

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

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

Tuesday, 3rd May, 2016

**Present:-** Councillors Rob Appleyard (Chair), Barry Macrae (Vice-Chair), Colin Blackburn, Lisa O'Brien, Fiona Darey, David Veale and Tim Ball

**Also in attendance:**

#### **61 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **62 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Beath sent apologies and was substituted by Councillor Tim Ball.

#### **64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Rob Appleyard declared a general interest as a non-executive Director of Curo.

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

There was none.

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

David Redgewell made a statement on retail strategy. He asked that the Panel look at regional activity and policy on retail. Following a question from Councillor Macrae, Mr Redgewell explained that he felt that expansion of retail sites should be a decision made across the sub region.

#### **67 MINUTES - MARCH 1ST 2016**

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record (noting the following amendments) and they were duly signed by the Chairman:

- ‘Councillor Colin Blackburn’ be changed to ‘Councillor Bob Goodman’ in minute 51 and 56.

## 68 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning Councillor Liz Richardson updated the Panel on the following current issues with in her portfolio:

- Placemaking Plan – the process on this has started and information can be found on the Council website;
- Housing Services – the Cabinet Member made reference to the written report on ‘Housing Services Update’ (*this is attached to the agenda papers for this meeting*);
- Government and Homes Planning Bill.
- The Cabinet Member reported that there is a plan for a locked down partial review of the Core Strategy (in the Council papers ). She informed members that this will be the main subject of the LDF meeting this week on which all groups are represented.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Ball stated that there are questions over Bristol being able to fulfil its housing requirement. He asked if the review of the Core Strategy referred to the whole area or part of the area. The Cabinet Member reported that sites will not be reopened. She reported that the duty to co-operate will be opened up so it will work both ways between Bath and Bristol. She explained SHMA – Strategic Housing Market Assessment. It was agreed that Councillor Ball will take any questions raised by the Panel to the LDF meeting.

Councillor Macrae welcomed the update and thanked the Cabinet Member.

Panel members asked questions of Graham Sabourn – Head of Housing, he explained that the key message is that there has been an increase in people with housing problems which includes people presenting as homeless with a home or without.

Councillor O’Brien asked how many social tenants have moved in from outside the area. The officer explained that he did not have the exact figures and will report back. He explained the introduction of ‘local connection criteria’ – one of the criteria is having employment in the area

Councillor O’Brien asked how many people are successful on the homesearch register. The officer explained that this information is published on the website, he explained that the broad figure is that there are 6 thousand households on the register and 550 properties coming on each year.

Councillor Appleyard congratulated the team on enforcement action and asked if the Council get any money from the fines. The officer explained that if the new Bill goes through, the amount possible to fine a landlord will go up.

Councillor Appleyard noted that now the Gypsy and Travellers site has been handed over to the management company, it can be taken off the Panel workplan, other than referring to future demand.

Councillor Appleyard referred to the Q4 performance statistics and asked if the KPIs can be reviewed in order that the Panel can see opportunities to help with policy development. The officer stated that he would welcome the Panel's input into reviewing the indicators.

There was some discussion around the bidding system. Councillor Macrae stated that the maximum number of bids should be three as if people are in urgent need, they will take the house. The officer explained that there is a small number of people who will bid on everything which crowds others out so there is a disproportionate amount of time spent on a few people. The officer reassured the Panel that there is a priority list and if people are on the A list then they are required to take a property after 3-4 months.

The Panel noted the update and thanked the officer.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development: Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones addressed the Panel, he stated that the Panel should scrutinize his decisions and he could also challenge them so there should be a healthy dialogue. He asked that the Panel look at the 'Getting Around Bath' Strategy which will help with economic development. The Cabinet Member updated the Panel on current issues with in his portfolio:

- Archway Centre;
- Midsomer Norton Town Council have procured a project manager to help with economic development – the starting point will be a cluster of businesses on the high street;
- Broadband – a lot of queries and complaints on this, phase two should see improvements;
- Bath Quays South – restructuring of the development programme;
- Railway Arches – this is vacant and there is a proposal for this to be used for art space/studios;
- Mineral Hospital – it is important that the Council moves quickly on this.
- Victoria Art Gallery – the Grayson Perry exhibition attracted a high amount of visitors;
- He reported that there are 22 major development sites in Bath.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Ball asked about retail policy and how footfall will be retained in the city. The Cabinet member stated that he would report back on retail policy.

