

**ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT  
(OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE  
12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015**

**PRESENT**

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Richards.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors Pritchard and Wilcox attended the meeting).

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

There were no declarations of interest at this point of the meeting.

**MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the inclusion of Councillor Leytham as being present, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 as circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Cabinet Forward Plan had been circulated and was considered in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee. Members asked some questions around off street parking and it was noted that it could be 2-3 months before a new agreement with Stoke on Trent City Council was completed. It was agreed that a Briefing Paper should be circulated by June 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the Cabinet Forward Plan as circulated be noted.

**WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme had been circulated and considered. It was noted that there would be a new work programme for the forthcoming Municipal Year but there would continue to be certain standing items carried forward including Friarsgate and the Local Plan. In the light of the findings of the recent Peer Review Members expressed the need to look at how Overview & Scrutiny was carried out and the potential to change how the work programme was constructed. Members felt that there could be a possibility that the work programmes were more project driven with timescales included.

**RESOLVED:** That the Work Programme be noted.

## **CONSERVATION AREAS: ADOPTION OF ELFORD, HAMSTALL RIDWARE & MAVESYN RIDWARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS**

The Committee received a report on the results of the consultation on the draft Elford, Hamstall Ridware and Mavesyn Ridware Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, along with proposed additions to the Register of Buildings of Special Local Interest. It was noted that there had been a high amount of responses to the consultation.

Some Members felt that developers did not consider conservation as a priority and planning applications within conservation areas were submitted with no sympathy for the local area. It was asked if wording and ethos regarding development in conservation areas were carried through all policies including the Local Plan. It was noted that there was consistency between the Conservation Area Appraisals and the policies of the Adopted Local Plan and the guidance in the emerging Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on the Historic Environment. Members agreed that a conservation area designation did not mean that development could not take place, but that it must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the results of the consultation be noted and Cabinet and Full Council be recommended to approve the final appraisal and management plans; and

(2) That the properties proposed for addition to the Register of Buildings of Special Local interest be noted and recommended to Cabinet and Council for approval.

## **TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE (TH) PROGRAMME FOR FAZELEY AND BONEHILL**

The Committee received a report on the decision by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in relation to the Round One Application for Fazeley and Bonehill Townscape Heritage programme.

It was reported that the Committee had previously given its support for an application to be submitted to the HLF and that the project included £34,000 of match funding from the Historic Buildings grant. The HLF had visited the application site in October 2014 where representatives were given a tour and met with District and Town Councillors along with other stakeholders.

In January 2015 the District Council had been informed that its application had not been successful. Whilst the HLF acknowledged the heritage importance of the area in question it had concerns relating to the deliverability of the project. It was reported that Officers had requested more detailed feedback so Members could be better informed when deciding what to do next.

Members enquired about the success or otherwise of other applications. It was noted that there had been three applications from the West Midlands area with only one relating to a resubmitted application for Dudley Town Centre being successful. Officers agreed to find out details of all schemes submitted to the HLF and to pass this information to Committee members.

Members agreed that detailed feedback from the HLF would be helpful in understanding fully the reasons for the application not being successful. It was noted that the Council

would need to be realistic and know that there would be a possibility of a successful application before committing to making a resubmission.

The Committee conveyed their thanks and gratitude to all the Officers involved in the application.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the report be noted; and,

(2) That the Committee receive a further report providing detailed feedback from the HLF to allow consideration of potential further work relating to Fazeley and Bonehill Conservation Area.

## **PROGRESS ON SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPD)**

The Committee received a report on the state of progress of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which had been formulated with the help of Member Task Groups.

It was reported that draft versions of the Historic Environment, Biodiversity & Development and Sustainable Design SPDs were ready to go out for public consultation if the Committee was minded to agree.

Members requested that executive summaries be used to help the public understand the documents. It was reported that these could be included although it should not be at the risk of people not reading the whole documents.

Members asked if copies of the SPD's would be sent to external agencies that have dealings with Planning including the County Council and Environment Agency and it was reported that such agencies would be notified of the availability of the documents as part of the consultation.

