

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

### **HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013

**Present:-** Councillors Rob Appleyard (Chair), Nathan Hartley (Vice-Chair), Brian Simmons, Gerry Curran and Mathew Blankley

**Also in attendance:** John Wilkinson (Economic Enterprise & Business Development Manager) and Samantha Jones (Corporate Policy Manager - Equalities), Katherine Coney (Senior Environmental Health Officer) and Emma Bagley (Policy Development & Scrutiny Project Officer)

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development: Councillor Ben Stevens

#### **1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Steve Hedges and Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning had sent their apologies to the Panel.

#### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

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

Mr Clarke Osborne, Stanton Wick Action Group made a statement to the Panel on the subject of the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

At the last meeting of the Panel you resolved to a) call on the Cabinet to produce a list of feasible sites, according to the existing criteria and to produce a timeline as

part of their June recommendations and b) to request the Cabinet to ensure that adequate resources are provided to complete the work on this matter properly and expeditiously.

To date we have not seen any evidence of either of the resolutions being accepted by the Cabinet and the communities we represent remain concerned at the continued lack of progress on this most important matter which remains a key element of the emerging Core Strategy.

A number of issues were raised at the last meeting, including;

- Exclusion from the report of the September 2012 Cabinet Resolution to progress a planning application at Lower Bristol Road.
- Delivery timetable not provided, yet there should be sufficient information available for a firm estimate.
- Vague reporting on the site selection criteria now adopted. It is relevant information which should be made available to the Panel.
- No advice on the critical path timetable of the DPD and the Core Strategy examination.

The Chairman asked for the statement to be passed to the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning to respond.

Mr David Redgewell addressed the Panel. He spoke of how a pedestrian crossing had not yet been put in place near the bus station and how a bus shelter had been recently moved but the appropriate service was still not able to use it. He also stated that the disabled toilets had not been working at the bus station for some months. He called upon B&NES, Multi, Network Rail and First Bus to progress these matters

He also said that a clear transport plan was required to support the Enterprise Area.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented that the issue of the bollards was mentioned at almost every meeting of the Development Control Committee under its update on Major Projects. He added that he was aware that the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council had also tried to resolve the matter.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development replied that he would speak to the Cabinet Member for Transport on these matters.

## **7 MINUTES - 14TH MAY 2013**

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

## **8 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

The Senior Environmental Health Officer was present on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Councillor Tim Ball.

Housing Services will be seeking a Cabinet decision in September to take enforcement action to recover 1 or 2 high priority empty properties. The properties have been picked after applying the risk rating that the Panel helped formulate.

In addition Housing Services & I propose to use the Cabinet decision in September to make a minor change to the policy, required due to the localisation of Council Tax Benefit. At present Housing Services prioritise all properties that have been vacant for one year. Due to the changes from Council Tax benefit and the move to the new Council Tax premium this will be changed to 2 years. This change will have a relatively small impact but will mean that resources can be focused on the higher priority properties. In addition an exceptional circumstance clause will still allow us to take enforcement action to deal with properties vacant less than 2 years if required.

The new drop-in service that Housing Services has been providing for housing options & advice which replaced the previous booking system, has proved very successful. Support agencies and other partners prefer this approach and last month they were able to offer advice & assistance to twice the number of people that they were seeing under the old system. As a result we are now looking to replicate this drop-in system at the Hollies and in Keynsham.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development addressed the Panel. He informed them that the Keynsham Regeneration Project remains on time and on budget and that a key anchor retail development had almost been secured.

He stated that Phase 3 of Bath Western Riverside, Building B17 (55 further affordable homes) had now commenced.

The Chairman thanked them both for their updates.

## **9 GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS SITES UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning was not present to deliver his update to the Panel.

## **10 BOAT DWELLERS AND RIVER TRAVELLERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW**

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She spoke of how the Task & Finish Group were tasked with considering accommodation needs only, the quality of life for boat dwellers and travellers and the needs of those who are often marginalised from society for other reasons: age, infirmity, being a lone parent and peripatetic lifestyle.

