

## Extraordinary Council – 28 November 2017

---

Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **28 November 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs L A Butcher

Vice-Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr M R Carter	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr N L Cooper	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr R Milne
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M J Webb
Cllr Mrs T R Hughes	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr G J Ioannou	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs J R Lumley, E O K Mason, T E Mountain and Mrs C A Weston.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Scrutton	- Managing Director
J Bostock	- Assistant Director, Democratic Services
M Thomas	- Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services
N Hayward	- Team Leader, Planning Policy & Economic Development
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Officer

Prior to commencement of the meeting Members representing all political groups on the Council paid tributes and shared memories of the late Councillor C I Black, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. This included reference to the fact that Cllr Black had been the longest serving Member of the Council, was intelligent and supportive, providing advice to other Members, with extensive knowledge and experience, which would be greatly missed; as well as his years of service to the residents of Rayleigh.

### **242 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: DRAFT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT; DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL; AND CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY 2017**

Council considered the report of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee seeking Council approval to publish the new Local Plan draft Issues and Options Document and accompanying interim Sustainability Appraisal for formal public consultation.

The Chairman of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee gave the following statement:-

“On 17 November 2017 the Planning Policy Sub-Committee met to consider the new Local Plan Issues and Options Document: Draft Consultation Documents. We discussed individually all evidential documents, including the SHELAA, the strategic housing and employment land availability assessment; duty to co-operate with other Councils; the gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment; the infrastructure delivery topic paper 2017 – all of these documents meeting the current legislative requirements which have been put in place by successive Governments, but of course these could be changed if Central Government move the goal posts. Officers’ hard work has ensured that we in Rochford are ahead of the game in respect of our plans, whereas some other local Councils have already been contacted by Government officials chasing for information regarding their Plans. During our meeting Members asked numerous questions, or sought clarification on various items, to which officers responded fully. Ultimately the net result of these discussions contributed to items 3 and 4 on this evening’s Agenda, with the Sub-Committee’s recommendations. No doubt Members who were not permitted to ask questions on these documents at the Sub-Committee meeting will want to raise issues. I am confident that officers, Councillors or myself will be able to answer them or, alternatively, give prompt responses after further investigations. While numerous issues were raised and answered or clarified, as the case may have been, it is essential that we do our utmost to get the public to engage with these issues that will affect everyone presently within the District and those who will become residents in the future. We appreciate that this is a huge document, but we hope that residents who have concerns in respect of a particular issue will concentrate on that and submit their views during the consultation period. We are fully aware that our evidence in support of our Plans for the future of our District must be robust and be able to stand up to intensive scrutiny from both within this Chamber and outside, as will the evidence that we have received from third parties. We will also ensure that the evidence presented by other Councils must be able to stand up to the same scrutiny to which they will subject us. I am sure that we will hear the usual views that we cannot cope with more housing, the lack of infrastructure, etc, and that some people will try to score political points in relation to this long term Plan for our District. While it is very pleasing to hear that County have stated: infrastructure first, sadly, to date, their track record does not support this aim. In my view this is not just a Conservative Group issue, but it is incumbent on everyone, both inside and outside this Chamber, to work together for the best possible results for our residents and the future successful planned development for our District.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning gave the following statement:-

“Our concept was to make this new Local Plan like no others that have been done before. What we have learned from experience is that residents with their local knowledge, together with their input and the desire to get involved

will be at the heart of this Local Plan. When we started the Local Plan making process, we consulted with both the Parishes and the Town Council, together with local residents who attended the various sessions up and down the District, enabling them to voice the issues of concern to them. Most were unaware of how much influence they could have on vitally needed improvements to their locality. Our concern has always been to get residents involved at the earliest stages of plan making, to enrich the process, or else we may miss out on the possibility of identifying all the necessary infrastructure and amenities needed within their local communities. It has also been previously mentioned that ideally it should be infrastructure first where a development requires it. Previous Government, Labour, Coalition and Conservative, have set targets for housing delivery, which Councils have had to comply with, often at odds with the local community. It has also become obvious to us that without the protection a statutory Local Plan gives it would be open season for developers to build anywhere. For the present, how do we deal with the immediate impact presented, of a possible identified housing need of 7,500 houses over the next 20 years? Firstly, this is an unconstrained need, secondly, that need is inclusive of already allocated land with planning permissions in place awaiting development, and, thirdly, the Local Plan we are embarking on will catalogue the issues identified in the independent evidence base reports regarding the current constraints. This body of evidence covers a large variety of issues, amongst which both the environmental and infrastructural constraints figure highly. It is important to repeat, emphasise and understand that the 7,500 figure is an unconstrained need, which as yet takes no consideration of the current environmental and infrastructural restrictions prevalent in the District that could possibly demonstrate a need to reduce the level of identified housing need. Good plan making will identify the most appropriate locations and ensure we build in the right places. We still need houses for our own local needs. What you can be assured of is that we are here to uphold that democratic process of asking, listening, explaining, debating and then deciding the best way forward that benefits our residents long term.”

