

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 27th May, 2014

Present:- Councillors Eleanor Jackson (Chair), Steve Hedges (Vice-Chair), Brian Simmons, June Player and David Veale

Also in attendance: Derek Quilter (Divisional Director for Project Management), Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing) and Tim Hewitt (Regeneration Team Manager)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Gerry Curran had sent his apologies to the Panel.

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Councillor Tim Ball and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, Councillor Ben Stevens had also sent their apologies to the Panel.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Steve Hedges declared an other interest to the Panel as his son works for Curo.

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 David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He said that the fleet of First vehicles needed to be upgraded to have comfortable leather seats and wi-fi available so that they would become more attractive to use. He added that he was pleased to say that the toilets within the bus station had been restored,

but that it was a real shame that the café was now absent, so the toilets were still closed.

He referred to the bus gate trial on Dorchester Street as a debacle and said that further consultation would be required if it were to be reintroduced.

He stated that he believed that any new public transport routes associated with Bath Western Riverside should form part of the Bath Transport Strategy. He added that there currently were some bus stops in the area but hardly any buses used them.

Councillor June Player commented that she was aware that some wheelchair users who live in Bath Western Riverside are affected by being unable to access services because of pavement height.

The Chair suggested that this be reported to the Equalities team within the Council.

7 MINUTES - 11TH MARCH 2014

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

8 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Head of Housing introduced this item in the absence of Councillor Tim Ball.

He said that in response to a query raised by the Chair that he had the following information regarding boat dwellers. The Council has approved the establishment of the Council Strategic River Group. This is a multi-partnership group which includes representatives of the Environment Agency, the Canals & Rivers Trust & Wessex Water and is chaired by Councillor Ben Stevens. He added that at the meeting on the 2nd May it was agreed that this group would progress the wider issues resulting from the task & finish group on boat dwellings, which would include utilising the £40k of funding agreed by Council.

The Chair asked if an officer would be available to work directly with the group.

The Head of Housing replied that an officer would be allocated to the group and that he believed the job description was in development.

The Chair commented that she would like to receive an update on the work of the group in due course.

The Head of Housing explained that the Housing Options & Homelessness Team has recently received a number of positive assessments as a result of benchmarking initiatives and peer review activities. These were:

- Peer review by 2 local authorities using the Government's rigorous Homelessness Gold Standard framework. The feedback was very positive. We scored 73% the 2nd highest score of the 8 authorities who have so far gone through this voluntarily process. They were particularly positive about our partnership working.

- Mystery shopping provided by Shelter, the national homelessness charity, has been very positive. In particular they commented that telephone calls were promptly answered and that staff were friendly and helpful. The website was graded as excellent. There was however some concerns expressed about an email that was not responded to. This will be investigated.
- Independent benchmarking, facilitated by the Housing Quality Network Ltd using 2013/14 data shows that of 12 national peers:
 - B&NES operate with 0.49 FTE staff per 10,000 households (less than half the mean peer group);
 - B&NES staff make more statutory decisions per FTE than the average of the peer group;
 - B&NES homelessness prevention rate per FTE is the highest in the peer group;
 - At the time of writing there were 10 households in temporary accommodation, a record low for the Council. This is despite a national increase in homelessness. If the national rate of households in temporary accommodation was applied to this Council we would have in excess of 170 households in temporary accommodation.

Councillor Brian Simmons commented that he was aware of two rough sleepers in Keynsham and that they were not able to travel to Bath to access facilities.

The Head of Housing replied that it was only feasible to have one centre and added that outreach workers do visit people across the Council.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked how many of the 513 new affordable homes were truly 'affordable'.

The Head of Housing replied that the majority of them had been delivered under the social rent regime, though some of the later developments would indeed be affordable rent tenancies, that is, up to 80% of local market rent.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked how many Mandatory Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence applications had been received.

The Head of Housing replied that around 1,000 applications had been received and that these were now being visited.

Councillor June Player asked if there was a condition of the licence that referred to the garden of a property.

The Head of Housing replied that the licence was to protect the tenant in terms of the condition of the property and not really about the appearance of gardens. He asked Councillor Player to pass to him the details of the properties that she was concerned with.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked when a licence would be reviewed.

The Head of Housing replied that they would be reviewed in five years' time.

The Divisional Director for Project Management addressed the Panel in the absence of Councillor Ben Stevens. He wished to highlight the following points from the report that was circulated.

London Road

- o Original scheme proposal has been re-evaluated in light of concerns raised by cycling community group(s).
- o Revised scheme developed - support from community groups now in place
- o Contract award anticipated in June 2014.
- o Anticipated commencement of works on site: Summer 2014
- o Target completion of scheme by end of 2014

Bath Transport Package

• Bus Stops

- ER Hemmings are delivering the Bus Stop construction works; currently 242 stops have been upgraded. The Bus Stop programme is expected to complete around March 2015.