She said that the group tried very hard to balance the positives of life out in the open with perhaps much lower accommodation costs than ashore, and the negatives – poor facilities in commercial moorings, lack of access to healthcare, homecare and

education and constantly being 'moved on' by the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT), who seemed to have no understanding of equalities issues.

She believed the review was an important step between anecdotal and individual case histories and concrete policies, which is why it is so important to continue the research. She stated that they had uncovered alarming evidence of potential homelessness, with possibly 50-70 families at immediate risk (on the basis of CRT) figures.

To sum up she spoke of the groups aspirations;

- Ask the Council to establish a national standard of good practice,
- Provide proper mooring facilities itself where appropriate and encourage others to do so, especially developers,
- Communicate to boat dwellers what the Council can do for them.

She wished to thank all of the officers who helped with the review, the members of the public who contributed their stories and the review consultant.

The Chairman commented he felt it was an excellent piece of work that straddled across a number of Panel remits.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented with regard to recommendation 1. He stated that any full in-depth study / review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within our area should take into account the Council's bio-diversity and use of the river by the general public.

The Chairman commented that the Council should also be mindful of the work of the River Regeneration Trust.

Councillor Dave Laming addressed the Panel. He informed them that he had recently received a letter from the Canal & Rivers Trust that enquired how they could work with the River Regeneration Trust and have a joining of assets. He added that 1,000 residential moorings were required for the area.

Councillor Brian Simmons proposed that the recommendations as printed be passed to the relevant Cabinet Members.

Councillor Gerry Curran seconded the proposal.

The Corporate Policy Manager for Equality stated that as the recommendations were not going to be discussed by the Panel but were being forwarded, as written, to Cabinet, she needed to assure herself that the Panel were fully aware of the implications of the report's findings.

The Chairman replied that at this stage it was the Panel's role to make recommendations and was confident of a fuller debate when the decision making element was played out.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development suggested that as part of the process officers could be invited to a discussion at informal Cabinet.

Councillor Gerry Curran asked where the figure for 1,000 residential moorings came from.

Councillor Dave Laming replied that the figure came from the Canal & Rivers Trust.

Councillor Brian Simmons asked if a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been agreed with the Canal & Rivers Trust.

Councillor Dave Laming replied that a meeting had been agreed with the Canal & Rivers Trust and that a MoU had been agreed between Wessex Water and the River Regeneration Trust.

## **11 PROJECT DELIVERY UPDATE**

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel on the options for the future use of the Victoria Hall, Radstock. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She stated that two years ago the Major Projects department tried to get the building converted into a business hub on the strength of money allocated in the 2011 budget for economic regeneration in Radstock.

She said that this plan was abandoned in the face of general outrage, channelled by her, and a decision was taken at Cabinet on 11 July 2012 that it should remain in community use with 'meeting rooms, exhibition space and relocation of the town library into the building'. She welcomed the decision and waited for the full results of the public consultation (316 responses) which never came.

She informed them that on 14 November 2012 (Ref E2458) Cabinet authorised the necessary measures to achieve this, following a feasibility study, with the installation of a new lift, and relocation of the library and the sale of the caretaker's house. In December she said that she met the architect with Cllr Crossley and Cllr Bellotti and reminded them that Radstock Town Council were interested in moving back into the library.

She added that refurbishment to this plan would have cost about £875,000 and that she had found two potential purchasers for the library when she was told that community groups would be contacted 'in due course'.

She questioned why Cllr Crossley was mysteriously afflicted with amnesia and declared there was no alternative to the commercialisation of the priceless heritage building.

She acknowledged that a revenue stream from a commercial rent was an attractive proposition, but still felt that Radstock was the loser as the hours of availability and the facilities would be very limited compared with previous use.

