

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 20th November, 2012

Present:- Councillors Eleanor Jackson (Chair), Les Kew, Brian Simmons, Gerry Curran and Ben Stevens (In place of Will Sandry)

Also in attendance: Derek Quilter (Divisional Director, Project Management, Major Projects), Graham Sabourn (Associate Director for Housing), Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources) and Samantha Jones (Corporate Policy Manager for Equalities)

40 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

41 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Steve Hedges and Councillor Will Sandry had sent their apologies to the Panel. Councillor Ben Stevens was present for the duration of the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Sandry. Councillor June Player gave belated apologies after the meeting.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

44 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no matters not covered by the agenda items.

45 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none but Councillor David Laming contributed to the debate on Item 49.

46 MINUTES - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2012

The Chair informed the Democratic Services Officer that the surname of the member of public that spoke on Page 7 was Stern not Sturm.

She also stated that the third paragraph on Page 8 should be amended to read 'He stated that he was surprised that not one Councillor outside the Labour Group had approached him regarding the governance of Curo and that he felt that Curo were handling the matter carefully.'

With those amendments the Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

47 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Cherry Beath, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development addressed the Panel. She informed them of archaeological evaluation that was taking place on the whole of the former Cadbury's factory site. She stated that the evaluation had included a complete geophysical survey of the site and initial results had revealed evidence beneath the ground, on land outside the area identified for redevelopment and to the west of the former factory buildings, of what was likely to be part of the Roman town of TRAIECTVS (Trajectus). Once completed, the evaluation work will help to establish the full extent of the archaeology on the site and inform the development proposals planned for Somerdale.

Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning addressed the Panel. He was pleased to announce the re-opening of the Julian House homeless shelter in Manvers Street and that it would have 29 beds available this winter, including a separate area for women to stay in.

He added that a count of people sleeping rough was not due to take place this year and explained the difficulties about making an accurate count. It was estimated that there were between 4-12 rough sleepers in the centre of Bath. He agreed that last year's count was impeded by the Christmas Market being opened that night.

The Chair asked if there was any evidence to support the anecdotal evidence she had heard regarding an increase in the numbers of young people in the Somer Valley who were homeless.

The Associate Director for Housing replied that there had been no increase in homeless applications.

The Chair thanked both the Cabinet Members for their updates.

48 CURO UPDATE

Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the Corporate Audit Committee had met following the Panel's referral of this matter to them and that they had made a number of recommendations, including;

'The Corporate Audit Committee supports Curo in the strengthening of its governance arrangements but believes it is a matter for individual councillors to

decide whether they wish to apply for a place on the Curo Board as the role is not to represent the Council but to support the operations of Curo.'

He asked if therefore the Panel could state whether they are happy with the proposals of Curo and their offer to be scrutinised by the Panel.

Councillor Les Kew stated that he supported the view of the Corporate Audit Committee and proposed the following recommendation;

The Panel requests that the Cabinet Member in discussion with Curo acknowledges that individual Councillor applications for Board Membership will be welcomed and then will be subject to their normal appointments process.

All Panel Members were in support of this recommendation.

The Chair stated that she also accepted their offer to be scrutinised by the Panel on a regular basis. She added that she and Councillor Vic Pritchard had met with their Chief Executive and had a positive conversation on the subject of resident consultation and the set-up of resident committees and repairs and ground maintenance as well as Curo's development plans.

49 BOAT & MOBILE HOME DWELLERS

Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning introduced this item to the Panel. He referred them to the paper he had supplied them with and asked for them to consider if they wished to undertake any policy review work on this matter and if they were in a position to support the Memorandum of Understanding.

Councillor Brian Simmons commented that he felt that the River Corridor Group should be involved in this matter.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented that he did not understand the subject matter well enough to make a decision, but that he would be happy to receive further information at a later Panel meeting.

Councillor Dave Laming addressed the Panel. He stated that this was a serious issue due to the growth in numbers on the river as a result of a lack of affordable homes. He added that there was also a lack of mooring space, particularly between Widcombe and Bradford-on-Avon. He commented that an agreed Memorandum of Understanding would be of a benefit to the boating community. He offered the help of the River Corridor Group if required and to give the Panel a short presentation at a future meeting.

The Chair asked if there were any equalities issues that needed to be addressed regarding this matter.

The Corporate Policy Manager for Equalities replied that it was about ensuring people had access to a number of areas, including health care, employment and education. She added that she was willing to look at the Memorandum of Understanding alongside colleagues in her team.

Councillor Cherry Beath, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development suggested the Panel should undertake a Task & Finish Group approach.

The Chair proposed that the Panel receives a scoping report at its next meeting and then forms a Task & Finish Group under its remit in order to attempt to produce a report by May 2013.

All Panel Members were in support of this proposal.

