

Planning Policy Committee – 23 June 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Committee** held on **23 June 2021** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr I A Foster

Cllr M Hoy

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr J E Newport

Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs E P Gadsdon, Mrs J R Gooding and I H Ward

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
D Kudla	- Senior Strategic Planner
L Morris	- Democratic Services Officer

93 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94 NEW LOCAL PLAN: SPATIAL OPTIONS (REGULATION 18) CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment setting out a range of strategy and thematic options relating to policy choices to be made in the Council's new Local Plan.

In response to a Member question relating to bullet point 4 of paragraph 3.9 on page 5.3 of the report, as to whether (as was the case with the Issues and Options stage) leaflets would be sent out to all households within the District and whether the leaflets would be tailored to specific areas rather than being a generic leaflet, officers advised that a leaflet to every household in the District was not currently planned. This was done at the Issues and Options stage; however, the cost had been approximately £15,000 to distribute leaflets to 35,000 properties. There was no current provision in the budget for this although this would be possible to do. At the Issues and Options stage leaflets were sent to 35,000 properties; however, only around 550 representations were received. Although circulation of the leaflets may have raised awareness of the Issues and Options document it did not ultimately result in a high response rate. It would be for Full Council to determine if a budget should be made available for such leaflets which, allowing for inflation, was likely to be around £17,500. The same Member further emphasised that, given the

current pandemic situation, there were a number of residents who were likely to be wary of leaving their homes and there were also a number of residents who did not access social media; accordingly, the increased expenditure should be considered to maximise awareness of the consultation.

Responding to the suggestion of another Member that the Council could make use of existing communication methods, including Parish newsletters, the Chairman stressed that a comprehensive communication engagement strategy was set out in appendix C to the report.

A Member made reference to a court case relating to lack of consultation last time and asked whether there was a risk of the Council being perceived as failing to consult fully if it does not circulate leaflets to all households. Officers emphasised that the important thing was that the Council complied with its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). In compiling the consultation strategy officers have ensured that the Council will, as a minimum, comply with the Statement of Community Involvement. There is no national requirement to consult in a particular way other than in respect of dates and prescribed formats. There was no requirement in the SCI, or in national policy, to send out individual leaflets/letters to all households within the District.

A further question was raised as to how the Council can monitor engagement when residents do so online by clicking on various links, etc. Officers confirmed that at the point that residents respond online they will be asked a basic question as to how they found out about the consultation. In addition, for social media promoted posts there would be close monitoring to establish broad trends which would enable analysis relating to representations made and how people are finding/not finding out about the consultation. A six-week consultation period allowed for measures to be put in place during the middle of that period to address any potential deficiencies that might be observed. In addition, a feedback report would be prepared for the Committee to consider, which would include any trends/lessons learned as a result of the consultation.

In response to a supplementary question as to whether any mid-point consultation lessons learned would be addressed by the Committee Chairman in consultation with other Committee Members or by the officers and whether the six-week minimum consultation period might be extended, the Chairman emphasised the importance of sticking to the six-week period as there was a tight timeline for all necessary work to be completed and it was important that deadlines did not slip.

It was also queried whether the Council has a budget for paid media ads, which could be targeted at specific geographical areas. Officers confirmed that promoted adverts on Facebook and Instagram, etc had been allocated within the overall budget for this exercise and these could be targeted, for example, at residents within specific age groups and geographical locations.

The Chairman advised that if Members of the Committee considered that leaflets should be circulated to all households in the District as part of this exercise, then they should raise this issue at Full Council as part of the debate of this item for Council to determine.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the Spatial Options Consultation document, set out at Appendix A, be consulted on for a period of six weeks.
- (2) That this consultation is carried out in accordance with the consultation strategy, set out at Appendix C.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, to make minor textual and cosmetic changes to the consultation document to ensure it is factually accurate and accessible at the time of consultation. (ADPE)

(This was unanimously agreed)

95 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: 2021 REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment providing a review of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

A Member noted that the section relating to Planning Enforcement set out on page 6.30 of the report did not include reference to Webchat on the Council's website and asked how any such web chats might be funnelled back to the Planning team and whether web chat should be included within the document as a different method for reporting alleged breaches of planning control. Officers advised that Customer Services man the web chat and email Planning Enforcement with details of any relevant web chats and confirmed that it was possible to amend the document to include web chat, as requested.

