

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Monday, 17th June, 2013

**Present:-** Councillors John Bull (Chair), Roger Symonds (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Paul Myers, Charles Gerrish, Barry Macrae and Nigel Roberts

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Councillor Roger Symonds as the new Vice Chair of the Panel.

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

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

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

There were none.

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

Councillor Myers declared an 'other' interest in Item 11 'Response to PDS Recommendations – Community Asset Transfer Review' as he is involved in a community asset transfer but not one that is related to this item.

#### **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**

A member of the public, Ms Kanter Dicatorato (M&K Hardware, Guildhall Market) made a statement to the Panel regarding item 9 'Grand Parade and Undercroft'. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book.

Mr Alex Schlesinger sent a statement to the Panel regarding item 9 'Grand Parade and Undercroft'. He was not present at the time this item was considered by the Panel. The Chairman stated that each Panel member had a copy of the statement and would note it in relation to this item. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book.

## **7 MINUTES - 18TH MARCH 2013**

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

## **8 MEMBER TRAINING**

Vernon Hitchman, Divisional Director of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report.

The Chairman informed the Panel that Councillor Martin Veal had been invited and was present to give his views as Member Champion for Member Development.

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Veal (Member Development Champion) stated that he felt that it should be 'development' rather than training. He stated that there is a budget for this and a requirement for member development in Councils to assure informed debate and decision making. He stated that member development could be 'sold' to members more through group leaders and political research assistants. He stated that he became a Councillor 18 years ago as a result of a by-election and had no training but that the process is much improved now.

Councillor Gerrish stated that new Councillors need training and existing Councillors need development as there are always changes in processes. He added that a benefit of training sessions is getting to know which officers to deal with on specific matters. He explained that Cabinet member briefing sessions often had disappointingly low turnout. He stated that there had been some good training sessions recently.

Councillor Roberts explained that some Councillors are in full time employment and he, for example, conducts some courses such as equalities awareness with his employer (NHS) so would not need to complete them again as a Councillor. He further explained that he often had meetings most evenings in the week for the Council so would not want to attend unnecessary or repeat training or briefing sessions. He stated that there is not enough use of e-learning in the Council and also presentations from officers can be emailed around to Councillors that cannot attend (including an officer name and contact point if needed).

Councillor Macrae agreed that there should be more e-learning and also suggested that along with training for new Councillors, there should be an informal briefing about the Panel/Committee that the Councillor sits on. He also stated that there are some wider issues such as 'Core Strategy' that it would be useful to have a briefing on.

Councillor Symonds stated that he was surprised by the amount of training courses offered and that this was good. He suggested a talk to new members by an experienced Councillor.

Councillor Bull noted that most of the feedback on the training courses was positive.

Councillor Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources stated that he was keen to look at the Panel comments (set out below). He added that there are a range of external courses available for specific training that officers could circulate to members. He further commented that one of the main reasons that Councillors do not attend events is because of the time of day that they are held and it is important that trainers should consider holding multiple slots.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Panel ask the Cabinet to take the following comments on board and that the comments also be passed on to the Divisional Director for Legal and Democratic Services:

- There should be more involvement of political groups, group leaders and political research assistants in encouraging their Members to attend training;
- There should be more joint sessions held with west of England authorities;
- Members elected through by-elections should have the full induction programme;
- There should be more use of e-learning;
- There should be a four year programme of member development, and not just a programme related to the induction process.

## **9 UPDATE ON GRAND PARADE AND UNDERCROFT**

Tom McBain, Divisional Director and Chief Property Officer gave a presentation to the Panel (a copy of the presentation is included on the minute book for the Panel and attached to these minutes). The presentation covered the following:

- Objectives
- Consultation
- Design – Access Options
- Design – Phasing
- Design – Visualisation
- Development Appraisal
- Timeline

The officer referred to a statement from Alex Schlesinger that the Panel had noted under item 6 that referred to a majority of respondents to a survey (Small Business Focus) felt that Bath could not support more cafes and restaurants. The officer stated that he acknowledged this point but that some soft research had shown that out of 24 restaurant chains approached, 18 showed expressions of interest which indicates that demand does exist.

