

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 3 April 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman
Councillor Sue Ellington – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Alison Elcox
Jose Hales Lynda Harford
Bridget Smith Bunty Waters
Kevin Cuffley

Councillors Ray Manning and Nick Wright were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Alex Colyer Executive Director, Corporate Services
James Fisher S106 Officer
Graham Hughes Cambridge City Council
Jean Hunter Chief Executive
Jo Mills Planning and New Communities Director
Stephen Reid Senior Planning Lawyer
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Douglas de Lacey.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

55. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

56. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

57. GREATER CAMBRIDGE CITY DEAL - GOVERNMENT OFFER

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ray Manning presented the Greater Cambridge City Deal report. The Executive Director (Corporate Services) Alex Colyer and Graham Hughes from Cambridge City Council, were also in attendance for this item. The Leader of the Council updated Members following a round table discussion regarding the City Deal with the Deputy Prime Minister, which had taken place earlier in the day.

Governance was discussed:

- Members were informed that South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council would form a 'combined authority' to enable unified decision making regarding the City Deal.
- The Executive Director informed Members that a change in legislation by Government was required to create this 'combined authority', for the County Council's powers to be devolved for the geographical areas covered by South Cambridgeshire District Council and the City Council. This would take

- approximately one year.
- Until the combined authority was established, a joint committee would be formed to take forward the work on the City Deal and agree on projects in which the funding would be invested.
- Concern was raised over the political balance of the Executive Board, formed of three members of each authority alongside representatives from the LEP and University. Being a partnership, it was assumed that decisions would be reached by consensus. A Memorandum of Understanding would support the Executive Board's work.
- The 12 person 'Assembly' formed of three members of each authority, would have a scrutiny type function, holding the Executive Board to account as well as offering advice, and would represent the political balance of each authority.
- The aim was for the 'Assembly' to be formed by April 2015 and the combined authority to be operational by April 2016.

Further discussion ensued:

- Concern was raised over housing completion targets potentially being triggers for further funding, as housing supply was outside the Council's control. Members were assured that these targets would not hinder delivery of the funding and that all elements of the first funding 'trigger' were considered to be measurable and achievable.
- Members were informed that there may be the potential for the City Deal period to be extended by five years.
- It was highlighted to Members that the City Deal funding was new money and that other grants for infrastructure would still be available.
- Members were informed that the Government believed that their £500 million City Deal investment would bring a further £500 million of investment to the area from other sources.
- Members were informed that there were no targets in terms of carbon footprint and that key radial routes (A10 north and south, A428 and A1307 amongst other key routes) would receive significant improvements in terms of public transport, enabling easier access to Cambridge. The focus was likely to first be on public transport, with the aim to ensure access to Cambridge from the surrounding areas was effective and joined up. It was believed that this would attract both employers and workers to Cambridge.
- Concern was raised that a certain element of the workforce was being driven out of Cambridge due to high property prices. Members were informed that between the County Council and Cambridge University, who were both major land owners, it may be possible to find some exception sites for affordable housing.
- The transparency of the decision making process was queried. Members were informed that Full Council agreement would be needed from all councils before anything could be decided. Members were informed that there was still much work to be done in forming the governance structures and that the Leaders representing each of the three councils would need to be mandated. The expectation was that meetings would be held in public.
- The Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman proposed a joint scrutiny working party was formed, consisting of members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Partnerships Review Committee and Corporate Governance Committee, to monitor the Greater Cambridge City Deal and report back to Members. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **AGREED** that this should be investigated further and brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report and **SUPPORTED** the principles of the Greater Cambridge City Deal.

58. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) INFRASTRUCTURE LIST

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development, presented the report regarding the draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Infrastructure List.

The Section 106 Officer clarified that under the regulations, infrastructure items that appeared on the Draft Regulation 123 list could not, in addition, be funded through section 106 contributions. Exempting items from the Regulation 123 list would mean that funding contributions could be secured via s106 agreements.

Members were informed that the Draft Regulation 123 list outlined in the report would be subject to a six week public consultation and parish councils would be encouraged to propose any items of particular and significant importance to them, such that consideration could then be given as to whether it was suitable to add particular items to the Regulation 123 list.

Concern was raised over the public consultation potentially bypassing some parish councils, particularly smaller ones. Members proposed that all parish councils were written to regarding the importance of their participation in the public consultation on the Draft 123 Infrastructure list.

Members were informed that the Council did not want to restrict its ability to secure funding from other sources. Primary education was not included in the Draft Regulation 123 list and as such, contributions could (subject to the 'Rule of 5') be secured from s106 payments, irrespective of the size of the development for which the primary education contributions would be.

