

Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 11 February 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the **Local Development Sub-Committee** held on **11 February 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr G J Ioannou
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr C G Seagers

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy and I H Ward.

OFFICERS PRESENT

C Lyons - Assistant Director, Planning Services
N Hayward - Principal Planner, Planning Policy
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2016

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning Services providing details of the Local Development Scheme 2016 and timelines for preparation through to adoption of the Rochford District Council Local Plan and other associated planning policy documents.

Responding to a Member question relating to the timetable for the Council's Core Strategy officers advised that the site allocations period would be extended, as part of the process for adoption of the Local Plan. A longer term release of land, beyond 2025, would form part of this process, with current land allocations carried forward.

In response to a supplementary question relating to non-delivery of sites, officers emphasised that there was no non-delivery; there were some sites currently in the planning process, with discussions being held with landowners around potential new sites, for economic development, as well as housing. The timeline was being extended to allow additional time to identify potential new sites and to review sites.

Members emphasised the importance of openness and transparency during this process. It was noted that the consultation period for the draft Statement of Community Involvement would be extended to 9 weeks to allow all interested parties ample opportunity to comment on the document.

It was noted that the timescales in the Local Development Scheme were very broad, given current limited staffing levels. There would be a need to recruit another planner and two fixed term contract planning researchers. Once the

team was in place the timescales would be reviewed and revised.

In response to a Member question relating to resources allocated for planning policy work, officers advised that there was a budget of £80,000 for 2015/16, £230,000 for 2016/17, £230,000 for 2017/18 and £155,000 for 2018/19.

Officers confirmed, in response to a supplementary question relating to the use of consultants, that, as one of five member local authorities of the South Essex Group, limited consultancy work would be conducted at regional level; consultants would be appropriately deployed to verify work that had been done locally and the costs of this would be shared by the local authorities. The Council's planning policy budget included provision for the current planner post and the additional planner post that had been identified, however, further funding would be needed for the fixed term research posts.

In response to a Member question relating to paragraph 7.1 of the officer's report, officers confirmed that public consultation was not necessary for what was essentially a timetable for the Council's main planning policy documents over the next three years.

Recommended to Council

That the content of the draft Local Development Scheme 2016 be agreed. (ADPS)

7 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME – DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2016

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning Services providing details of the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2016.

Members concurred that it was important to obtain the views of as many residents as possible on the draft document and there was debate around the potential different options, including distribution of leaflets at railway stations and schools, public events in schools and with Parish Councils.

Members emphasised that, with effect from 1 April 2016, *Rochford District Matters* would no longer be circulated to residents in paper format and would only be available online. It was noted that paragraph 2.3 of the draft Statement of Community Involvement would need to be appropriately re-worded to reflect this.

Members expressed concern about the Council's ability to consult with a number of residents who would be unable to access the consultation online. Officers advised that paragraph 2.3 of the document would be re-written to include reference to the use of other agencies for distribution of leaflets in order to circulate copies of the consultation document to 'hard to reach' residents.

Concern was also raised around the use of some forms of social media, e.g., Twitter, as a vehicle for consultation, given the complexity of the issues involved.

Members drew particular attention to paragraph 2.7 of the document, emphasising that the Council did not have the necessary resources to provide transcription services. It was therefore noted that paragraph 2.7 would also need to be amended to include provision for copies of the document to be made available in other formats/medium, upon request.

Officers advised, in response to a Member observation that the Council should attempt to identify any residents with equality and diversity considerations who might not be able to access the document online, that this was work that should be undertaken corporately as part of the Council's overarching consultation strategy; this would be checked outside the meeting. It was important that this should not slow down the consultation process for this particular document.

In response to concern raised by Members about the current corporate consultation strategy not taking account of *Rochford District Matters* only being available online from 1 April 2016 officers advised that if the proposed 9-week consultation timetable was not adhered to it was possible that this process could be delayed until the autumn. It was emphasised that the next edition of *Rochford District Matters* was being issued in paper format and would include an article on the Statement of Community Involvement consultation. It was further emphasised that the Council was legally obliged to use the 2007 Statement of Community Involvement document as the basis for consultation with residents.

Officers further confirmed that they would liaise with the Parishes to include consultation articles in parish and community newsletters. It was also noted that a consultation summary setting out how the Council intended to consult with residents on this document would be circulated to Council on 23 February, together with draft text to be included in parish and community newsletters and consultation leaflets.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question relating to the proposed consultation timetable, that consultation would begin in early March for a 9-week period. The Council had a legal obligation to advertise the consultation in local newspapers and was also issuing a press release on the consultation. This timescale should offer ample opportunity for parishes to respond to the consultation.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the content of the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2016, as set out in appendix 1, be agreed, subject to appropriate amendments to paragraphs 2.3 and 2.7.

- (2) That the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2016 be approved for 9 weeks' public consultation starting in March/April 2016, subject to the contents of the consultation summary and text for inclusion in parish and community newsletters and leaflets, as appended to the officer report to the Sub-Committee. (ADPS)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.20 am.

Chairman

Date

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