50 MEDIUM TERM SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANS

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. She reminded them of the need to focus on the Housing & Major Projects elements of the plan and to not discuss Health matters as they had already been debated at the Wellbeing Panel. She asked the Divisional Director for Project Management and the Associate Director for Housing to highlight the key points from within their plan.

The Divisional Director for Project Management addressed the Panel. He stated that the department would see its main savings realised in 2013 / 14 when the five directorates of the Council are to be fully reduced to three. He added that there would be no reduction in key support staff.

He explained that Major Projects and Regeneration were very much inter-linked and hoped that the department would continue to bring forward key sites across the Council through their proven framework of operation.

Councillor Brian Simmons commented that the Council should all it could to increase the number of businesses within B&NES so that an extra income could be gained. He also questioned why there was no figure attributed to the Public Realm after 2013 / 14.

The Strategic Director for Resources replied that the level of investment was under review.

The Chair asked where the £500,000 that had been earmarked in the previous budget for work within Radstock could be found within the plan.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that a request could be made for Capital to be carried forward for future years.

The Associate Director for Housing addressed the Panel. He explained that most of the 'easy wins' had already been done within this department in previous years. He informed them that an additional income of £20,000 would be gained from the administration of Homesearch and that a saving of £51,000 would be made by ceasing the voluntary Accreditation Scheme for private rented accommodation (£25,000) and a reduction in staffing capacity in Housing Services (£26,000).

Councillor Gerry Curran asked if the loss of the voluntary Accreditation Scheme would be seen as a loss of service to good landlords.

The Associate Director for Housing replied that it could be seen as a window of opportunity as not all schemes are run by a Council. He added that there is now a scheme run by the National Landlords Association and by the Universities.

He informed the Panel that a new software was to be launched to take some of the brunt of these losses as it will allow staff to concentrate on more detailed cases.

The Chair proposed the following recommendation;

The Panel asks the Cabinet to consider whether investment in the Public Realm and Affordable Housing should be shown within the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan for future years, following 2013 / 14.

All Panel Members agreed with this proposal.

51 HOUSING & MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

The Divisional Director for Project Management introduced this item to the Panel.

Keynsham

He stated that Keynsham occupies a strategically important location between Bristol and Bath and is therefore well placed to improve and attract investment. It will continue to act as a market town and service centre for the surrounding area. In responding to the loss of a major employer, it will evolve as a more significant business location. Keynsham will retain its independence and its separate identity within an attractive rural setting. It will become a more sustainable, desirable and well-connected place in which to live and work.

He added that the Keynsham Regeneration Project will see a major redevelopment of the existing town hall site in Keynsham. The redevelopment aims to revitalise Keynsham and make better use of the town centre, and will ultimately maximise opportunities for retail business and encourage wider private sector investment into the town.

The project will deliver:

- New retail units
- An innovative 'one stop shop' and library for people to access local services together with a multifunctional community space
- New Low Carbon office space for Council and Partner staff

Willmott Dixon are working closely with the Council to maximise the benefit of the project to Keynsham and the B&NES district. A couple of examples are:

- A "Meet the Buyer" event is being arranged for the beginning of December where local contractors can learn more about forthcoming tender opportunities.
- Over the two year construction period, Willmott Dixon will provide training and employment opportunities for local people including two work placement

opportunities for children leaving care, three apprenticeships and range of training outcomes.

Riverside

The Council has commenced a study on the options for the demolition and redevelopment of the Riverside Building. Once determined, the Council will start consulting with the community in the New Year before any decision on the future of this site. The ideas being considered indicate that there could be a range of uses for the site and particularly housing, including town houses and retirement living for older people. The May 2012 Cabinet report obtained in principle agreement to the use of CPO powers to secure the future regeneration of the Riverside site if required.

Fire Station

Avon Fire and Rescue Service are considering consolidating their services at Bristol, Brislington and Keynsham and have identified the need to secure a more suitable location for response services. They have identified Keynsham as a potential site for back-office space and for a new fire station. As such they are working with the Council to bring forward their town centre site for redevelopment in line with the regeneration strategy for Keynsham town centre.

Leisure Centre

With the potential redevelopment of Riverside, the Council is considering options for the future of leisure provision in the town. Consultation on this will take place with the Riverside and Fire Station proposals.

K2B

Planning permission for 285 homes granted on appeal in July 2011. Taylor Wimpey is the developer and are currently undertaking work to satisfy the pre-commencement conditions in the planning consent. Taylor Wimpey is actively marketing new homes on their website.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented that he hoped the Avon Fire and Rescue Service could rationalise their organisation within Keynsham.

The Chair commented that she was concerned about the low figure of 'Undisputed invoices paid within 30 days'.

The Associate Director for Housing acknowledged that it was not good enough.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel thanked the officers for their report.

52 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. She reminded them that earlier in the meeting they had agreed to receive a scoping report in relation to Boat Dwellers at their January meeting.

The Associate Director for Housing suggested that the Sheltered Accommodation report could be deferred until March.

All Panel Members agreed with this suggestion.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services