In response to a Member question relating to paragraph 2.3 on page 6.10 of the report in respect of turning off social media comments in, e.g., Instagram and Twitter but whether Facebook comments might be included and the observation that all forms of social media that are used should be specifically listed in the document, officers advised that there was a legal requirement, both for Local Plans and planning applications, that comments aren't anonymous and that they are attached, ideally, to an address. Given the often anonymised nature of social media, it was not possible without extensive dialogue with those that comment, to obtain the necessary information to enable such legal requirements to be met. That said, such comments could be picked up more informally to gain an indication of public feeling.

A Member also stated that there should also be reference in the SCI to paid media adverts.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning commented that the updated document, on pages 6.14 and 6.15 of the report, did already cover some of the comments that had been made by Members during this meeting.

Recommended to Council

That the Statement of Community Involvement: 2021 Review be consulted on for a period of six weeks. (ADPE)

(This was unanimously agreed)

96 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME: 2021-2023

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment seeking agreement for adoption and publication of the Council's Local Development Scheme 2021-2023.

In response to a Member question relating to how a judgment was made in respect of the level of risk associated with the failure for infrastructure to be delivered by relevant providers, as set out at paragraph 6.1 on page 7.13 of the report, officers advised that the infrastructure requirements are not known in detail at this point. However, the Council was hoping to commission an infrastructure delivery plan, viability assessment and some other evidence within the next couple of months which would identify the infrastructure required and the cost of delivering it. It was important that the strategy included in the new Local Plan for Members to determine subsequent to this consultation would also need to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is delivered to support the strategy. The level of risk judged as low was based on the fact that there was plenty of work planned to ensure that that infrastructure could be delivered. It was not stating that there was no risk; clearly there were risks around viability of development. However, the Council was committed to ensuring that infrastructure was delivered alongside the new Local Plan.

Another Member made the point that he did not understand how this could be classed as low risk if the risk was currently unknown; in his view this should be medium to high risk. In response to a supplementary question around potential mitigation of this particular risk, officers confirmed that there was regular dialogue with the County Council relating to infrastructure requirements. It was difficult to talk about this in the context of the new Local Plan at this stage as this was linked to development, the detail of which we didn't currently know, ie, what specific development there might be, where it might happen and what the volume might be. There was an understanding of the likely level of infrastructure that would be needed to support new development and a very good understanding of where infrastructure was not working currently.

Recommended to Council

That the Local Development Scheme 2021-2023, set out at Appendix A, be adopted and published on the Council's website. (ADPE)

(This was unanimously agreed)

97 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: SITE APPRAISAL PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place & Environment providing details of the Site Appraisal Paper which assesses land promoted for development in the District.

Officers advised that work was being undertaken to develop an interactive map. It was hoped that this would be available by the time consultation commences and that this would allow people to easily see the results of this paper without having to look at a small diagram on, e.g., an A4 document.

Officers emphasised that the purpose of the Site Appraisal Paper was not to 'select' from or rank the sites that had been considered at this stage.

A Member made the observation that a numerical scale for the criteria would be easier to interpret, visually. In addition, many of the tables did not have legends. He also emphasised that the resolution of the maps needed to be improved. He asked whether the interactive maps that were being worked on had been tested on a range of different devices to check for robust functionality. If this information was being provided to residents in digital format there was a high risk of officers receiving a high volume of calls if the maps did not work across multiple different operating systems and electronic devices. The further observation was made that Google mapping would be preferable to, e.g., GIS, as this was more familiar to more people and provided street views and satellite views, etc. Given that people's ability to read maps varied greatly, it was important to include road names and landmarks to make this as easily as possible and the point was made that a live demo would be useful.

Officers responded by advising that the maps had been developed using GIS but that there was a lot of functionality within GIS that could be used to build an intuitive map. A demo could be shared with Members once a version was ready. Officers further advised that it would be possible to change to a numerical scale – from 1-10 – for assessing site criteria and that table legends would also be included in the document.

Resolved

That the Site Appraisal Paper set out at Appendix A be noted. (ADPE)

The meeting closed at 8.26 pm

Chairman

Date

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