

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

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

Tuesday, 2nd August, 2011

**Present:-** Councillors Rob Appleyard (Chair), Steve Hedges (Vice-Chair), Les Kew, Barry Macrae, Brian Simmons, Will Sandry and Paul Fox

**Also in attendance:** John Betty (Strategic Director, Development & Major Projects), Derek Quilter (Divisional Director, Project Management, Major Projects) and Graham Sabourn (Associate Director, Housing and Health)

Councillor Tim Ball – Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning

Councillor Cherry Beath – Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development

#### **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**

There were none.

#### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

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**

There was none.

#### **7 HOUSING & MAJOR PROJECTS ROUTINE REPORT**

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the directorate was focused on delivering Sustainable Economic Growth as set out in the Economic Strategy of April 2010 and the Smart Economic Growth Cabinet paper of November 2010. The delivery of this is manifested through Business development and support, Regeneration and

Development projects, Housing Delivery and the continued delivery of Capital projects.

He added that there were significant challenges ahead in bringing forward development but there were also major opportunities through Bath City Riverside, Bath Western Riverside, Bath Quays South, Manvers Street, Norton Radstock Regeneration, MOD Sites, Keynsham, Somerdale and Temple Street. All of which could and should have significant ability to help the economic growth and development agenda. The Directorate is currently reviewing its capacity and organisation in order to respond to this agenda.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked if he felt he had enough resources and the backing of the new administration.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied yes, subject to a review currently underway or additional activities being required.

Councillor Cherry Beath, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development added that she was aware of the staff resources that were required and was very appreciative of the hard work that the officers do.

Councillor Barry Macrae commented that he would encourage the Panel to ensure the directorate does have the resources it needs.

Councillor Paul Fox asked what the current status on work relating to the West of England was.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that the West of England Partnership submitted a proposal to Government to form a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) covering the West of England area in September 2010. In October 2010 it was announced that the West of England was successful and that the Enterprise Zone would be in Bristol Temple Quarter. The LEP Board agreed to the establishment of Enterprise Areas – in Bath this would be Bath City Riverside - and should proceed with establishing its Board. He added that the purpose of the LEP is to support the delivery of sustainable economic growth and private sector jobs in the West of England.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects addressed the Panel on some of the Council's Major Projects.

### **Keynsham Town Hall:**

Further consultation and engagement with the local community about the regeneration of Keynsham town centre will take place in Autumn 2011. The timescale for the wider consultation is intended to allow the new Cabinet to consider options about the best way to deliver a well thought out scheme that will support the regeneration of Keynsham, including the Riverside building, take account of Somerdale and provide the best possible value for money for the local taxpayer. The public consultation will cover all elements of the scheme such as building design and materials, new streets and spaces, traffic and parking, and how the scheme will contribute to the wider regeneration of Keynsham town centre. A public consultation

is planned for Autumn 2011 with a view to submitting a planning application by the end of the year 2011.

Councillor Will Sandry commented that Public Realm activity appeared to be very much focussed on the city centre of Bath and called for more to be done for the district centres around the city. He asked if any of the new bike share facilities could be installed in the district centres.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that he believed the Civitas scheme was quite prescribed with what the Council were allowed to do with the funding, but added he was willing to look at further options.

### **Radstock Public Infrastructure:**

In addition to its own funding, the Council has secured investment support worth £800k from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to enable the improvements to the current road network to begin.

The Chairman commented that there appeared to be a great deal of concern over the proposed flow of traffic and suggested that any information that could be made public should be done as soon as possible.

Councillor Cherry Beath, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development commented that both she and Councillor Roger Symonds, Cabinet Member for Transport would be walking the route in the very near future and would endeavour to take on all views.

Councillor Les Kew wished to comment on the misconception that the improvements were subject to the development of the Norton Radstock Regeneration. He stated that they were not. He added that he felt that access from Hayden appeared to be the main problem and suggested a mini roundabout be inserted there.

The Chairman asked for Councillor Beath to update the Panel at their next meeting following her visit to Radstock.

### **Public Realm:**

Councillor Paul Fox stated that he believed we have one of the world's greatest cities and called for it to be looked after properly, in particular the pavements which he described as disgraceful.

### **Wellsway Sports Hall:**

Councillor Les Kew commented that he was appalled by the previous application made.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that the previous application had put the Council in a difficult position with regard to the Green Belt Policy. He added that consultation had now taken place with residents over three options for the hall and that a Planning submission was submitted on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011 for the aim of full Planning consent on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

### **Bath Western Riverside:**

Fifty affordable housing units should be ready for occupation in October 2011. Our Development Partner is in discussions with a Supermarket chain on the removal of the remaining Gas holders.

Councillor Will Sandry asked if there was any truth in the rumour that Crest had damaged a support to the Victoria Bridge.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that this was not true although excavation work had been carried out close to the supports.

Councillor Will Sandry asked who was in control of the re-opening of the bridge.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that the bridge requires significant general repairs before it can re-open and that it was the Council's role to repair it. He added that the Highways team and a lead engineer were working towards a solution and that Crest's role was to provide an enhancement to the bridge.

Councillor Les Kew asked if Crest would still be making a contribution of £2m given that the Bath Transport Package (BTP) has been hugely revised.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that the transport corridor remains and will need to be serviced. He stated there had been no challenge at present from Crest on this agreement.