Councillor Macrae asked about economic development and where it will be in 5 years time. The Cabinet Member explained that there is a lot of continuity in major projects. Councillor Appleyard noted that the Cabinet Member is carrying on a work stream.

Councillor Appleyard explained that the Panel had an item on Broadband at their last meeting and that the Panel had been constrained in the debate. He explained that scrutiny is a two way thing and that the Panel would like to know things that the Cabinet Member is becoming aware of. He stated that he did not want an adversarial situation between the Panel and the Cabinet Member.

## **69 PROJECT DELIVERY: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**

Simon Martin, Programme Director Bath Enterprise Area gave a presentation to the Panel on the Programme Management tool for project delivery (*copies of this presentation are saved with the agenda papers for this meeting*).

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Macrae thanked the officer for the clear presentation and set of structured thoughts. He commented that, at ward level, member input is important. He has concerns about external impositions such as Network Rail. He also asked that this does not stop at the boundary and that there should be prioritisation agreed by the Cabinet. The officer stated that adjacent projects should be built in.

Councillor Darey asked if this could be accessed by the public in the future and if it has a patent. The officer responded that other organisations do similar things. He explained that there is an intention that the system may be open to the public in the future but it is still in its early stages at present. It will be used internally in this financial year.

Councillor O'Brien stated that it is an excellent tool and may stop incidents of clashing road works which have been an issue. Councillor Ball commented that the system would only be as good as the information that is put in to it. Councillor Appleyard commented that the tool is very good and he looks forward to when it can be used by members to see when and where different projects are running and it could also be used when scheduling public events. He further commented that the effects of the weather should be built in on long term projections.

The officer explained that this is a good tool for long term events but with a short event eg. marathon, the impact on a major project may be shown as small yet there may be a significant impact on the community.

## **70 WATER SPACE STUDY**

Cleo Newcombe-Jones, Project Coordinator – River Avon introduced the report. She ran through the themes of the Study and asked how the Panel would like to be involved.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Appleyard stated that the Panel would like to make an early and positive contribution. He asked that this item be brought back to the Panel when certain

milestones are reached. He stated that he wholeheartedly welcomes the study and feels that the river is underutilized.

Councillor O'Brien thanked the officer and commented that she is keen to see the river used for more things such as energy conservation and transport.

Councillor Appleyard noted that flood risk is mentioned and asked if the project is in a position to affect this. The officer responded that the project sits underneath the flood agency and that the project may look at localised surface water. Councillor Appleyard asked how business and leisure will be prioritised, the officer stated that a balance must be struck.

Councillor Macrae commented that this is a good project and a fantastic representation of partners working together. He asked that the officer bring the item back to the Panel if potential conflicts emerge.

Councillor Appleyard stated that the officer is invited to report back to Panel at the next stage (possibly July or September).

## **71 ARCHWAY CENTRE PROJECT UPDATE**

Stephen Bird, Head of Heritage Services gave a presentation to the Panel on the 'Archway Centre Project' (*copies of this presentation are saved with the agenda papers for this meeting*).

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor O'Brien commented that maybe video representations could be used more to generate an atmosphere.

Councillor Ball welcomed the presentation.

Councillor Appleyard asked about the buildings to the side and if there will be security of tenure. The officer responded that the buildings are currently occupied by retail and maintenance for the Roman Baths and there will be security of tenure.

Councillor Macrae stated that the project is fantastic and that we should say there are commercial interests involved. The officer stated that the commercial element won't be to the fore. He added that our role is as a public body but if sponsors can be involved then this will be taken up.

In response to a query on the funding by Councillor Blackburn, the officer reported that 90% of the funding is in place and there have also been offers of work in kind from Wessex Water for example. The foundation has had £30k in philanthropic gifts. A visit is planned for major developers and start-ups.

Councillor Appleyard asked about the increased capacity, the officer responded that currently 10 thousand children a year come to the venue but this plan would see the figure rise to 25 thousand.

Councillor Appleyard thanked the officer for the presentation and for the offer to show the Panel around the site.

**72 PANEL WORKPLAN**

Councillor Appleyard explained that he would be meeting with Directors and Cabinet Members to see what is coming forward and come back to the Panel with this information.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**