

## **Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 28 November 2016**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **28 November 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr C I Black  
Cllr Mrs T R Hughes

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr J R F Mason

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs J E Newport, C M Stanley and I H Ward.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G J Ioannou.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

M Thomas	- Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services
N Hayward	- Team Leader Planning Policy & Economic Development
Daniel Goodman	- Planner
Xavier Preston	- Planner

## **5 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **6 NEW LOCAL PLAN – EARLY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS AND SURVEY**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services, which provided details of the early engagement programme undertaken to better inform the new Local Plan.

There was discussion relating to whether or not the consultation was compliant with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. It was recognised that the engagement undertaken was not a statutory requirement for the Authority that took into account necessary elements to achieve an appropriate level of consultation. The point was also made that take up generally from Town and Parish Councillors and local communities was low and this might also be attributed to the consultation being non-statutory and being open-ended in its questions.

Reference was also made to whether there was a need for more regular monitoring during consultation; a Member made the point that informal monthly meetings of Sub-Committee members was inappropriate for a six-week consultation. Going forward, further consideration should be given to the most appropriate way to monitor the consultation process, where appropriate.

Although Members recognised that the Council favoured electronic consultation methods, the point was made that at informal meetings during the summer Sub-Committee members had supported the option of leafleting residents and it was understood that provision of £20-k had been requested in the Council budget for public consultation; leafleting could, potentially, be achieved via such budget provision. A supplementary point was raised that district-wide engagement, rather than parish-level engagement, was more appropriate for a district spatial strategy such as this. One Member made reference to a North Essex example, and observed that the inclusion of garden communities within the issues and options document would be positive.

In response to a Member question relating to the specific online consultation techniques used, officers confirmed that all those on the workshop mailing list were directly notified about the engagement events; there was some difficulty engaging with some of the parishes, which resulted in less forward notice of the events being given in these areas than would have been preferred.. It was possible that attendance may have been low because of the nature of the consultation, which was not focused on any specific proposals. The online surveys were quite open-ended for residents' responses, again, because the Council did not have specific proposals to survey residents about. However, this approach did give residents an opportunity online to add any additional comments they wanted to include, and an opportunity also to be included on the Council's mailing list for future consultations. It was not currently possible to track the online responses given to the survey, however, it was anticipated that the new IT contract would allow residents to register online to confirm their interest.

Responding to a further Member query relating to the norm in terms of attendance at such engagement events, officers advised that low attendance at such events was not considered unusual; unless events specifically targeted issues of interest to residents, attendance tended to be low. The start of the consultation process was usually more open-ended in terms of focus, but consultation later on in the process would be more tightly focused. It was also emphasised that it was usual to receive most representations at the end of the consultation period deadline, and this had also been the case for this particular consultation exercise.

In response to a Member observation that documents for consultation could be quite technical in nature, which could be difficult for residents to engage with and that an executive summary, with links to the necessary sections within the technical document could be more accessible to residents, officers confirmed that it would be possible to do something along these lines, provided that there was a link from the executive summary to the full consultation document and that it was made clear that the summary was for guidance only and responses must be to the draft Plan.

Officers advised, in response to a Member question relating to data within the

document in respect of school places, that population data from the 2011 Census had been used, and data from the last ECC 5-year school plan. The County Council was now releasing 10-year plans in respect of school places; when the Council started consulting on the actual issues and options document the most up to date data would be included.

Officers agreed to a Member request to follow through with actions set out in appendix 1 to forward concerns raised in the Consultation Statement to relevant teams/organisations, where appropriate.

During further debate of the low levels of public engagement, the point was made that Ward Councillors had also publicised the consultation via different media, including email, website/s and social networking sites. The point was also made that some residents would be reticent about coming forward at workshops attended by groups of Councillors. It was also observed that residents in Rayleigh did not perceive new developments west of Rayleigh as being likely to affect them directly. One Member commented that the timing of the public engagement event in Great Wakering may have been a contributing factor for low turnout, as potentially an evening event would have been easier for working residents to attend, rather than a morning event. Officers emphasised, however, that ideal timing was difficult to predict across the district and it was very difficult to time such events to satisfy everyone.

Reference was made to the importance of using different media for different age groups, where appropriate, and the need to liaise with the Council's Communications officers in this respect. Officers reiterated that the Council would have to provide robust evidence to the Planning Inspector relating to the soundness of the new Local Plan. To this end the Council would seek to engage as widely as possible with all stakeholders to the best of its ability.

A Member observed that he was unable to agree with some of the responses to the document listed in appendix 1 and accordingly felt unable to agree with the officer recommendation detailed on page 5.3 of the officer's report.

On a Motion moved by Cllr J R F Mason and seconded by Cllr Mrs J R Lumley it was:-

### **Recommended to Council**

That the content of the early engagement programme consultation statement, as set out in appendix A, be noted. (ADP&RS)

## **7 PLANNING POLICY PROJECTED WORK PROGRAMME**

**(Note:** Cllr J E Newport declared a non pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of being a tenant of SJL Farming.)

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services updating Members on planning policy work done

over the past six months and providing an indication of the projected work programme for the development of the new Local Plan.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the consultation on the Castle Point Local Plan Examination, officers confirmed that, in addition to this Council, other South Essex Authorities had lodged objections, as Castle Point had not discussed reductions in new housing numbers within the Plan or had sufficient discussion in relation to other potentially unmet housing need in neighbouring authorities. The hearing was scheduled for 12 December and this Council would be attending to give evidence. The hearing would be open to the public, but they would not be able to address the hearing unless specifically invited to do so prior to the hearing by the Planning Inspector. The decision of this hearing could have an impact on Basildon's Local Plan as well. A briefing for Members would be prepared after 12 December, once the Planning Inspector's report is published.

In response to a further Member question relating to the Essex Waste Local Plan, officers advised that Dollymans Farm had been put forward as a potential landfill site, although this had not previously been included in the Waste Local Plan. The site is situated partly within the Rochford District and partly within the borough of Basildon. A 6-week public consultation would commence on 5 January 2017 and Ward Councillors would be briefed on 4 January. Members expressed concern about the proposal of this site for landfill, given concerns around flooding. These issues would be raised by officers in respect of this proposal.

In response to a concern expressed by Members that there should be closer working with the County Council on such issues, officers confirmed that the Council was working with ECC to produce a baseline report on potential traffic hotspots across the district and potential challenges for both Authorities; this would be published alongside the Issues and Options document. Officers confirmed that it would be possible for this document to be considered by the Sub-Committee prior to inclusion. In response to a supplementary question relating to engagement with other Councils officers advised that there were ad hoc meetings of the South Essex Members Group and a South Essex Heads of Service Group meets monthly. The Memorandum of Understanding was a work in progress; housing was a particular issue that it had been difficult to reach a consensus on as yet amongst Local Authorities.

Responding to a Member question relating to the strategic housing land availability assessment document, officers confirmed that this was an evidence base document which would help inform the content of the Issues and Options document. Any sites included within the Issues and Options document that are deemed by stakeholders to be undeliverable or inappropriate should be commented on during the consultation stage of the document. When the Issues and Options document is published it will include commentary on how the Council could deliver housing; residents will have an opportunity to challenge this with appropriate and robust evidence.

In response to a Member question relating to whether Brexit would result in any delay to the strategic housing market assessment (SHMA), officers advised that this and the economic development needs assessment (EDNA) were due to be published by the end of the year.

### **Resolved**

That current work streams continue on the preparation of the new Local Plan evidence base and the Issues and Options Document over the next six months. (ADP&RS)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.36 am.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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