

**PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the Meeting held

Tuesday, 1st September, 2015, 2.00 pm

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Rob Appleyard (Chair), Liz Richardson (Vice-Chair), Colin Blackburn, Barry Macrae, Lisa O'Brien, Fiona Darey and Cherry Beath

Officers : Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing), John Wilkinson (Divisional Director for Community Regeneration), Lisa Bartlett (Divisional Director for Development), Jim Collings (Lead Local Flood Authority Manager) and Daniel Parr (Senior Engineer, Drainage)

Cabinet Members in attendance: Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones

10 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

11 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Councillor Rob Appleyard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as he is a Director of Curo.

14 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Councillor Robin Moss made a statement to the Panel on the subject of the referendum on membership of the European Union (EU). A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an attachment to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

He said that a vote on our membership of the EU is less than 18 months away and there will be many emotive issues and images, not least of which concern the movement of people, whether that is within the EU as a whole or the wider migration of refugees from conflict, persecution & poverty that is currently such a problem for the east of the EU in particular.

He added that there are also economic & social issues that have a specific bearing on residents in B&NES that should and must be aired, and which need research a scrutiny. Some areas that specifically come within the remit of this Panel include:

- i) Economic investment and growth does in part come from companies wanting to invest within the EU.
- ii) Economic confidence relies on stability for forward planning.
- iii) Any regulation on immigration and the movement of labour may affect the ability to recruit staff to fill vacancies from the widest possible pool.

He asked that as part of the policy development element of the Panel's role it should consider a risk assessment be undertaken as to potential implications of a referendum. This should include not only the potential result of any referendum but also what effect the actual process will have on business confidence, this should include talking directly to local businesses.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Moss for his statement and said that he would take advice from officers as to when the matter can be discussed by the Panel.

16 MINUTES - 20TH JULY 2015

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

17 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Economic Development for his written submissions that had been circulated to the Panel and asked if there were any questions for him.

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if it was planned to make the current Enterprise Area bigger.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development replied that the Council is proposing a multi-site urban and rural enterprise zone that re-designates the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area into an Enterprise Zone and will include an additional portfolio of employment locations along the A367 Somer Valley Corridor district (the smaller towns of Midsomer Norton and Radstock and the rural areas which lie along the A367).

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration added that if successful the Council would receive additional Government benefits and that the funding would be spread across B&NES.

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if other areas are bidding to become an Enterprise Zone.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that four expressions of interest within the West of England have been lodged and that only one will go forward to the Government for them to decide upon the proposal.

Councillor Barry Macrae commented that he welcomed the work on this matter and said that if successful it would benefit the whole of B&NES.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked what the timeline of the bid process was and if the Council could bid again should it be unsuccessful on this occasion.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that the deadline for submissions to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was August 28th and that he expected a meeting of the LEP Executive to take place within the next 7 – 10 days ahead of a submission to Government by September 18th.

With regard to the Housing Services update report Councillor Liz Richardson asked for clarification on the status of Right to Buy of affordable houses in villages with a population of under 3,000.

The Head of Housing replied that at present villages were excluded, however, the Government's proposal would include homes within a village of a population of under 3,000. He added that no details had yet been released, but that Government statements stated that all properties lost on a right to buy basis must be replaced on a 1:1 basis by the Council. He said that this would be a challenge, particularly given the scale forecast.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked if Affordable Warmth grants were available for older properties.

The Head of Housing replied that solid wall insulation is part of the scheme of grants available.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked what measures the Council takes regarding the enforcement of additional HMO Licensing.

The Head of Housing replied that the Council will enforce the minimum standards without exception.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that he supported a strong line of this issue.

The Chairman asked what the budget was for the Affordable Warmth scheme.

The Head of Housing replied that the figure was around £120,000 and was made up of contributions from the Government, energy companies and the Council.

The Chairman asked how many homes took part in the scheme.

The Head of Housing replied that around 50 were in the pipeline to take part.