She stated that there had been a total absence of any consideration of an Equalities Impact (especially on the young people using the garden, some of whom are

disabled) and it was not right to switch suddenly to a totally different (commercial) plan without reference to the community.

She concluded by requesting the Panel to monitor the project carefully – and for the Cabinet and officers to apologise for the destruction of a unique Victorian interior in the name of progress.

Councillor Gerry Curran asked why new bus shelters were not put in place while the previous work on the High Street, Bath took place.

The Senior Project Manager replied that they were subject to a separate future planning application.

Councillor Mathew Blankley asked if the plans for the extension to the Newbridge Park & Ride were due to be submitted by the end of the month. The Senior Project Manager replied that they were.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development commented that the Co-working Hub situated at The Guildhall had 12 businesses currently using the facilities and were aiming to raise that number to 30. He added that a launch event was being planned for September.

## **12 BATH ENTERPRISE AREA / CITY DEAL**

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment gave a presentation to the Panel regarding this item. A copy can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

Policy target to deliver 6,700 new jobs in Bath city centre, most of this growth will be accommodated in the Bath Enterprise Area.

### Enterprise Area Key Facts:

Covers 98 hectares

36 hectares of developable land, 25% of which is in Council ownership

65,000sqm of new office space in Bath Central Area

7,000 gross new jobs

£343m of GVA pa

3,600 new homes as contributing to Core Strategy targets

Protection for existing industrial locations at Locksbrook & Brassmill

Main focus for the Creative, ICT, and Financial and Business Services jobs needing new business quarters in and adjoining city centre

### Emerging plans include:

New Residential Quarter – already delivering at Bath Riverside

Innovation Quarter – Three sites coming forward aimed at the city's creative and high tech businesses (Bath Quays North (BQN), Bath Quays South (BQS) and Manvers Street)

BQS: Developer interest to deliver creative workspace

BQN: Interest from Dyson Plc to deliver 200ksqm R&D (contribute over 1,300 new jobs and £110m in GVA pa)

BQN: Developer interest from Adapt Properties and Stirling

Manvers Street: Interest from Cubex to provide accommodation to retain BMT in the city

City Gateway – Plans are emerging for Green Park Station and BWR East

Sainsburys: Proposed new supermarket

Pinesgate: Ediston are developing plans

St James West: Plans are being developed to deliver student accommodation

Industrial Quarter – Aimed at the city's high value engineering and manufacturing sector

Roseberry Place: Developer interest to deliver residential/student accommodation on site next to BWR

Twerton Mill: Application for student accommodation

We have a plan to address challenges that includes:

Strategic flood mitigation

Land remediation

Transportation infrastructure

A more detailed strategy is being developed in the Placemaking Plan to enable delivery and secure funding.

#### Outcomes:

4,200 Homes = £38m in New Homes Bonus over 20 years

9,200 Jobs = £400m uplift in GVA per annum

New Commercial Floor Space under City Deal = Business Rate Uplift (£4.2m per annum uplift, £70.6m over 25years)

#### For the Council:

Delivery Corporate Policy and Aspirations

Align Council objectives

Greater certainty of income

#### For the Community:

Certainty of development

Reassurance of what is protected

Opportunity to contribute to shaping their place

#### For Developers:

Viable development opportunities

A clear vision, with specific design and infrastructure requirements

Reduced risk and greater certainty of delivery

#### Bath Sites:

Bath at the moment is a collection of sites with no inter-relationship

Brownfield land remediation – 200 years of contamination

Flood mitigation – significant parts of the EA within Flood Zone 3

Roads & bridges – to unify the area without contributing to congestion having regard to the extra 7000 vehicles in B&NES since 2001

Pedestrian routes & public realm – to increase permeability, pedestrian and cycle activity, access to the riverside and social interaction and dwell-time in public spaces

Park & ride expansion / transit routes – to encourage organic modal shift

Funding secured to date

Already secured funding through RIF to deliver:

£5m for flood mitigation works

£2m for pedestrian footbridge

£4m for removal of gasometers

However, further funding is required

#### Spatial Framework:

The strategy is essential to enable us to compete within the WoE and nationally for scarce Government funding

Example of other areas that have secured funding:

Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone

£20.9m of Revolving Infrastructure Fund

£2.8m Inward Investment Fund (BIS, HCA)

£11.3m HCA funding

Funding they have applied for include:

£70m for additional transport infrastructure to deliver the 17,000 jobs

£55m station enhancement from Network Rail to deal with capacity as a result of EZ (masterplan to begin in October)

£45m RGF money for Arena

£60m for an Energy masterplan from European Funding

Bristol are looking to appoint a Funding Strategist who will be a dedicated resource to find and apply for funding

Birmingham Enterprise Zone

£450m transformation project

Emphasis on creative industries, digital media, professional and financial services (similar to Bath)

£125m investment raised

#### Emerging Strategy:

Will pull emerging plans together

Provide planning certainty



Target funding  
Provide developer certainty  
Ensure delivery

Councillor Gerry Curran asked if he could expand more on the term 'planning certainty' as the Council aspiration for sites does not always match up with the owners of those sites.

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment replied that planning was at the heart of their work alongside the Placemaking Plan and the Core Strategy. He added that developers want certainty as much as the Council do so we are working with them to find a fit for our vision.

All nine of the developments sit along the river corridor

£100k been allocated provisionally to deliver River Strategy

A proportion of this could be used to deliver the objectives of the Bath Enterprise Area

Our strategy will be more integrated / aligned with:

River Strategy  
Transport Strategy  
Environmental Strategy  
Connectivity Strategy including Broadband

#### Growth Incentive deal summary:

Government will:

"Provide a licensed exemption from the effects of the resets and levies of the local government finance system in five Enterprise Areas over 25 years (starting April 2014), enabling the West of England to retain 100% of business rates growth in these areas."

Local authorities will:

"Pool the business rate growth from these five Enterprise Areas alongside that from the existing Enterprise Zone, generating a significant financial contribution to the £1bn West of England Economic Development Fund."

LEP will:

"Deliver a £1bn programme of investment from the Economic Development Fund to unlock and accelerate economic growth in the West of England."

#### City Deal:

1. The pooled business rates from the EZ and EAs will have three primary calls upon it. To make sure, as far as is reasonably and practically possible, that no individual council is worse off under the growth incentive deal than they would be had it not taken place. To meet the costs of operating the pool and the growth incentive proposition and any contingency for safety nets. (Tier 1)

2. To invest up to £500m in the £1 billion Economic Development Fund, and through it unlocking the infrastructure investment required to generate additional economic growth. (Tier 2)
3. To support each council's budget in meeting some of the additional demographical pressures growth may bring with it to be distributed on a simple formula basis to support revenue pressures - such as in social care, arising from demographic changes. (Tier 3)

Economic Development Fund:

Provides up to £500M to fund projects which accelerate growth in WoE  
 Total £1bn of investment with other funding streams e.g. RIF, Transport etc.  
 All EDF Projects subject to Governance and Approval by LEP Board  
 Subject to availability of funds in the business rate pool  
 To Fund Approved Infrastructure and Related Borrowing Costs  
 Projects to be put forward by Lead Authority (indicative list being developed)  
 Borrowing underwritten by Lead Authority

Delivery Timetable: Needs to be appropriately phased in conjunction with other sites.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones asked what level of stress was being placed upon the Council to achieve the aspirations of the Enterprise Area.

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment replied that a fiscal boundary had been drawn up by the Local Authorities to assess risk and that the figures quoted were conservative.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his presentation.

**13 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He suggested that the reports on Council Land Availability and London Road Regeneration be added to the agenda for the September meeting.

The other members of the Panel agreed with this proposal.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**