Keynsham Regeneration Project

- o Project remains on-time and on-budget
- o Brass and gold cladding is nearly complete
- o Raised access flooring is ongoing
- o Internal decorations commenced

Weston All Saints Primary School

KS1 new classroom block

- o The previously withdrawn Planning application was re-submitted in April which is expected to go to committee in June

St. Nicholas CE Primary School

The Chair commented that through her work as a governor at St. Nicholas' School, Radstock she was aware that some major repairs were required.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that he was aware of a further leak at the site and that floor work was planned for the summer and would be in place by September.

The Chair thanked the officers for their updates.

9 FUNDING APPROVAL FOR INDICATIVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME

The Head of Housing introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the Council has made available capital funding to support the delivery of affordable housing. He added that the report due before Cabinet on June 11th provided the indicative Affordable Housing programme for 2014-15 and the evolving pipeline programme for 2015-18. He said that it outlined the proposals for determining the

affordable housing projects for funding and sought to agree an effective and robust delegated authority for funding approval decisions.

He said that a proposal was to be made to amend the decision making process to allow the Director of Place in association with the Cabinet Member Homes & Planning to allocate funding.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that he saw no argument against this proposal.

The Chair commented that she felt it would be an effective way of working. She also asked if it would alleviate the problem of granted permissions not being built.

The Head of Housing replied that it would not. He added that it was about pursuing developments when approached by partners.

Councillor Brian Simmons asked if the Council would receive any funds back through Section 106 agreements.

The Head of Housing replied that it would not but that it would receive the New Homes Bonus if a development was successful.

10 BATH WESTERN RIVERSIDE / SOMERDALE : NEXT PHASE

The Regeneration Team Manager introduced this item to the Panel. He highlighted to the Panel some of the key points from the report.

Somerdale

The detailed part of the application is for 157 dwellings, change of use of Block A for up to 113 apartments. It also covers highway works, social and sports pavilion (new Fry Club), new sports pitches, alterations to factory buildings B and C for employment use (B1) leisure (D2 uses) and retail (A3, A4 and A5 uses).

The Section 106 agreement was signed on February 19th 2014.

The employment space is being marketed. A full page advert has been placed in Estates Gazette (w/c 12th May). Taylor Wimpey and their representatives are preparing a marketing strategy which is required by the S106 Agreement for the Council's approval within six months of signing the agreement. Regular meetings with the Council's Economic Development Team and Invest in Bristol & Bath form part of the strategy, and these are already under way.

Bath Western Riverside

Phase 1 of Bath Riverside commenced on site in early 2011 and is currently delivering up to 813 residential units. The project is delivering affordable homes (101 to date with a further 55 under construction) early in the development. The project has established a good market for the product with strong sales.

Significant outputs have already been achieved;

- 300 homes constructed – 101 affordable 1, 2 and 3 bed flats and houses

- Biomass Energy Centre completed and operational
- £750k in S106 contribution to B&NES
- £260k PA received in New Homes Bonus
- Demonstrated Crest/B&NES/HCA and Curo have formed a good partnership

With the support of the Council to use LEP Revolving Infrastructure funding (RIF), Crest entered into an Agreement with Wales and West (WWU) under which the gas towers have been decommissioned and the demolition and remediation processes commenced. The first phase of decommissioning is complete and WWU has now surrendered the Hazardous Storage Licence. In parallel, Crest (and by contracting RIF, the Council) has been granted an option to acquire the Wales and West site which extends through to 2018 and which provides the necessary control from which to bring forward the remaining phases.

The Council is developing plans to relocate the waste transfer and recycling site with options to consolidate and improve the waste service activities. This may be achieved by relocation of the waste management operation to Pixash Lane, Keynsham and the Household Recycling Centre onto an alternative Bath site.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked if the gasometer was still there.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that the gasometer was still there, but it had been de-commissioned. He added that it will take two years to take it down.

The Chair asked if the Radstock Road recycling facility was due to close down.

The Regeneration Team Manager replied that he was not sure and would try to find out for her. Following the meeting the Democratic Services Officer was informed by the Regeneration Team Manager that there are absolutely no plans to close the public Recycling Centre at Wheelers Hill, Old Welton (off Radstock Rd).

The Chair asked if the highways works associated with the NRR were due to commence before the 16th July 2014.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that there were no plans to commence before that date and that the Town Council would be notified of a start date. He added that they hoped to leave as much infrastructure in place as possible during the works.

Councillor June Player asked if any update was available regarding the old Bath Press site.

The Regeneration Team Manager replied that the Council had met recently with Tesco and that he now expected a residential led application to be submitted.

The Chair commented that she would appreciate an update on project activity in Midsomer Norton in due course.

The Regeneration Team Manager replied that he would be happy to provide one to the Panel.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that he believed some people may be sleeping on the Bath Press site.

The Chair asked for the Head of Housing to note this comment.

Councillor David Veale asked if any retail outlet was planned for the site.

The Regeneration Team Manager replied that a small scale one was likely.

The Chair thanked him for the update on behalf of the Panel.

11 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. She said that she would like them to receive a report from the Council Strategic River Group as soon as possible. She added that the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan needed to be placed upon the workplan.

The Head of Housing commented that four registered providers had been invited to address the Panel on their plans for the future in July.

The Panel agreed with these proposals.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services