The Chairman asked what the Council does to identify HMO's and are its costs covered through the fee charged.

The Head of Housing replied that the administration of the scheme is covered by the fee but that any enforcement action has to be covered by the Council. He added that a recent case in London has argued that enforcement should be included within the fee. He said that a judgement on the case was pending.

He said that the department had just cleared the incoming applications and was about to start work on further identification.

Councillor Colin Blackburn said that an anonymous reporting system would be welcomed in terms of reporting suspicious properties with regard to HMO's.

The Head of Housing replied that he would look into arranging an anonymous reporting form.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked if officers had considered doing a cross reference check with those claiming Council Tax relief to identify further properties.

The Head of Housing replied that they had done this type of work previously and would be willing to look into a similar exercise in the future.

The Chairman asked for an update on the two empty properties that had been purchased under a Compulsory Purchase Order.

He said that the Council were now evaluating the options on how best to get them back into use, ideally as family accommodation.

The Chairman asked how changes to the Homesearch system would affect vulnerable people who are not proficient in using the internet.

The Head of Housing replied that it operates a number of alternative options for vulnerable clients including allowing friends & family to bid and in some cases contacting them by telephone each week.

Councillor Liz Richardson said that she was concerned for elderly users of the system and asked if Age UK could be contacted to help.

The Head of Housing replied that he was open to offers and suggestions of help. He added that you normally find that somebody, a friend or relative, has been allocated to help an older person.

The Chairman asked what the significance of the statistic '100% was of homelessness decisions were made within 33 days' was.

The Head of Housing replied that this was a Government guidance figure that the Council was measured against. He added that the goal of the service is

homelessness prevention and that the key figure is the number of households in temporary accommodation.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Panel recognises the work of officers in this area.

18 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Councillor Lisa O'Brien said that she welcomed the forthcoming advisory note for Town & Parish Councils and asked if any training would also be provided.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that training would be provided and that it would also be discussed at the next Parish Liaison Meeting.

The Chairman asked if the Council is able to keep up to 5 % of CIL funds to cover administration costs, are the Parishes entitled to any of that money for their admin purposes.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that Parish & Town Councils would have to make their own arrangements with regard to administration costs.

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if the Panel should receive a future report relating to the framework for the unparished areas of Bath.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that the Divisional Director for Strategy and Performance was undertaking some work on this matter.

The Chairman asked if members had a role in deciding on projects.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that members would be able to comment on projects as part of the Medium Term Plan process.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if Parishes & Towns in the locality of a major development would get the first bite of CIL funding.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that they would look to align local works and infrastructure where they could.

Councillor Barry Macrae replied that infrastructure was key and that the Cabinet should listen to joint approaches for funding.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the arrangements for deciding on how CIL funds should be spent and asked to review the matter next May.

19 BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET PLACEMAKING PLAN

The Chairman commented that a lot of brownfield sites are being used for student accommodation and he asked what engagement has the Council had with the universities.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that there is a specific line in the document that states the need to engage with them.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that he was worried the number of decisions / reviews that the Council makes on these issues as areas such as Midsomer Norton have already stated what they want to happen in their areas.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, the Cabinet Member for Finance & Efficiency replied that the Placemaking Plan is the detail around the Core Strategy.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked whether student accommodation could be built within the Green Belt of the campus.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that it would have to be exceptional circumstances for development within the Green Belt.

The Chairman asked if other wards should be given protection in relation to HMO's given that student numbers are now uncapped for the universities.

Councillor Colin Blackburn said that he felt that the City was being turned into a dormitory and that a campus could be set up in a different area of the Council to spread the benefit.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that he felt that the Council was giving too much consideration to students over residents and families and that a sense of community must be retained.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien stated that she appreciated the work on this matter in relation to Keynsham.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the scope and purpose of the Placemaking Plan and the opportunity to make detailed comments on the contents of the Plan as part of the formal consultation process.