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Macrae made the following comments: that there was no car parking for weddings and events and no facilities for disabled people and the elderly; he was not convinced about the 18 restaurant chains, he asked about local and existing restaurants. He asked about safety barriers at the Colonnades. He asked that the market be kept at its present quality and not sell 'tat'. He also asked about social

housing and if this was included. He finally added that he was staggered at the timescales. The officer responded that all the issues raised would be taken into account with respect to the detailed design and that it was only at the concept stage now. He assured the Councillor that the spaces would be openly marketed which included local and existing businesses. He explained that he was looking at a 'Market Strategy' which would ensure the present high quality of the Guildhall market. He reported that there would only be 6/7 units of housing so that social housing requirement does not apply. He concluded that he realised that the timescale is challenging and that this was why the consultation was being started early.

Councillor Roberts congratulated the officers on the exciting proposals.

Councillor Gerrish stated that the hours of opening and delivery arrangements for any potential restaurants would be a planning condition due to the potential noise issue for residents of the Empire. He supported the running of the market in house in order to keep control. He commented that parking facilities for people with disabilities (for more than 3 hours) must be provided adjacent to the Guildhall. He stated that there would have to be more than 20 spaces for full Council meetings. He further added that not all local businesses welcomed the Christmas market. He agreed with Councillor Macrae that the timescale was optimistic.

Councillor Symonds stated that it was a great project. He referred to the anxieties of some of the Guildhall market traders and reminded the Panel and officers that it was a local needs shopping area and should be protected.

Councillor Bellotti – Cabinet Member for Community Resources responded that the Panel had raised some good points and that plans were at a concept stage at the moment and comments could be taken on. He explained that no decision had been made on who would manage the market in the future and there were examples elsewhere that worked with a market manager. He explained that some street stalls and maybe the Christmas market could be joined up. Regarding car parking spaces, he explained that the intention is to transfer existing capacity to Manvers Street where there would be extra parking for people with disabilities. He further explained that this project is about trying to restore a sense of history as well as economic development. He added that no Council administration has gone forward with plans in this area but any development would have to be in partnership with the private sector. He stated that there should be a mix of restaurants, not just high end. He concluded that there would be several phases in this project and the button had been pressed on phases 1 & 2 only. He assured the Panel that it could be delivered within the timescale.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones (Lansdown Ward) stated that there would have to be screening to block the noise from the weir which is likely to be extensive and mean that the existing wall would have to be removed. He asked that a visual be provided at future presentations on the change to the view.

Councillor Roberts stated that he felt that there had been too much concentration on car parking.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to have an update on this item at their September meeting.

## 10 CITY DEAL

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director Resources, introduced the report and gave a presentation to the Panel on the following:

- West of England City Region Deal – Growth Incentive Summary
- Business Rates Pool
- Pool distribution
- Economic Development Fund
- £1bn Economic Development Fund
- EDF Governance

The Director explained that there would be a report to Council in July and that it would also be reported to each Unitary Authority and then to the LEP Board (Local Enterprise Partnership).

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Bull asked if all the projects had to be in the five enterprise areas. Tim Richens, Divisional Director Finance and the Strategic Director explained that it was possible that projects could be outside the areas if they can help unlock economic growth across the west of England but they explained that most of the projects would be within the enterprise areas.

Councillor Macrae asked for reassurance that other areas would be considered. The Director stated that the enterprise areas are linked to the deal and that the Council needs to consider how it invests in economic development.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the officers for the presentation and mentioned that a site in need of investment that would unlock economic development and create jobs is the Cadburys site in Keynsham which is already in the planning process. The Director explained that this is an example of the pressure that the fund might be under and that the vast majority of the fund will go into the project areas. He explained that while there may be some exceptions, the money would not be available for a project at this time as the fund needs to become established and the Authority would have to borrow in the mean time.

Councillor Myers asked if money would be available for schemes outside the area and the Director stated that there may be some money for schemes outside the areas and referred to his explanation earlier.

Councillor Roberts stated that the City Deal should be seen alongside other things such as the Core Strategy. He stated that this scheme offers an opportunity to get extra money into the area that we would not have had otherwise but the difficulty is that the designated area is the city of Bath. He added that there was a need to look at the level of commuting out of Midsomer Norton and other areas.

