evident that the timetable for the JSP, for example, was going to slip, there was the possibility of adjusting the LDS timetable to accommodate that. In response to the concerns raised around the timing of public consultation it was agreed that the timetable should be adjusted to October/November 2019 for public consultation on the Preferred Options Document.

Officers advised, in response to a specific question as to whether the Council had the resources in place to deliver this timetable, that the capacity of the Strategic Planning team was under review. The Joint plan-making work was still in its infancy, with the South Essex authorities still formulating governance and resource arrangements; it was likely that there would be an element of resource required from each authority although it was still not known how that would be apportioned. Officers were confident that the Preferred Options Document could be delivered by October/November 2019; however, it was important to keep the Council's Local Development Scheme under constant review.

It was noted that there were three authorities in South Essex that had been identified by the Government and had received intervention letters. Brentwood and Basildon were being closely monitored by the Government, as they had not had a Local Plan in place for a number of years. The Government was holding them to their timetable and required specific justification from them for any changes in that timetable. The situation for Castle Point was slightly different; it was possible that the County Council might be asked to intervene in their Local Plan process. There was a lot of pressure on local authorities to deliver Local Plans. Although this Council has in place a Local Plan and associated planning policy documents, it was important that these be kept up to date and the Government was closely monitoring all local authorities.

In response to a Member question as to whether the Council was adhering to its original timetable, officers advised that there had been some slippage as a result of changes in staff and problems with recruiting planners necessitating prioritisation of available resources. Responding to a supplementary question as to whether joint planning with other authorities was also having an impact on delivery, it was emphasised that the Council had a duty to co-operate with other authorities. It was further noted that delays also occurred as a result of the need for evidence from the other Essex Authorities; often reports were largely completed but delayed for a variety of reasons.

It was agreed that the timetable set out at paragraph 3.7 in the appendix to the officer's report be amended so that the target date for public consultation on the Preferred Options Document (Regulation 18) be October/November 2019 and the target date for public consultation on the Proposed Pre-

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Submission Document (Regulation 19) be October/November 2020.

It was also agreed that a meeting of the Sub-Committee be scheduled for August 2018 at which a report should be available relating to resources to deliver this work, that feedback on public consultation on the Issues and Options Document be reported to the Sub-Committee in September 2018 and that regular meetings of the Sub-Committee be scheduled to monitor the timetable closely.

Recommended to Council

That the draft Local Development Scheme 2018 – 2021, amended to take account of a revised public consultation date of October/November 2019 on the Preferred Options Document and revised public consultation date of October/November 2020 on the Proposed Pre-Submission Document, be adopted.

It was further:-

Resolved

That regular meetings of the Sub-Committee be scheduled, including meetings in August and September, to consider, respectively, a report on resources to deliver the Local Plan and Joint Strategic Plan, and to consider feedback on the public consultation on the Issues and Options Document. (ADP&RS)

3 ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2017: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of an implementation plan to support the Economic Growth Strategy 2017.

During debate of the report, a Member expressed concern that the key performance indicators set out on page 1 of the appendix to the officer's report did not include any numerical targets. Officers emphasised that it would be challenging to quantify targets as these were dependant on other factors, for example, the number of planning applications that come in, or funding grants, which were not consistently taken up by local businesses. Any target numbers included would be estimates in this first year of introducing KPIs and there was every possibility therefore that any estimated targets would not be met. Officers stated that next year the KPIs for this year could be used as a base for comparison; however, this year there was no base. The Member reiterated that there should, nevertheless be estimated numerical targets for the KPIs, and those targets were not met, an explanation should be given; the KPIs were meaningless without numerical targets. The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise commented that estimated numerical targets could be included, with plus/minus values, which could be used as a basis for future monitoring.

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It was agreed that the KPIs should be amended to include plus/minus assumptions relating to numerical targets and that this should be incorporated into the report on the Economic Growth Strategy's Implementation Plan due to be considered by the Executive on 12 July.

Resolved

That the Implementation Plan, appended to the officer's report be noted, subject to the KPIs on the first page being amended to include plus/minus assumptions relating to numerical targets. (ADP&RS)

4 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: SOUTH ESSEX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the evidence and key findings from the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) 2017 following its completion, as well as the implications for Rochford District's plan-making.

During debate Members noted that Brentwood Borough Council would also have to be included in this assessment. It was further emphasised that the Brexit agreement would also impact on the assessment. In response to a Member question as to whether the authorities had plans and budgets in place to consider this, officers advised that the evidence was not up to date as this work had been done last year. Changes would need to be made to the document and this would be kept under review. It was agreed that this should be included as a standing agenda item for future meetings of the Sub-Committee.

Resolved

That the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017 be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website and that it be included as a standing agenda item for forthcoming meetings of the Sub-Committee. (ADP&RS)

5 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: SOUTH ESSEX RETAIL STUDY (SERS) 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the evidence and key findings of the final South Essex Retail Study (SERS) 2017, as well as the implications for Rochford District's plan-making.

It was noted that Brentwood Borough Council would also have to be included in this assessment. Members observed that this was a highly contentious area that was constantly and rapidly changing and it was therefore important to have a flexible, open-minded strategy for the future.

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Members drew attention to paragraph 2.17 on page 5 of the Retail Study, and emphasised that the Council would have to provide an assessment of future retail needs beyond 2031. Officers advised that a future review would be needed at the appropriate time.

There was a discussion around the need to have a fast, robust broadband service within the District, including those parts that currently experience fluctuations in service. It was noted that those residents whose telephony connections were ducted underground would not be able to receive superfast broadband service, as the necessary re-cabling costs would be prohibitive. The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise noted the concern raised and agreed to report back to Members on this in due course.

Resolved

That the South Essex Retail Study (SERS) 2017 be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

6 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: SOUTH ESSEX LEVEL 1 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT (SFRA) 2018

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the South Essex Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2018, which will inform the Council's plan-making process and approach to its flood risk management duties across the District.

A Member commented that the Southend Council/Great Wakering Parish Council work on the Shoreline Management Plan had highlighted concerns relating to the input of the MoD contractors. Officers emphasised that Shoreline Management Plans look at flood defences and the Environment Agency's responses to issues, including maintenance, which is distinct from the SFRA. It was further reiterated that the MoD contractors would only engage with the Environment Agency.

Resolved

That the Level 1 SFRA 2018 be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

7 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: ESSEX GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATIO ASSESSMENT 9GTAA) 2018

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the evidence and key findings of the final Essex wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2018, as well as the implications for Rochford District's plan-making.

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During debate there was reference to the possibility of developers being asked to provide gypsy and traveller pitches as part of the conditions associated with the grant of planning permission. However, it was felt that this was unrealistic, given commercial considerations.

The point was made that transitional provision should be earmarked for travellers. Concern was, however expressed about transit provision, and it was felt that this should be dealt with separately, at Essex-level. It was felt that this should be looked at in more detail. Members expressed concern that temporary planning permission for pitches could result in a more permanent arrangement. Officers highlighted that a separate piece of work on transit provision across Essex, including scrutiny of existing evidence, was going to be commissioned through the Essex Planning Officers' Association.

It was noted that emergency stopping points had not been covered by this report and officers advised that these were not specifically defined. It was felt that the study should include provision for emergency stopping places.

Resolved

That the Essex GTAA 2018 be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 11.12 am.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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