20 DRAFT LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Lead Local Flood Authority Manager introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, makes Bath and North East Somerset Council a Lead Local Flood Authority and we are responsible for managing flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses in the area.

He added that a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has been drafted and will be publicly consulted upon during September and October 2015, with a view to publishing a final document by the end of the year.

He said that officers were also seeking advice on who within the Council they can approach for a steer on the appropriate level of promotion of the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water.

The Chairman asked if planning officers take into account the potential for surface water when deciding on new developments.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that evidence is gathered pre-application and during an application. She added that policy wording may need amending.

The Senior Engineer for Drainage said that the Sustainable Drainage Policy was within the Placemaking Plan.

The Chairman asked if the views of officers associated with this matter should be more enhanced in the planning process.

The Divisional Director for Development replied that their views are equally important, but said that they would likely face a challenge from developers on the viability of proposals. She added that Case Officers would make recommendations if they felt that work was required following a discussion.

Councillor Liz Richardson said that she felt that all developments within the Bath and Chew Valley basins should be built with SuDS and that the Environment Agency should be more involved in the process.

The Senior Engineer for Drainage said that the Environment Agency would be consulted on any development within a flood zone.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien commented that as it was desirable to live and build in B&NES that planning consent must be adhered to.

Councillor Fiona Darey said that she agreed with this comment.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that a balance of views must be found and that he would like to see a firm statutory position from the Council.

The Chairman asked what role officers played in emergency planning.

The Lead Local Flood Authority Manager replied that they do have a role in the process in that they produce various plans that include flooding. He added that as a Lead Local Authority we have Flood Representatives that report incidents to us. He said that the Environment Agency has also put Flood Wardens in place in Chew Magna and this could be extended to other areas.

Councillor Liz Richardson said that she was aware of an exercise to practise flood drills without the actual use of water within the Chew Valley.

The Chairman asked if the Council would be able to deal with an incident should one occur at Twerton Lock.

The Lead Local Flood Authority Manager replied that a major incident plan is in place to cover a number of eventualities.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance & Efficiency commented that following incidents in 2012 the Emergency Planning Team were praise for their role.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- 1.1 Recommend that the Cabinet should be the appropriate body to sign-off the final version of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- 1.2 Recommend the endorsement of the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to the Cabinet.
- 1.3 Recommend further discussion with the Strategic Director for Place on the matter of the Council's support or otherwise for sustainable drainage systems.

21 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel's workplan was agreed as printed.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

PHECD Scrutiny panel 1.9.15

Statement to panel

Referendum on membership of the EU

We are less than 18 months away from a vote on our membership of the EU

We are less than a year away from the start of the campaign concerning our membership, although some may argue that the campaign has already started.

There will be many emotive issues & images, not least of which concern the movement of people, whether that is within the EU as a whole or the wider migration of refugees from conflict, persecution & poverty that is currently such a problem for the east of the EU in particular.

However there are economic & social issues that have a specific bearing on residents in B&NES that should & must be aired, & which need research & scrutiny. Some are areas that specifically come within the remit of this panel include:

- (1) Economic investment & growth does in part come from companies wanting to invest within the EU.
- (2) Economic confidence relies on stability for forward planning.
- (3) Any regulation on immigration & the movement of labour may affect the ability to recruit staff to fill vacancies from the widest possible pool.

In these areas a business's ability to thrive may be influenced by the upcoming referendum.

Also:

- (1) C.30,000 UK citizens living abroad in the EU claim benefits to assist with housing & unemployment costs.
- (2) It is estimated that 2.2M UK citizens live outside the UK but within the EU, the majority of whom are above pension age.

There are implications for the demand on housing & social care if there is an influx of returning citizens.

I am asking that as part of the policy development element of the panel's role you should consider a risk assessment should be undertaken as to potential implications of a referendum. This should include not only the potential result of any referendum but also what affect the actual process will have on business confidence, this should include talking directly to local businesses.

I hope you will take this suggestion into account when looking at the panel's workplan

Robin Moss

1.9.15

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