There was some discussion around the Core Strategy in relation to the City Deal. Councillor Bull stated that this report is concerned with the funding stream

mechanism and does not affect the existing decision on the Core Strategy. The Director agreed and concluded that the City Deal does not affect the Core Strategy except that it would help to deliver it.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

## 11 **RESPONSE TO PDS RECOMMENDATIONS - COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER REVIEW**

The Chairman explained the background to this item in that there had been a task and finish group which had done some work around Community Asset Transfer and had sent it's recommendations to the Cabinet member. He explained that the Cabinet member would now give his response to these recommendations.

Councillor Bellotti addressed each recommendation in the report as shown below:

Recommendation 1 – Accepted

Recommendation 2 – Accepted (he noted that so far everyone he has spoken to asked for as long a lease as possible but acknowledged the need for a short lease option)

Recommendation 3 – Accept (he stated that there were too many meetings already and that in principle, this should be property led)

Recommendation 4 – Defer (he stated that he did not think the Panel was the right place to bring individual cases so wanted to amend the wording)

Recommendation 5 – Accept (he stated that the development of best practice was key to this). Regarding the 'Financial Assessment', he reported that this would be considered in the context of the 2014/15 budget.

He thanked the Panel for the report and stated that the Cabinet were 100% signed up to this Community Asset Transfer.

Councillor Bull thanked the Cabinet Member for supporting the recommendations.

There was some discussion around the wording in the report:

Councillor Myers stated that, regarding recommendation 5 – this was not meant to read as officer time, there is a self help group waiting to do this work. He stated that with regard to recommendation 4 – he agreed the Panel did not need to see individual cases.

The Chairman summarised that the following had been jointly agreed with the Panel and Cabinet Member and the Cabinet will take this on board.

The Panel **RESOLVED** that:

- On Recommendation 4, Tom McBain, Divisional Director and Chief Property Officer would be the reference point; and

- On Recommendation 5, this would be provided by a self help group; and
- The Panel will receive annual updates on Community Asset Transfers based on the Resources element.

## 12 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources, updated the Panel on the following:

- He explained that there would be a report on 'Financial Outcome 2012-13' at full Council, he reported that there would be no bad news in this report.
- He explained that he has a monthly meeting with Ian Savigar, Divisional Director, Customer Services (Council Connect, Revenues and Benefits) and could report that unemployment is going down; there were fewer claimants for job seekers allowance; on the under occupancy issue 90% of people decided to stay where they are and one quarter of the remaining 10% have already moved and there has been an increase in Council Tax collection. He further reported that there had been 48 discretionary housing payments in the first month; the number of summons are within 10% of last year. He further reported that 60% of claimants can go online and of the 40% remaining half will be able to learn and 20% will need ongoing help. He stated that there was a plan to develop beyond the one stop shops into libraries and that these facilities would be targeted in areas with the highest number of claimants.
- The 'Think Local' procurement plan is challenging but there will be benefits for local traders. He encouraged members to send him any examples of where this policy is not working.
- Regarding Asset Transfer, he referred to some potential examples.
- Regarding Keynsham Workplaces Project he explained that the plan was to keep as many employees in the Guildhall as possible. He further reported that the development is on time and a main anchor tenant has now been secured.
- Regarding the Capital Programme he referred to a range of schemes that are being delivered across the Council.

The Pan raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Macrae welcomed the Cabinet Member explaining the above points. He asked if there is an indication on the current uptake on the new electronic car parking receipts. Councillor Bellotti said that he would find out.

Councillor Barrett asked about resuming his role as procurement champion, he was advised to refer to his group leader.

Councillor Myers stated that the computer in the library in Midsomer Norton kept going down so people had to travel to Bath to make their claim. Councillor Bellotti stated that this would be put right.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his update.

## 13 PANEL FUTURE WORKPLAN

Councillor Myers asked to add an item on 'Allocation of Funds for Regeneration across BANES', which explores how the policy is determined and what is available as he felt that there are areas where resources are not going. The Strategic Director, Resources advised that this would sit within the Economic and Community Development Panel and that it is possible that any Resources Panel member can attend the meeting. It was resolved that the Chairman John Bull would speak to the Chairman of the ECD Panel, Councillor Robin Moss.

Changes to the Future Workplan:

'Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedures' to move to the July meeting.

'Grand Parade and Undercroft Update' to be reported to the September meeting.

Annual report on 'Community Asset Transfer' (report update based on the Resources element)

The meeting ended at 8:40pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**