

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 10 September 2019 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Anna Bradnam Dr. Martin Cahn
Nigel Cathcart Graham Cone
Dr. Claire Daunton Geoff Harvey
Peter McDonald Judith Rippeth

Councillors Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Bridget Smith, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Victoria Wallace Scrutiny and Governance Adviser
Stephen Kelly Joint Director of Planning and Economic
Development
Caroline Hunt Planning Policy Manager
David Ousby Head of Commercial Development & Investment

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ruth Betson, Dr Douglas de Lacey, Sarah Cheung Johnson and Steve Hunt.

The Chairman informed the committee that due to new work commitments, Councillor Gavin Clayton had resigned from the committee. Councillor Nigel Cathcart replaced him as a member of the committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Grenville Chamberlain declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 5, Bourn Airfield Supplementary Planning Document, as the Local Member representing Hardwick.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee authorised the Chairman to sign as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2019.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5. BOURN AIRFIELD SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development and Planning Policy Manager presented the report which set out the main issues raised during the public consultation on the Bourn Airfield New Village Supplementary Planning Document, and officers' response to these.

The committee considered and commented upon the summary of representations made

during the public consultation on the draft SPD, which the committee noted reflected the concerns it had raised during its consideration of the draft SPD in May 2019. The main points discussed were as follows.

A letter was received from Bourn Parish Council in advance of the meeting, raising concerns regarding lack of direct access to the A428, the transport modelling in the Local Plan and traffic volumes estimated by the developers. Officers informed the committee that all the issues raised in this letter had already been considered and responded to by officers.

Councillor Tumi Hawkins addressed the committee as the Local Member representing Caldecote. She supported the comments made by Bourn Parish Council in their letter and set out her own concerns regarding:

- The current problem with congestion in Caldecote.
- The lack of direct access to the A428.
- The treatment of the separation between the new village and Caldecote.
- That the SPD should not allow any housing in the north east corner of the Major Development Site.

The committee expressed concerns that the lack of a junction providing access to the A428 would lead to rat running through surrounding villages; the committee emphasised the need to protect villages from this.

The committee was informed by the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development, that there was no policy requirement in the Local Plan for a new junction providing direct access to the A428, and a need for this had not been identified by Highways England. While committee members were still concerned that proposals did not include direct access to the A428, the committee acknowledged that this was in line with the policy of the approved Local Plan and with which the SPD had to be consistent. The committee was informed that these concerns could be addressed at the planning application stage.

The committee was informed by the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development that the transport modelling used had been updated to reflect the latest known situation and took traffic growth rates into account.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the Council's policy, which was in line with national policy, to achieve zero carbon and as such, car dependency needed to be discouraged. It was recognised that the location of Bourn Airfield New Village was an issue due to its distance from employment sites, however making car use easier went against the zero carbon policy. Committee members acknowledged this and highlighted the need for public transport options to be available from the outset for new developments. Committee members pointed out that the use of public transport needed to be made easy and appealing for residents in order for them to use it. Committee members also suggested that employment should not be constrained at Bourn Airfield.

Regarding the lack of access to the A428, some members suggested that provision should be made for flexibility to allow for this, as more people would be moving to low carbon and electric vehicles. In future the issue would therefore not be about carbon but about congestion.

Committee members suggested the Wildlife Trust should be engaged with at an early stage in the development of Bourn Airfield New Village, regarding the management of the wildlife centres. The benefits of this approach had been seen at Trumpington

Meadows.

Regarding the provision of a health centre, it was suggested that having separate health centres at Bourn and Cambourne may be counter intuitive; by having one large centre, more services such as minor surgery for example, could be offered on site in future.

The committee received and noted the report and drew Cabinet's attention to its comments.

6. CORPORATE ASSET PLAN

The committee considered and discussed the Corporate Asset Plan which was presented by the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance and the Head of Commercial Development and Investment. It had been a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Corporate Asset Register since 2007.

Committee members were pleased to see the intention to manage and maintain property was reflected in the asset plan, and that there was a maintenance programme. The Deputy Leader of the Council highlighted the need to and importance of optimising the opportunities presented by the Council's assets while recognising the responsibility to actively manage these. Committee members pointed out the potential insurance liability from not properly managing and maintaining the Council's assets. Cabinet was receiving ongoing training on asset management. The Leader highlighted the need for a properly joined up asset management strategy which looked at the Council's assets in their entirety and not in isolation. The committee felt that more emphasis should be given to the community benefit of some of the Council's property.

Committee members suggested that consideration should be given to how the Council's assets could be used to support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and that more reference to this should be made in the plan. The Head of Commercial Development and Investment informed the committee that the Council was looking at how it could deliver flexible and shared work space at Northstowe for SMEs. Support for emerging businesses was also being looked at in the Council's Investment Strategy and through further potential acquisitions at the Science Park and other areas, where market failure in the supply of suitably sized affordable business space had been identified.

Subject to the incorporation of this in the plan, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee supported the adoption of the Corporate Asset Plan.

7. INVESTMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received a report which presented a refreshed version of the Investment Strategy. During its consideration of this, committee members raised the following:

- Ethical investment needed to be ensured; the policies of the businesses that were the Council's tenants needed to be considered to ensure they were not involved in activities that the Council did not support. In particular, the Council should have no involvement with any company involved in child labour anywhere in the world. The Head of Commercial Development and Investment assured the committee that this was considered and was addressed in the investment criteria definitions. The Head of Commercial Development and Investment informed the committee that the profile of potential tenants was looked at closely to ensure they were not involved in

contentious activities which the Council did not support. He informed the committee that the Council did not have the power to control who an existing tenant could reassign a lease to and could not object to a business carrying out a legitimate business activity.

- Concern was raised regarding the assumption that the value of property would not go down, particularly given the current uncertain national political climate.
- The committee queried how it could protect against another organisation's poor performance hindering or preventing the Council from being able to fulfil its commitments. In response to this the Head of Commercial Development and Investment informed the committee that scoring was undertaken and capacity to deliver was considered.
- The committee was informed by the Head of Commercial Development and Investment that a net yield of over 5% was sought from investments. The future yield of an investment was projected.
- The committee queried whether 3% provision of voids was adequate. The Head of Commercial Development and Investment advised the committee that this was adequate as the longest void period in Cambridge was currently nine months.
- Committee members raised concern that the assumption was that property value would not reduce, particularly during the current national political climate. The Head of Commercial Development and Investment reassured the committee that the Council was getting a return on investment through the rental market and not capital growth, so provided properties were tenanted this was not an issue. Only properties that would deliver a return were invested in. The Leader also informed the committee that Cambridge was starting to see a situation, which was also occurring in London, where the land value of commercial sites was exceeding that of residential land, therefore commercial investment was safer than investment in residential housing.

Subject to the incorporation of the committee's comments regarding ethical investment, the committee supported the adoption of the refreshed Investment Strategy.

8. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received and noted its work programme.

9. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted that its next meeting would take place on Thursday 17 October 2019. Due the large number of scheduled agenda items, the meeting would start at the earlier time of 3pm.

The Meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.