Following consultation on and finalisation of the Regulation 123 list, this list could be amended at any time. However any amendments would be subject to public consultation. It was proposed that once the Regulation 123 list was finalised, it would be reviewed after two years, but it could be reviewed sooner if circumstances warranted particular amendments.

Members were apprehensive that CIL did not generate the same level of funding for parish councils as traditional s106 agreements. That was a particular concern to the Local Member for Sawston due to the large number of houses being proposed through the Local Plan. The Planning and New Communities Director suggested that the three Sawston developments could be treated in the same way as the strategic developments i.e exempt them entirely from CIL and secure all infrastructure through a section 106 agreement.

Neighbourhood Plans were discussed. Members were informed that parishes would receive a larger CIL contribution if they had a Neighbourhood Plan. The misconception of the purpose of Neighbourhood Plans by some parish councils was discussed, with some seeing such a plan as a means to preventing development within their parish when the purpose was to enhance development. Members of the committee advised that this needed to be communicated more clearly to parish councils. It was suggested that an invitation to find out more about Neighbourhood Plans should be put in the Parish Bulletin.

Members were informed that feedback on CIL from other local authorities had been used to inform the Council's own strategy and approach to CIL. Feedback had been used from Huntingdonshire District Council and developers in Huntingdonshire, where

CIL had been in place since 2012. This feedback helped inform the proposal being recommended, where strategic sites such as Northstowe were exempt from CIL.

Officers were asked whether parish councils had a duty to cooperate with each other and were informed that they did not. Members proposed that this was looked at, to which officers agreed.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

(a) **AGREED:**

- That communication to parish councils regarding CIL should be refined in order to avoid misconceptions and ensure they had the greatest opportunity/encouragement to respond fully to the consultation, and to ensure that parish councils could put forward specific infrastructure of strategic importance, as items they particularly wanted to see included as part of the Regulation 123 list.
- That communication was needed with parish councils to clarify the purpose of Neighbourhood Plans and the benefits in terms of CIL contributions of having such a plan.
- That Sawston developments should come under Section 106 rather than CIL and that this should be amended in the report to Cabinet.

(b) **NOTED** the infrastructure items highlighted on the CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule

(c) **RECOMMENDED** the draft Regulation 123 infrastructure list to Cabinet.

59. CONSERVATION SERVICE REVIEW

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development, presented the report updating Members on the Conservation and Urban Design Service Review and highlighted some of the fundamental changes which have enabled a streamlining of the service.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman thanked officers for their prompt answers to queries submitted by Councillor de Lacey in advance of the meeting.

Discussion ensued, with concern raised regarding the outsourcing of consultants:

- The Director of Planning and New Communities clarified that the service was being kept in-house but while there were vacant posts in the service undergoing recruitment, consultants may be needed to cover the workload until a full complement of permanent in-house staff had been recruited. Members were informed that whilst the service would be kept in-house, specialist external resources may be brought in to supplement the new in-house service at times of peak activity, in order to prevent over burdening of staff.
- The Committee was informed that Essex Design consultants had been used to support the existing service for two weeks, while candidates were being interviewed for vacant posts.
- Members were also informed that a consultant had been working with the Council for one year and a second interim consultant since October 2013.

Members were informed that working with neighbouring local authorities would be piloted, but that the restructure of the service would be completed before considering a shared service with another authority.

The Committee sought assurance that the service was being restructured in order to create something completely new, consisting of posts with different job descriptions and remits. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development assured the Committee that this was the case.

Charging for a same day emergency service (£100 charge) and an initial view pre-application service for listed building proposals (£350 charge), was discussed:

- Concern was raised that members of the public may be reluctant to seek advice early on due to these charges.
- The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development and the Director of Planning and New communities assured Members that positive feedback on these charges had been received from agents; the charges were considered very reasonable.
- Feedback from other local authorities was that premium services which members of the public paid for had been working very well.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **ENDORSED** the measures to support implementation of the new Urban Design and Conservation Consultancy Team.

60. SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Chairman presented the draft Scrutiny and Overview Annual Report and informed Members that the Chairman's Foreword would be added to the report before it went to Full Council. Members confirmed that they agreed with the contents of the report and had no comments to add.

61. WORK PROGRAMME 2014

The report regarding the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's Work Programme was presented. Members agreed with the contents of the scoping documents contained within the report regarding the areas for potential scrutiny and the proposed next steps.

62. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Bridget Smith provided a verbal update following the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder's meeting:

- Ten vacant posts were being filled in the Planning Department. Some posts had been advertised with a market supplement, which could be applied for 12 months and then reviewed.
- Heritage guardianships design had been discussed and resolved at the meeting.

Councillor Alison Elcox informed Members that there had not been a Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder's meeting in the last year, and requested officers raise this with the Portfolio Holder.

63. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the next scheduled meeting date was Thursday 3 July 2014, at 6pm.

The Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.
