

Environmental Services Committee – 11 January 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environmental Services Committee** held on **11 January 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M G B Starke
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs L Hungate

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr Mrs R Brown
Cllr Mrs T J Capon
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P R Robinson and C G Seagers.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllrs A J Humphries and C A Hungate

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Head of Planning Services
M Martin - Committee Administrator

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Mrs Capon and congratulated her and Cllr Mr Capon on the birth of their son.

2 ISSUES ARISING FROM ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of the Administrative & Member Services relating to the Review of the Planning Services Committee. This item of business was referred by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14 December 2005 with a number of recommendations. A copy of the officer's report to that meeting had been attached as an appendix.

The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the work done in respect of this review and the recommendations it had made. However, it was considered that, as a strong evidential base was required to support any recommendations made, the Committee should defer making any decisions at this stage in order that this work could be carried forward by a task and finish Sub-Committee.

The work should include, for example, visiting other local authorities, gaining the opinions of the local press and public, Chambers of Trade and other local bodies. The results of those consultations already carried out by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of Parish Councils, and other local authorities in the Audit Commission Family Group would be brought to the Sub-Committee.

Members agreed that, if possible, a visit to at least one fourth option authority should be included.

The recommendations relating to site visits, procedures for deferment and compulsory training should also be considered as part of the Sub-Committee's work.

On a Motion moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr Mrs J A Mockford it was:-

Resolved

That a Planning Committee Review Sub-Committee, reporting to the Environmental Services Committee, be established, to continue the in-depth review of the operation of the Planning Services Committee and to draw together the evidence to support the final recommendation. The Sub-Committee to comprise six Members: the Chairman of the Environmental Services Committee, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Planning Services Committee, Cllr Mrs Vince and a Member of the Liberal Democrat Group. (HPS)

3 PLANNING GAIN SUPPLEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services inviting Members to agree a response to a consultation document relating to the Government's proposals to introduce a Planning Gain Supplement (PGS).

Members thanked the Head of Planning Services for his excellent comments, which should form the basis of the response to the consultation paper.

During discussion, the following points/responses to Member questions were noted:-

- the PGS was not intended to be a complete replacement for the Section 106 agreement.
- the PGS specifically related to the uplift of the value of land; it was not intended to be a levy on homeowners who extend their properties.
- the alternative of a set charge per dwelling or 'roof tax' would be an alternative and much less complicated solution.

Of particular concern to Members were the following points:-

- whilst the intention was for the majority of PGS revenue to be recycled directly to the local level, the report had indicated that a significant proportion would be used to deliver strategic regional, as well as local, infrastructure.
- in general terms, the south of the country would be taxed more heavily due to the greater levels of development, but with no guarantee regarding the geographical allocation of the funding.
- on the one hand Government required the building of low cost housing, whereas the introduction of a PGS appeared to be a stealth tax which in time would only increase the cost of housing.
- the potential existed for a developer to delay commencement of the project in order to delay payment of the PGS.
- an extra burden of tax collection would be caused by the introduction of the PGS and the burden for dealing with the procedure would fall to local authorities.
- unless appropriate arrangements were put in place, the cost of building on brownfield sites could increase.
- it was likely that additional work would be created for the local planning authority in managing the collection and policing of the scheme.
- the concept of creating additional infrastructure was to be welcomed, but the proposals suggested would require a high price to be paid.

Members were in agreement that the comments made by the Head of Service in the body of the report in respect of the recycling of funding adequately covered their concerns.

A form of wording relating to Members' other concerns was agreed as follows:-

'The proposed Planning Gain Supplement can only increase the cost of new housing, including social housing of any kind, such as affordable housing, with the consequent effect on the cost of all housing.'

All new houses will be more expensive to build, including that for Housing Associations and Charities who provide accommodation for various special needs groups, such as those with learning disabilities or physical disabilities.'

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It was noted that as the responses to the questions posed by the consultation did not address the broader concerns, the response should indicate the reasons why this authority did not agree with the principles of the PGS.

On a Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the officer's report form the basis of the Council's response to the Planning Gain Supplement consultation document; the Head of Planning Services to liaise with the Chairman of the Committee and the Leader of the Council to agree the Council's final response to the consultation document.
- (2) That in view of the implications of the consultation document, this authority's response should be issued as a press release. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.16 pm.

Chairman

Date