

**REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
(OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Drinkwater (Vice Chairman), Mrs Eagland (Vice Chairman), Mrs Barnett, Mrs Fisher, Isaacs, Roberts, Mrs Richards, Smedley, Mrs Stanhope MBE, and Willis-Croft.

No apologies for absence were received.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillor Pritchard attended the meeting).

At the meeting on the 11th November 2014 the following matters were considered:

1. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

- 1.1 The Cabinet Forward Plan had been circulated and was considered in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee. It was asked what the next stages would be for the Friarsgate Development and it was reported that a report would be circulated to the Committee in January and then onto Cabinet.

2. WORK PROGRAMME

- 2.1 The Work Programme had been circulated and considered. Members wished to express hope that conservation area appraisals would be abided by.

3. EXAMINATION OF THE BASIS ON WHICH THE COMMENTS OF A PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL MAY RESULT IN AN APPLICATION BEING REPORTED TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 3.1 Members considered a report on the basis upon which comments of a Parish/City/Town Council may result in a planning application being reported to Planning Committee for determination and not dealt with under delegated authority. It was noted that at Council's Planning Committee on the 27th January 2014, it was resolved that the Economic Growth, Environment & Development (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee examine whether the procedure was effective or if the Council's Constitution needed amending.
- 3.2 It was reported that currently the Constitution stated that Officers would not have delegated authority to determine an application where significant objections had been received from a statutory consultee or Parish/Town Council and if this situation arose, the application would be determined by the Planning Committee. It was also reported that Officers would carry out an assessment on whether the objection was deemed significant or planning related and if in doubt, consult the Planning Committee Chairman

or Vice Chairman. The cost implications of taking applications to Planning Committee instead of delegated authority were also noted.

- 3.3 Members asked how many applications had been considered by Planning Committee this year of this nature compared to the number of applications received and it was reported that 1000 applications had been received with 50 going to Planning Committee and out of that 50, 18 due to significant objections from Parish/Town Councils. Members felt that this was not a significant enough number to warrant concern.
- 3.4 Members felt that cost should not be a barrier to democratic representation and believed the current process allowed this but was also a balanced approach with Officers ensuring objections were related to planning matters.
- 3.5 Members also felt that training was important and was disappointed that, although offered regularly to Parish and Town Councils, attendance levels were low.
- 3.6 Members considered how quickly information was sent to Parish/Town Councils and it felt that emailing information, as it arose, to Clerks could be beneficial as long as it did not risk appeals for non-determination. It was noted however that weekly planning application lists were published and easy to obtain.
- 3.7 Overall the Committee felt the current process was sufficient and there was no requirement to change the Constitution.
- 3.8 it was resolved that the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee recommend to the Planning Committee that no amendment be made to the Council's Constitution to the current officer delegation powers in relation to applications where a significant planning objection is raised by a Parish/Town Council. .

4. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

- 4.1 Members received a verbal update on the Local Plan. It was reported that Hearings had recently reopened and now concluded and it was expected that the Inspectors report would be released to the Council before Christmas.
- 4.2 It was reported that nationally Inspectors were keen to ensure Plans were legally compliant to avoid challenge and this appeared to be the case with Lichfield's Inspector in terms of the issues he wanted to examine and the way he approached the hearings.
- 4.3 When asked, it was reported that Officers had a positive feeling regarding the outcome of the hearings as the Inspector had not requested further detailed information or required the Council to undertake any additional work.
- 4.4 It was reported that once the Inspectors report was received and if found 'sound' the Plan would be recommended for formal adoption by the Council and then work would begin on the site allocations document. It was noted however that there would be a 6 week period after adoption when legal challenges could be received and Officers expressed the view that there is a likelihood that this could happen.
- 4.5 The information received was noted.

5. HS2 UPDATE

- 5.1 Members received a verbal update on the High Speed 2 Railway project., following a report presented to the 24th September Committee meeting. regarding the petitioning process.
- 5.2 Negotiations between the Council and HS2 Limited had continued to the point whereby on the 7th October the Council's Cabinet had decided, on the basis of various assurances given to it on matters pertaining to the Authority's petition, not to appear in front of the Select Committee on the scheduled date of 14th October. These assurances included a commitment from HS2 to route the line under the West Coast Main Line, South Staffs Railway and A38 at Streethay as opposed to over as per the original plans; re-configure the route to avoid two crossings of the Trent and Mersey Canal; a general lowering of the line; and the lowering of the line plus additional mitigation measures at Hints.
- 5.3 Whilst accepting the aforementioned, the Cabinet had however resolved to maintain its petition to allow it to continue negotiations on outstanding matters and support other petitioners in advancing their cases including other local authorities acting on behalf of a number of authorities in respect of route-wide issues eg. Noise, Transport etc.
- 5.4 It was reported that following the Cabinet's decision the Select Committee had been informed of the Council's position. Discussions on outstanding matters were now taking place or would take place in due course.
- 5.5 Members enquired as to the costs of the action. In response it was stated that the original indicative estimate which included appearing in front of the Select Committee was put at approximately £65,000. Costs had been incurred in petitioning but not as great as expected due to the fact that the Council had decided against appearing at the Select Committee. The Council would, as stated earlier, also be supporting other joint cases where some financial contributions were likely.
- 5.6 The information received was noted.

R. E. Cox
Chairman

Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee