

Minutes of the Economic, Planning and Housing Committee meeting held on Thursday, 10 January 2019 in Committee Rooms 1 & 2 - Deanes, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council at 6.30 pm

Members of the Economic, Planning and Housing Committee in attendance:

Councillor T Robinson (Chair), Councillor O Cubitt, Councillor P Harvey, Councillor L James, Councillor C Phillimore, Councillor K Rhatigan and Councillor J Richards

Also in attendance: Daniel Cameron Ipsos Mori

26/18 Apologies for absence and substitutions

There were apologies from Cllr Watts.

Councillor Frost was replaced by Councillor Miller
Councillor Parker was replaced by Councillor James
Councillor Leeks was replaced by Councillor Capon

27/18 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28/18 Urgent matters

There were no urgent items.

29/18 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November

It was noted that a suggestion for the council tax department to write to new owners of listed buildings informing them of planning restrictions relating to their property was outstanding.

The Chair commented that he had contacted the Chair of Scrutiny Committee to discuss the most appropriate format and manner to review the work of the LEP, and would feed back in due course.

The Chair agreed to chase up distribution of the 'local list' in relation to conservation areas.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st November were confirmed as a correct record and signed by Chair.

30/18 Exploring New Opportunities to Provide Homes Council Motion

The Chair reported that the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration, Arts & Heritage had volunteered to establish a member's advisory panel to examine and investigate the motion.

It was suggested that the topic was broad ranging and would require contribution from a number of Portfolio Holders and departments.

Councillors G James, Harvey and Phillimore volunteered to join the member's panel. Councillor David Potter was volunteered by Cllr Harvey.

Invitation to be circulated to all members.

31/18 **Action on Empty Houses Council Motion**

The Chair reported that the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration, Arts & Heritage had commissioned a report due later in the year in relation to the subject and was happy to engage further with any interested member.

It was suggested and agreed that an appropriate member's advisory panel be set up to examine the issue and to aid and support the anticipated report.

Councillors Harvey, L James, and Rhatigan volunteered to join the member's panel. Councillor Carolyn Wooldridge was volunteered Cllr Harvey.

Invitation to be circulated to all members.

32/18 **Horizon 2050: The journey to 2050**

Horizon 2050: The journey to 2050 was introduced by the Leader of the Council. It was noted that the report had been written by the Basingstoke Area Strategic Partnership (BASP), in conjunction with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC). It was clarified that the document was neither a strategy nor policy document, but was intended as a framework of desired outcomes to inform policy making in the future.

It is intended that the final document will be presented to Cabinet in early February, and recommended for adoption by the Council on 28 February and by the BASP in March.

The committee made a range of comments and observations.

Homes & Housing vision

It was suggested that there should be some expectation management in relation to the assertion that 'where possible, new development will take place on brown field sites in preference to green field sites'. The number of available brown field sites was acknowledged to be reducing.

It was further suggested that the term 'previously developed land' be added to the 'brown field sites' term.

It was felt that the vision lacked the element of 'place making' and may benefit from including garden village principles.

Surprise was expressed that there was no mention of a desire for additional council

housing. It was clarified that there was lots of discussion relating to affordable housing, with affordability deemed more desirable than sustainability.

It was felt that section 9.2 should be strengthened and enhanced to adequately reflect the strong desire for more council housing and housing provision for the elderly.

It was queried how representative the workshops were when some of them were self-selecting. It was confirmed that both the Over 55 forum and Disability forum were included within the engagement activities.

It was requested that regeneration, specifically relating to housing, be included more fully within the vision.

Health, safety and inclusive communities vision

The disparity of health provision generally was noted.

Whilst it was acknowledged that residents generally felt safe it was felt that there needed to be reference to a high profile policing element in the future to continue ensuring such community safety. It was further suggested that whilst the borough was a safe place, there were underlying issues in the form of drug and alcohol misuse that still needed to be addressed.

A full breakdown in the profile percentages of people interviewed was requested and is available within Appendix A of the telephone sample survey report.

There was a request to more fully reference inequality within the vision, particularly in relation to child poverty.

It was suggested that 'accessibility' in terms of transport and affordability should be incorporated within the vision.

Environment

It was noted that there was a strength of feeling throughout the borough in terms of the importance of sustainability and environment.

It was suggested that there should be a reference to climate change.

It was noted that incorporating the vision into ongoing building projects throughout the borough was particularly important, especially in terms of Town and Country Planning Association principles.

Sustainability

It was agreed that the vision's wording should remove the phrase 'working towards' and read '.....generating all the energy we use and consuming the waste we create'.