### **Somerdale:**

Kraft is in the process of procuring a developer for the Somerdale site. They are currently assessing the Expressions of interest and will be shortlisting a number of developers to work up a more detailed proposal for selection in the Autumn 2011. An introductory meeting has been set up between representatives of Kraft, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development in August.

Councillor Steve Hedges suggested the Panel should receive some feedback from either the Leader or the Cabinet Member on that meeting in September.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked if the bids were broadly meeting the aspirations of the Council.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied yes.

### **MOD Sites:**

The MOD has confirmed that it is to vacate all three of its sites in Bath and move 2,600 jobs to the Abbey Wood complex in South Gloucestershire. The Council has expressed concerns over the economic and environmental impacts of these relocations and is seeking to address these and the future use of the three sites with the MOD through a Bath Sites Working Group.

Councillor Paul Fox asked who leads the Bath Sites Working Group.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that is led by the MOD and that the Council interfaces with them. He stated that the Council needs its own internal focus group that leads on formulating future plans for the sites.

### **Enterprise Area:**

The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has determined that Bristol Temple Quarter will be given a new designation as an Enterprise Zone. The Government will also offer a business rate holiday for new businesses starting in the zone and allow the LEP to retain business rates from new businesses. As part of this agreement 3 Enterprise Areas have also been agreed within the West of England. One of these is Bath City Riverside. This designation means that these areas will be the first to benefit from some of the financial gains from business rate retention accrued from the Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects suggested the Panel may wish to focus on this work area in future meetings.

Councillor Paul Fox commented that he would be happy for this element of work to be within the remit of the Panel.

### **Housing Delivey:**

The Government has put in place the New Homes Bonus. This is a new scheme which provides a financial incentive to Local Authorities for every home built and an additional bonus for affordable homes built - Bath and North East Somerset received £611,349 in its first allocation.

A new Affordable Rent Model (AR) is being implemented. Affordable rented homes will be made available to tenants by Registered Providers at up to a maximum of 80% of market rent and allocated in the same way as social housing is at present. Landlords will have the freedom to offer Affordable Rent properties on flexible tenancies tailored to the housing needs of individual households.

Councillor Will Sandry asked why the Homes and Communities Agency had pulled out of plans to develop a hostel at a cost of around £8m.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that he was unaware of any such proposal.

Councillor Will Sandry asked what the mechanism was within the Council that allowed the directorate to take control of a project.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that there was a very robust project initiation process that included aspects of budget and governance.

The Chairman asked how the New Homes Bonus would be reinvested.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that it would be a un-ring-fenced sum of money that would need to be debated politically as to its priority for spending.

The Chairman asked the Panel to think about its Policy Development role briefly with regard to both Affordable Rent and the New Homes Bonus.

The Associate Director for Housing & Health commented that the Panel will be receiving a report to its next meeting on the Strategic Tenancy Policy.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that they would endeavour to bring the Panel a more joined up report at the next meeting which would expand on the Housing detail.

Councillor Paul Fox suggested the Panel received a presentation in relation to Housing that showed the levers available to the Council.

The Chairman asked why the Council needed to ask for an extension of time when it was posed questions by the Core Strategy inspector.

The Strategic Director for Development & Major Projects replied that the inspector had a number of concerns relating to delivery, brownfield sites, growth levels, Transport Strategy and the Growth Agenda. A three month period was recommended to the Cabinet to allow for a measured response.

Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning commented that he felt the issue of traveller's sites should be properly addressed through an actual policy.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked if he could update the Panel on the planned hostel for James Street West.

Councillor Tim Ball replied that all plans for a hostel had been stopped as it was not feasible to invest £3m on such a project at this time.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked what the Council could do to aid the people that would have benefited from such a hostel. He suggested that both this Panel and the Wellbeing Panel looked at how provision could be enhanced.

Councillor Will Sandry supported this proposal as he believed that hostel provision was very important.

The Associate Director for Housing & Health replied that pathway solutions were now required to move this issue forward and that reports would be submitted to both Panels at the same time.

The Chairman stated that he was willing to meet with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Wellbeing Panel to discuss the matter. He asked the Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning if he would bring the options in relation to traveller's sites before the Panel

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning replied that he would.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and requested that they received a more focussed Housing report to its September meeting.

## **8 HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY**

Councillor Will Sandry asked for the report to be noted as the Cabinet had adopted the revised policy as a matter of priority on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that the Panel must maintain its role of overview.

The Associate Director for Housing & Health explained that normally a report such as this would have come to the Panel prior to a decision being made, but due to the removal of around £700,000 from the budget an urgent decision was required to be taken.

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

## **9 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

The Cabinet Members had nothing further to add from the contributions they had made during the debate on the previous agenda items.

## **10 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel.

Councillor Paul Fox asked if the Medium Term Service Plans and Service Action Plans would still be debated by the Panel in November and January.

The Chairman replied that yes they would.

Councillor Will Sandry asked for the Panel to receive a report on the quality of HMO accommodation (Houses of Multiple Occupancy).

The Chairman suggested that should form part of the report due in March 2012 in relation to the House Condition Surveys.

Councillor Brian Simmons asked if the Panel could look at flood mitigation.

The Chairman replied that the Planning, Transport & Environment Panel had been designated to lead on this work area.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree with the proposals made above.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**