

## Planning Policy Committee – 2 October 2020

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Committee** held on **2 October 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr Mrs C M Mason

Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M Hoy and S E Wootton.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr Mrs L Shaw	- for Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr S A Wilson	- for Cllr M Hoy

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

M Hotten	- Assistant Director, Place & Environment
Y Dunn	- Planning Manager
D Goodman	- Team Leader, Strategic Planning
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer

### **149 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman in due course.

### **150 ESSEX COAST RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGY (RAMS) SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) 2020**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment providing an update on the outcome of the RAMS SPD public consultation and seeking Members' approval of the revised supplementary planning document.

It was noted that 146 responses were received in response to the public consultation, 12 of which were from Rochford District residents, 87 from Essex residents and 59 from various organisations. Most of the comments received related to matters of clarity and detail.

Natural England was supportive of the approach taken in respect of the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. It was further emphasised that any failure to adopt the supplementary document would not, however, remove the Council's legal responsibilities under the Habitats Regulations, nor remove the need to implement the RAMS or other appropriate strategy to avoid or mitigate the impacts of new housing on the integrity of habitat sites.

The Chairman observed that this approach would also result in the costs of any mitigation strategy being borne by all member Essex Authorities.

### **Recommended to Council**

- (1) That the Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) set out at Appendix B be adopted.
- (2) That the 'You Said We Did' Report and Adoption Statement, set out at Appendix A and C respectively, be published on the Council's website. (ADPE)

### **151 ESSEX COAST RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGY (RAMS): PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2020-2023**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment setting out details of the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS): Partnership Agreement 2020-2023 and seeking Members' approval that Council enters into the Partnership Agreement.

It was emphasised that there would be a clause within the agreement that would ensure that the Council would be able to withdraw from the Partnership Agreement with six months' notice.

In response to a Member question relating to inconsistency around the allocation of charges to partner authorities, officers advised that a couple of authorities were being asked to pay slightly less than Rochford because the way the RAMS would be managed was on the basis of zones of influence from the coastal habitat sites. That estimated how far the average person would be likely to travel to visit those habitat sites. In the case of Brentwood and Uttlesford only a small part of their area was captured by one of these zones of influence. As they were not coastal authorities the view was taken that they were unlikely to receive any of the benefit from the mitigation package and it would therefore be unfair to expect them to pay the same contribution as that of coastal authorities.

Officers advised, in response to a supplementary question relating to inconsistency of charges, that they were unaware of any specific inconsistencies. The Council was being asked to contribute approximately £3,500 per annum; a slightly lower amount for this year, given that a significant part of the current year had already passed and this would cover aspects of the partnership that could not be covered by the tariff, including general administrative costs of, for example, staff recruitment. The costs could be met from existing local development framework budgets.

Responding to a Member concern that the Steering Group comprised officers, rather than Members, officers emphasised that any decision-making required of the steering group would be low-level. The RAMS strategy already identifies the mitigation package; accordingly, the amount of discretion that would fall to the steering group would be limited. One of the recommendations set out in the report is that authority would be delegated to the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make any necessary decisions to discharge this partnership.

In response to a further Member question relating to the potential impact of the creation of a combined authority on this partnership, officers advised that any restructure of local government would take years to co-ordinate; this partnership agreement had an end date of 2023. The agreement contained clauses that would allow the Council to leave before the end date of the partnership agreement. It was further stressed that any future local government restructure would affect any partnership arrangements and would also apply to other local authorities.

Officers reiterated, in response to a Member query as to whether regular reports could be made to the Committee in respect of any progress and actions on the RAMS partnership agreement, that the partnership would not be able to deliver transformational projects; any issues likely to have any significant impact would, however, be reported to Members. Issues likely to be addressed by the steering group would be minor in nature and would include, for example, matters around minor signage or minor path diversion issues. It was likely that there would be a large number of minor, short term actions that would need to be taken, which was why the steering group consisted of officers.

In response to a further Member question as to whether the RAMS would operate cross-county boundary, officers confirmed that Natural England was using set county boundaries for mitigation packages; however, there would be some projects where there would be a need for cross-boundary consultation, for example, with Suffolk.

### **Recommended to Council**

- (1) That the Council enters into the Partnership Agreement attached at Appendix A.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Place and Environment to discharge the Council's responsibilities under the Partnership Agreement, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.
- (3) That it be agreed that the annual costs of around £3,500 be met from the existing Local Development Framework reserve. (ADPE)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 10.36 am.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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