Transport

Whilst there was acknowledgement that the report expressed the views of the local population, disappointment was expressed that the use of personal vehicles was to remain a 'key element', and it was suggested that the term be re-phrased to 'play a

role’.

It was further suggested that quality of provision be referenced.

Education

It was agreed that there needed to be good quality education provision in places that best met the geographical location of residents.

Economy and Entrepreneurship

It was confirmed that research used to develop the vision had evidence that the percentage of commuters working within the borough and travelling out was similar to those figures produced by the 2011 Census.

It was suggested that the unique location of the borough needed to be highlighted in relation to not only working within its own LEP area, but beyond to neighbouring organisations.

A borough with heritage and distinction

It was suggested that there needed to be a management of expectations in relation to the vision’s commitment to ‘protect rural areas from urban sprawl’, particularly given pipeline developments.

Comment was made that protecting the ‘identity and separateness of rural areas’ was not specific enough and ‘identity of small towns and villages’ was suggested as an alternative.

Membership of the advisory group consulted and engaged with to produce the report was requested.

Resolved: The Committee

- Note Horizon 2050: The journey to 2050 report;
- Request that the above comments be actioned and suggested amendments incorporated into the final Horizon 2050 vision document.

33/18 **Economic Growth Strategy**

The Economic Growth Strategy was introduced by the Leader of the Council. It was noted that the report outlined a strategic approach to support the economic development of the borough, whilst aiming to respond to the aspirations and ambitions for the borough as set out by Horizon 2050.

It was clarified that the document was solely a BDBC report.

The committee commended the report and made a range of observations.

An observation was voiced that economic poverty within the borough should be dealt with more robustly in the strategy.

In response to a query the Economy and Culture Manager suggested that the document identified three areas of specific importance, notably:

- Enabling the right environment for start-ups, in relation to low rent accommodation and networking support;
- Supporting the existing workforce with opportunities to upskill; and
- Ensuring that there is no shortage of commercial stock in the future.

It was clarified that Basingstoke start-up performance compared well with other boroughs and that survival rates after 5 years were amongst the highest.

It was queried whether conversations had been held with Urban&Civic in relation to skills training. This had not taken place to date but was a subject that would be addressed.

It was envisioned that the council would be a facilitator and enabler to upskilling and further education, rather than direct provider. Discussions had already been held with four existing universities within the area with a view to future collaboration.

It was suggested that in relation to a further education culture there should be a change in focus from employer to student perspective.

Priority 1: Growing talent

It was acknowledged that as a borough council with no direct responsibility for education, the role was not to try and replicate university towns but to facilitate and promote educational opportunities within the locality.

Priority 2: Supporting entrepreneurs

It was confirmed that the borough offered a fertile and thriving environment both for start-up and ongoing growth, with competitive rates and good transport links.

Core Pillars 1 & 2

It was queried whether there was the potential to become a centre for agricultural excellence. It was commented that given there was one of the best agricultural colleges in the country less than 15 minutes travel away, there would be little point in trying to compete.

Core Pillar 3

It was queried why Basingstoke was losing jobs to Reading, given that Reading was a more deprived area. It was explained that there was no direct correlation between the two and that the statistics may have been distorted as Reading was a small borough to which a number of other borough residents commuted.

It was also explained that AWE, situated just inside the border of West Berkshire, employs approximately 3,500 residents of Basingstoke which impacts the percentage number commuting out of the borough.

It was queried whether there was any follow up with business' that had chosen to leave the borough. It was confirmed that discussions did take place and generally decisions to move were not linked with Basingstoke, but were based on corporate and commercial considerations.

Core Pillar 4

Comment was made on the importance of preserving and regenerating the Top of Town.

Resolved: The Committee

- Note the Draft Economic Growth Strategy;
- Request that the above comments and suggested amendments be considered by the Leader.

34/18 **Authority Monitoring Report for Planning 2017/18**

The Authority Monitoring Report for Planning 2017/18 was introduced by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure.

It was highlighted that the housing target of 850 new homes was close to being met (with 828 net homes having been built), and that the council's housing trajectory indicated that this target would be met in future monitoring years.

Progress with planning documents

There was praise for the number of neighbourhood plans in force.

There was a query in relation to powers offered by a plan as a defence against speculative development. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure explained that neighbourhood plans were part of the development plan and would strengthen the LPA's position in resisting such planning applications.

It was clarified by the Planning Policy Manager that neighbourhood plans were required to be in general conformity with the policies in the Local Plan. It was suggested and agreed that any future review of the Local Plan would need to include engagement with the neighbourhood plan groups at the outset. The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) was informed by a call for sites, and would be used to inform future plans.

It was explained that all parishes had been encouraged to develop neighbourhood plans. Where there was no appetite to do so, but additional new housing was required by Local Plan Policy, BDBC would need to consider allocating sites on that area's behalf.