Members wished to thank all Officers involved in creating the SPDs and helped the Member Task Groups. The Chairman thanked the Committee and the Task group Chairmen for their commitment and work.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That it be agreed that the draft SPD's on Biodiversity, Historic Environment and Sustainable Design be published for the purposes of public consultation; and

(2) That the progress in bringing forward supplementary planning documents across the range of identified topics be noted.

## **REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING DISCUSSIONS**

Members received a report on the outcome of a review into the effectiveness of the protocol for Member engagement in the pre-application planning discussions after one year of its operation. It was reported that Members were asked to comment on the effectiveness of the protocol and a total of 10 responses were received with the majority making positive comments.

It was reported that some critical points were made about the protocol including the afternoon timing of the meetings which was not convenient for working Members; planning training for non-Committee Members which was not considered essential for pre-application meetings; Ward members being able to call-in a pre- application

proposals and the lowering of the range of housing numbers, as especially in rural areas, as proposals of this amount could have significant local impacts.

Members agreed that seven day notice of meetings was not enough to allow Members to make arrangements to attend and it was agreed to increase this to 14 days.

Members asked if neighbourhood plans would have an impact and whether Parish Councils could be involved in the meetings. It was reported that developers would have to take neighbourhood plans into account, and they were already encouraged to engage with Parish Councils as a next step after the pre-application meetings. It was noted that this allowed developers to iron out any issues before meeting Parish Councils.

There was some discussion around the number of dwellings required for Member engagement in pre-application discussions. It was noted that it was currently 50 dwellings, although it could be reduced for development in rural areas if considered locally significant or controversial. It was also noted that Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Planning Committee Chairman/ Vice-Chairman, would determine if a reduced number of housing warranted Member engagement. Members felt this number should be reduced to 25 dwellings, with Officer discretion still allowed on schemes below this threshold if considered significant or controversial. Members felt this was a more appropriate number of dwellings, especially in rural areas.

Overall, the Committee felt the meetings were very useful and provided value for money by allowing many issues to be dealt with before an actual application was submitted.

**RESOLVED:** That approval of the protocol (attached at Appendix A) be recommended to the Planning Committee, subject to:

(1) The notice period for meetings being increased from 7 to 14 days; and

(2) The number of dwellings required for the protocol to be used be reduced from 50 to 25, with a review by this Committee in one year's time to the effectiveness of its operation..

## **LICHFIELD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: UPDATE**

Members received an update on the Local Plan. It was reported that the District Council had formally adopted the Local Plan Strategy at the Full Council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015. A legal challenge had duly been received on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015 by the same body that had challenged the plan whilst it was being prepared. Members noted this and asked what the costs of the challenge would be to the Council. Officers could not say. It was noted that there was a six week period for any legal challenge to be submitted and the deadline for this was 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

It was reported that the Duty to Cooperate and cross boundary issues were ongoing with discussions with Tamworth Borough and North Warwickshire Borough Councils. Discussions were also continuing with Birmingham City Council and Cannock Chase Council and work with the GBSLEP regarding three key pieces of work to inform the development of the GBSLEP Spatial Plan.

Neighbourhood planning was discussed and it was reported that Stonnall had formally submitted its plan to the District Council and it was currently the subject of consultation.

It was noted by the Committee that a proposed Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the update in relation to the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy, Neighbourhood Plan preparation and work to progress the Community Infrastructure Levy be noted.

#### **ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16**

Members received a report on the proposed activity and performance indicators for Development Services which would be reported to the Committee on a biannual basis.

Members felt that enforcement was an important area and requested a performance indicator in this area and it was agreed that it would be looked into.

Members requested current and past data on capacity to allow evaluation of the impact of reduced resources. Members also asked for historic performance indicators to be included.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **VOTE OF THANKS**

It was proposed, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That the sincere thanks of the Committee be recorded to all the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Officers for their work during the past year.

(The Meeting closed at 8.27pm)

CHAIRMAN