The Leader of the Green and Rochford District Residents Group drew particular attention to the non delivery of a Local Plan by Castle Point, Basildon and Brentwood Councils, while this Council was embarking on its second. He urged Council to approve the production and delivery of a leaflet to every household in respect of the public consultation to publicise to residents that they have an opportunity to respond to the consultation. He also emphasised the importance of all Ward Members looking at the evidence and challenging whether the proposed 7,500 new houses per annum was acceptable. He stated that, in his view, the number of houses to be delivered locally ought to be the number that was actually needed, supported by the infrastructure in place, ie, infrastructure first.

The Leader of the Council emphasised that having a Plan in place protected the District from unwanted development, citing the Coombes Farm major application, which was refused planning permission and the Christmas Tree Farm development in Hawkwell, where the number of houses initially proposed were reduced.

Officers advised, in response to a concern raised about potential shortfalls in annual housing delivery targets during the interim period of one Plan ending and another being adopted, that although there would be a shortfall during that period, new houses built before adoption of a new Plan would, however, go towards targets within that Plan, depending on the start date of the Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning advised, in response to a Member concern that it was likely that local people would not be able to access any new houses built, that the majority of properties sold to date on the Hall Road development had been purchased by local people.

It was confirmed, in response to a Member question, that if leaflets were to be used as part of the consultation process, Planning Policy and Communications officers would work together on the content of these. The Chairman of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee confirmed that it would be possible for the Sub-Committee to meet to approve the content of the leaflet. During debate of the budget required to produce and deliver consultation leaflets officers confirmed that although there had previously been discussion of a leaflets budget by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee, there was no specific budget for this and Members would need to approve expenditure of £15,000. Cllr D J Sperring moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr J R F Mason that an amendment to recommendation 4 be made to the effect that a budget of £15,000 be used to produce and deliver consultation leaflets on the Issues and Options document, the content of which to be approved by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the new Local Plan Draft Issues and Options Document and accompanying interim Sustainability Appraisal be published for formal public consultation for up to 12 weeks.
- (2) That the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.
- (3) That the activities set out in the Consultation and Engagement Summary be noted and published on the Council's website.
- (4) That leaflet circulation to all properties in the District be included as part of the public consultation using a budget of £15,000, the content of which to be approved by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.  
(ADP&RS)

### **243 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2017-2021**

Council considered the report of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee recommending adoption of the Local Development Scheme 2017-2021.

## Extraordinary Council – 28 November 2017

---

In response to a Member question as to whether the issue of non delivery of infrastructure by Essex Council could be included in the relevant Risk Register, officers confirmed that an additional risk could be included in the LDS Risk Register in respect of infrastructure not being delivered by Essex County Council.

In response to a Member query as to whether District Members also Members of Essex County Council might raise the issue of delivery of infrastructure at county level, the Leader of the Council advised that this was already happening. The County Council was pursuing potential Government grants for infrastructure improvements. He emphasised the importance of these key issues being raised as part of the forthcoming consultation process on the new Local Plan Draft Issues and Options Document.

The Deputy Leader also stressed that he continually raised the key issue of the importance of the A127 as an economic corridor for South East Essex at county level.

In support of the argument that new houses should be built in line with existing infrastructure that could support them, a Member cited the example of the requirement of the recent major Hullbridge planning application that Watery Lane be raised above sea level, which had not been done to date.

In concluding the debate, the Portfolio Holder for Planning reiterated the importance of gaining residents' views on infrastructure in the context of their local knowledge and experience as part of the forthcoming consultation process.

On a Motion moved by Cllr D J Sperring and seconded by Cllr I H Ward, it was:-

### **Resolved**

That the revised Local Development Scheme be adopted. (ADP&RS)

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.