Housing policies

It was queried that whilst the report stated that the council was taking a pro-active approach, the number of extant sites was also rising. The Planning Policy Manager explained that there was no clear evidence of land banking in the borough, and that the council was working with developers and other stakeholders to overcome specific barriers to delivery.

It was noted that the percentage of new dwellings on previously developed land had decreased in the past year. It was explained that this was as a result of more development on green field sites allocated in the Local Plan. It was anticipated that this trend would continue as more Local Plan allocations came forward.

Concern was voiced that of the 828 new homes built, 311 were delivered through windfall. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the relatively high number of completions on windfall sites reflected the building out of sites that had received consent before the adoption of the Local Plan. Members noted that some delivery on windfall sites was positive, particularly for smaller sites, which could make efficient use of land in the urban area. Concern was raised about permitted development office conversions, in particular the fact that they did not provide affordable housing or community infrastructure.

It was clarified that the high figure for the previous and current year was due to the stage that had been reached in the Local Plan process and that expectation was for the numbers to drop in the forthcoming couple of years. It was further explained that the 50 units a year target for windfall was applicable only to smaller sites.

Members requested a simple breakdown of the number of dwellings delivered on allocated sites, windfall sites and as part of permitted development conversions.

It was clarified that the Local Plan policy in relation to regeneration (Policy SS2), had a broad geographic scope at the time of writing. Although a number of priority areas were identified, the policy was not restricted to those particular areas.

There was a request to reference specific councillors on footnote 18 of page 35 of the document. This was rejected on the basis that it was a formal public planning document, and would be too onerous to reference all individuals connected with each aspect of the report.

Types of housing

A ward by ward breakdown of dwelling delivery was requested and agreed to be provided.

Concern was raised at the number of affordable 2 bedroom flats that had been delivered, and the fact that many families were being housed in such accommodation where there was no requisite requirement to provide outside space.

It was suggested that in the future the committee may wish to explore the allocation policy in relation to families being housed in flats, housing need, and the fact that affordable housing was increasingly being provided in the form of flats rather than houses.

It was further suggested that there be a note for members prepared in relation to offsite affordable housing contributions, detailing the cumulative amount received, restrictions on their spend and any spending proposals.

Given the ageing population it was suggested that a report should be bought back to the committee detailing how the council intends to meet older persons' needs in the future, and that this should be considered as part of any Local Plan review.

In relation to gypsy traveller accommodation it was noted that whilst progress had been made, the borough was currently 3 pitches short of being able to demonstrate a five year supply of pitches, which could leave the borough potentially vulnerable to

speculative development.

With reference to design quality, it was requested that officers review the figures within Table 5.29 to provide some clarification as to why there were 'good' ratings in 2016/17, but none in 2017/18. Officers agreed to provide a note to members.

Economic development

It was clarified by the Head of Planning and Infrastructure that an up to date understanding of employment and economic needs throughout the borough would form part of any future review of the Local Plan.

It was suggested that any review of vacant office space should be clear that it does not include buildings that are not capable of beneficial occupation (e.g. Grosvenor House). The committee recognised that Article 4 directions would come into force on three of the borough's important employment sites in 2019, and requested that future AMRs should report the effect that they were having.

The committee noted the difference between the small amount of new retail floorspace approved in the town centre, as opposed to the amount of out of centre floorspace permitted.

It was suggested and agreed that another members' training session on planning enforcement be arranged for after the borough elections.

It was clarified that Basingstoke Golf Course was not included within the 5 year land supply, because the site was not currently considered to be deliverable. As progress is made with the site it will be reviewed as part of future housing land supply calculations.

Manydown was included within the five year supply with the first 50 units due to be completed in 2020/21.

Resolved: The Committee

- Note the Authority Monitoring Report for Planning, 2017/18;
- Request that the above comments be noted and actions delivered.

35/18 **Review of work programme**

The Committee reviewed its work programme and made the following comments:

- It was noted that HCC Education department who were due to attend in March, were uncomfortable attending a meeting in a public forum. Chair to discuss likely attendance and availability of officers with HCC's Portfolio Holder for Education;
- It was agreed to abandon pursuance of a meeting with the AA and Abstract;
- It was agreed that another meeting of the SS9 task and finish group would be arranged;
- Chair to discuss the scrutiny of risk assessment and equality impact assessment with other Chairs;

- A briefing note was being prepared by the Supporting People member's advisory panel to be reviewed at either the next or following meeting; and
- Topic suggestion forms to be submitted in relation to Older Persons Accommodation and Permitted Development reviews.

The meeting ended at 11.35 pm.

Chairman