

ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT:

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Ball (Vice-Chair), Warfield (Vice-Chair), Mrs Baker, Mrs Eagland, Marshall, Smith and Mrs Stanhope MBE.

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

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Drinkwater and Mrs Fisher

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

25 INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Ball to the Committee and to role of Vice-Chairman. He reminded Members that the position would be ratified at Council in October but that Councillor Ball was acting in the role as of this moment. The Chairman also thanked Councillor Drinkwater for all his hard work and input as the previous Vice-Chairman and passed on the Committees well wishes to him and his wife.

26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

27 PRESENTATION BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Committee received a presentation from the Environment Agency (EA) on Planning and Flood Risk. They reported that they had two strategic roles in the Planning system which included advice on the Local Plan and Development control and detailed these in depth to Members.

It was reported that the EA expected Local Plans to have Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 with a preference to avoid flood risk or manage if factors means level 2 or 3 site are required for development.

It was then noted that the EA was a statutory consultee regarding planning applications. It was reported that the County Council was the lead local flood authority for certain types of water concerns like surface water drainage but the EA would comment on flood risks.

The EA presented what calculations they use when considering flood risks and what they expected developers to do to mitigate these risks. They reported that the two questions they pose when considering applications were will it firstly be "Made safe for its lifetime" and secondly "without increasing flood risk elsewhere". They then wished it to be noted that responding to planning consultations was not a simple yes or no but object to the principle or in the details of the application along with recommendations of planning conditions.

The Committee then asked questions and wanted reassurances that the models used were correct especially with changing data and the added complication of climate change. It was reported that uncertainties were written into the models.

Members then wanted to know what data sources were used to create flooding models and whether local knowledge was included. It was reported that information was taken from known flooding events and physical gauges and models were updated whenever the data changed. It was noted that anecdotal evidence should be used when collating site specific data and it would be investigated if this had not happened. The Committee suggested that a reporting mechanism with Parish Councils could be advantageous to the EA.

Members asked how often flooding zones were reviewed as there had been an instance where the Planning Committee had approved an application based on a 'no objection representation made by the EA only for the flood zone to change on the site soon after. Members expressed their concern that the Planning Committee were making decisions based on out dated professional advice. The EA committed to investigate when the zoning changed for the site in question and let Members know. They also agreed to look at why local knowledge had not been considered when initially giving their comments on the planning application. They did assure the Committee that the models now used suggested that the site was safe and reported that they would pass these models on to help reassure residents in the area.

Further concern was expressed regarding sewage works especially in the Fradley area and it was agreed that the EA would discuss these issues with Seven Trent Water on the Committee's behalf.

When asked, it was confirmed that dredging of rivers did not make a big enough positive impact and now the preferred method was to re-naturalise them as it was more environmentally friendly.

The Environment Agency was thanked for their attendance and their assistance to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the information given be noted.

28 PROPOSAL FOR A SMALL BUSINESS GRANT SCHEME

Committee received a report on the proposed small business grant scheme. It was reported that the scheme would award up to 50% grant funding ranging from £500 to £1500 and to qualify, existing businesses would have to have been trading for no more than three years or be persons looking to start a business in the district.

It was noted that other local authorities had already introduced similar schemes and it would aid meet the Council's Strategic Plan priority a vibrant and prosperous economy.

Members welcomed the proposals and felt it would encourage businesses to grow in the district. Reassurances were sought that robust monitoring would be undertaken to ensure the grants awarded were adding value. It was reported that a review of the use of the grant would be undertaken 6 months after being given. It was also reported that the applying business or individual would have to be a member of the Enterprise for Success programme which would ensure they received business advice and courses to help them make the best use of the grant given.

Members expressed a need to ensure there was no duplication with other forms of funding as it would allow all sectors of business to have the opportunity to receiving grants. It was noted that this was especially the case with business to consumer types.

There were concerns of what available resources there were to undertake the awarding of grants but were reassured that this had been taken into account when devising the scheme.

Members then requested that there be reviewable outputs written into the scheme to allow for robust monitoring and it was reported that there would be budget based and job creation targets and these could be reported back to the Committee.

The Committee expressed their disappointment at the sale of industrial units as they were a good model for business start up however accepted the reasons for their sale.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be recommended to approve the proposal for a Small Business Grant Scheme.

29 LOCAL PLAN AND RELATED SPATIAL POLICY MATTERS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the Local Plan. It was reported that the Local Plan Allocations document had recently been examined by the Planning Inspectorate at a public hearing and the Council was now awaiting the Inspectors report.

The Committee expressed their thanks to Mr Ashley Baldwin, Spatial Policy and Delivery Manager, and all Officers in his department for all the work they have undertaken at the examination hearing and overall for the whole process.

It was noted that the examination stage of the Allocations document had not ended and the Inspector had requested further information on a number of points including reliance on larger allocation sites. It was reported that a requirement for main modifications to the document was expected and if this was the case, these would be reported to Members

The results of the consultation on the Local Plan Review Scope, Issues and Option was noted as concluding on the 11th June 2018 and the responses received were included in the report. Feedback from the effectiveness of the consultation was also reported and the Committee was pleased to note that this would be taken on board for the next consultation which was due in January 2019. Members did request that mailshots were not used due to the cost. It was suggested that Mosaic be utilised if possible to help target specific demographics. It was also suggested that Councillors highlight the consultation when meeting with residents.

The use of greenbelt was discussed further and it was noted that the Council's position was not to use to accommodate housing and this was expressed at the examination hearing by both the Council's Counsel and Members speaking as witnesses. It was noted that some responses from the consultation had suggested that greenbelt be released however these were from owners of such sites. When asked, it was agreed that the Infrastructure Development Plan could be used to help prove sustainability of the proposed sites.

Duty to Cooperate was discussed and it was noted that this was continuing and a Statement of Common Ground would soon be forthcoming with Tamworth Borough Council.

The proposed new NPPF was noted and in particular, windfall sites. It was asked if a policy could be introduced to prevent back garden development and it was reported that the NPPF still leaned towards the presumption of development and so any policy would have to be very robust.

The housing need for Birmingham was discussed and the Committee still felt that all brownfield sites should be considered by that City Council before looking outside their area to need their need. It was noted that it could be the case that sites are not suitable for housing but for employment needs but Officers will continue to articulate this point with Birmingham

- RESOLVED:** (a) That the progress associated with the Local Plan Allocations and Local Plan Review be noted;
- (b) That the summary of representations received to the Local Plan Review Issues and Options consultation and the officer responses be noted;
- (c) That the need to review the content of the Statement of Community Involvement in more detail and subsequently present this to Cabinet to request permission consult on the proposed changes be noted;
- (d) That the recent progress in relation to neighbourhood plans within Lichfield District be noted.

30 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was considered and it was reported that an additional meeting had been provisionally scheduled for 21st November 2018.

It was noted that the item on Festivals and Events would be led by the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee however a report on the economic and tourism benefits of these events would be considered by this Committee.

It was noted that Councillor Marshall had agreed to Chair the BRS Member Working Group which would include Members across the Council and be cross party based. It was also reported that updates from the group would be fed back to this Committee and Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted and amended as agreed.

(The Meeting closed at 8.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN