

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Tuesday, 9 June 2020 at 5.20 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chair  
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	Anna Bradnam	Dr. Martin Cahn
	Sarah Cheung Johnson	Graham Cone
	Dr. Claire Daunton	Dr. Douglas de Lacey
	Geoff Harvey	Steve Hunt
	Peter McDonald	Richard Williams

Councillors Heather Williams, Bunty Waters, Deborah Roberts, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:	Liz Watts	Chief Executive
	Victoria Wallace	Scrutiny and Governance Adviser
	Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
	Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
	Susan Gardner Craig	Interim Director of Corporate Services
	Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy
	Paul Frainer	Assistant Director (Strategy & Economy)
	Hana Loftus	Special Projects Officer
	David Ousby	Head of Commercial Development & Investment
	Jennifer Perry	Residents Involvement Team Leader

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nigel Cathcart and Judith Rippeth.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Grenville Chamberlain declared a non-pecuniary interest and informed the committee that his company owned two properties that were close to the North East Cambridge site.

Councillor Douglas de Lacey informed the committee that he had a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 11.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record of the meeting, subject to political party names being removed. The committee agreed that rather than referring to a party title, only the name of the councillor would be referred to.

The committee was informed by the Vice Chair that the ICT documents requested by the committee at its March 2020 meeting, had been issued.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

**5. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2020-2023**

The Lead Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the Resident Involvement Strategy, which the Head of Housing Strategy presented.

The Head of Housing Strategy set out the measures implemented to contact tenants and for tenant engagement to ensure tenants had a voice; the importance of which had been highlighted by Grenfell Tower.

Committee members considered and commented on the Resident Involvement Strategy which they welcomed.

Committee members were pleased to see that there would be tenant representative elections as this reflected what tenants had wanted. Members suggested that the methods and process for the tenant elections be considered carefully to ensure good representation. Officers informed the committee that this would be promoted as much as possible to generate interest from tenants and the tenant representative election process was explained.

The committee discussed whether an additional council member should be added to the Housing Board and agreed that this should remain at three councillors but suggested there should be cross-party representation.

The committee was informed by the Head of Housing Strategy that the Housing Board had a scrutiny function and this would be made clearer in the Resident Involvement Strategy.

The Resident Involvement Team Leader explained to the committee the process of recruitment of the Housing Board and informed the committee that one to one discussions would take place with tenants to try and identify potential members of the Board. Social media would also be used to encourage individuals to come forward as potential Board members. She explained that a lot of work would be needed to bring candidates forward.

Committee members suggested that a simplified version of the Resident Involvement Strategy be developed for tenants and leaseholders, which the Head of Housing Strategy agreed to investigate.

The Scrutiny and Overview suggested the strategy be reviewed after 12 months.

**6. NORTH EAST CAMBRIDGE AREA ACTION PLAN: DRAFT PLAN FOR CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18)**

The Deputy Leader introduced the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP) which Planning Policy Officers presented.

Officers informed the committee of the following:

- Officers explained the complexities, opportunities and development potential of the North East Cambridge Site.
- The AAP was predicated on the relocation of the waste water treatment works.
- The ambitious and forward-looking vision for North East Cambridge, which would be consulted on. The emphasis was on creating a low carbon district with sustainability at its core.
- Officers were looking at best practice in sustainable development both nationally and internationally, such as for example how different streets and spaces were managed in the Netherlands.
- Officers informed the committee that the key principles of the AAP were planning for streets rather than roads and that the car was not being planned for as car use was being actively discouraged on the site. No additional parking spaces were being created and there would be much less parking per home than normal. This was unique in the UK. Officers were mindful of the risks of parking displacement and were exploring parking enforcement for the site.
- There would be a phased approach to development and parking reduction across the site.
- The committee was informed that parking on the Science Park was significantly under-utilised and officers were proposing it was reduced and dispersed across North East Cambridge. Officers were discussing this with the owners of the Science Park to negotiate relinquishing parking from their tenants.
- Although a walkable, cyclable neighbourhood was being promoted, officers informed the committee that access to a vehicle was not being prevented as access to shared use vehicles and car barns was being considered. The infrastructure would be in place, so residents did not need a car when they moved in to the development.
- 20,000 jobs would be created, which were in addition to the existing jobs within the AAP area.
- There would be around 8000 homes with 40% affordable homes.
- Land was safeguarded in case a secondary school was needed.
- There was a strong emphasis on community, recreation and cultural facilities.
- This was a unique opportunity to take advantage of the scale and location of the site.
- A sense of place would be created through mixed use development. Officers wanted to ensure a lively mixed-use area was created, which went beyond the hours of 9am-5pm. The cultural place making strategy detailed this and would be available as part of the consultation.
- North East Cambridge would contribute to the strategic needs reflected in the emerging joint Local Plan.
- Chesterton Bridge would be a key cycle route to the site and provide access to the city rather than via Milton Road.

The committee considered and commented on the AAP:

- Members congratulated officers on the aspirations of the AAP.
- Committee members raised concern about shared use paths for cyclists and pedestrians and the potential conflict between users, particularly considering the increased use of electric bikes and scooters. Officers informed the committee that there would be segregated paths on the main streets through the development and shared paths on the secondary routes due to the more limited space. Officers were considering how to plan for electric bikes and electric scooters, which it was anticipated would be legalised in future, and were looking at speed limits on shared use paths. Amendments would be made to the plan to address mobility scooters. Officers would also investigate the powers the Council had in relation to shared use paths.
- In response to concerns raised about the potential conflict between users of shared paths, the committee was informed that as the car was not being planned for in the AAP, space would be freed up for other users and reduce the conflict between users of shared paths.
- Committee members noted the active discouragement of car use and the reduced parking provision but queried how parking would be enforced to prevent parking displacement. Officers acknowledged that a comprehensive approach to the parking management and enforcement was needed. Officers were looking at good practice elsewhere and were engaging with officers across both councils and the highways authority.
- Committee members emphasised the need for a sense of place to be created and that developers needed to be brought onboard with these concepts.
- Committee members expressed concern regarding green space and emphasised the need for enough of this to be provided within the development to allow families space to play without having to leave the development.
- Members highlighted and expressed concern about the potential impact on neighbouring green space such as Milton Country Park, if insufficient green space was provided in the development. Officers informed the committee that they had been talking to the community about these requirements and that there were large areas of open space in the AAP. Officers explained the four levels of open space provision in the development.
- The committee was informed by officers that open spaces needed to be mixed use, flexible and serve the needs of the people living and working in the area. Officers assured the committee that they did not want increased pressure and footfall from the development to destroy the existing habitats of neighbouring green spaces such as Milton Country Park.
- In response to the concerns raised about the potential impact of the development on Milton Country Park, officers informed the committee that they had been engaging with the operators of Milton Country Park who were members of the NEC community forum. The committee was assured that the existing green spaces neighbouring the development had the capacity to cater for the potential increased use by future North East Cambridge residents.
- Committee members queried access to and parking at Cambridge North

Station and emphasised that the station served the villages to the north east of Cambridge. Officers assured the committee that existing station users who travelled to the station by car, had been considered. More efficient parking such as multi-storey parking provision was being considered. Members were assured that the road infrastructure would be sufficient to deal with the traffic travelling to the station.

- Some concern was raised that discouraging car use may be unrealistic as residents may want to access more green space than the development and Milton Country Park could offer and would want to travel further afield to do so. Officers assured the committee that they fully acknowledged the need to work with Milton Country Park so that it was able to accommodate the potential increased number of users from North East Cambridge.
- Officers noted a request from the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing to consider running a sewerage pipe to the Chesterton Fen travelling community.
- Officers noted concern raised by the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing regarding surface water drainage and infiltration, that the ground would not be able to cope with this. In response to this concern, officers informed the committee that they were confident with the infiltration proposals.
- Officers informed the committee that the area by the River Cam would be set aside for biodiversity and landscape enhancements.
- Concern was raised by committee members that the development needed to be carbon zero or carbon negative if zero carbon targets were to be met. Officers informed the committee that the climate change standards in relation to the housing were higher than government standards but were not net zero carbon. Officers expected that over the life of the NEC AAP, there would be exemplar sustainable development and requirements and policies would be reviewed and modified on an ongoing basis to address issues and realise benefits.
- In response to a query regarding the decarbonisation of the energy grid, officers informed the committee that they were looking at a local network of alternative energy generation such as ground source heat pumps and anaerobic digestion. This was part of the energy masterplan.
- Members were pleased to see acknowledgement that the site was in an area of water stress, however there was concern that the targets for water efficiency may not be enough to ensure sustainability of the water supply. Officers informed the committee that work was ongoing on the water cycle study and to understand how water consumption could be reduced across the site. Several options and measures were being considered to help reduce water consumption.
- Members highlighted the importance of making this a place where older people also felt comfortable to live. Officers informed the committee that they were looking at the full range of demographics for the site, which included the housing requirements for those aged over 55.
- Members queried whether thought had been given to providing individual or collective space for homeworking. Officers informed the committee that they were monitoring the potential implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on requirements for new office floor space and the potential for increased home working.

- Officers were seeking to facilitate fast broadband and open wi-fi on the site. There was a separate workstream which addressed digital connectivity and utility providers, and Smart Cambridge was being engaged with regarding aspirations for the site. Open wi-fi also formed part of the sustainable transport measures so that users could connect to the different modes of transport through smart technology and access timetables while on the go.

Subject to the committee's comments being considered, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

1. Recommended to Cabinet that the name of the AAP be formally changed to the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan and the boundary of the AAP be amended to be as shown on the new policy map at appendix A.
2. Noted the response to comments received to the issues and options document as set out in the Statement of Consultation.
3. Noted the findings of the updated Joint Equalities Impact Assessment, Draft Sustainability Appraisal, Draft Habitats Regulation Report.
4. Recommended to Cabinet that it approved the draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan and supporting documents for a 10 week public consultation.

## **7. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented the Quarter Four Operational Key Performance Indicator Report which the committee considered.

In response to concern raised by committee members regarding the amount spent on bed and breakfast accommodation, the Lead Cabinet Member informed the committee that this had increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council would receive some housing benefit back from this.

Regarding the average call answer time KPI, committee members requested the figures included a standard deviation so that they were meaningful.

Committee members requested a report for the next committee meeting, on the impact of home working on the Council's performance, productivity, staff wellbeing and the CO2 saved. The Chief Executive agreed to draft a report. The Chief Executive informed the committee that the Council had undertaken two staff surveys since staff had been working from home and this data would be shared in the report.

The Chief Executive informed the committee that based on the feedback from the staff surveys, experiences of working from home varied amongst staff with some enjoying working from home and working effectively doing so whereas others had found this more difficult for reasons such as having caring responsibilities. Others had also suffered

through isolation. Staff had fed back that they had felt well supported at home and many would like to continue to work from home after the office had reopened.

The Head of HR and Corporate Services informed the committee that staff sickness had been monitored throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time there had been a reduction in staff sickness. This could be due to the lack of spread of general germs as staff were working from home and due to staff playing less sport during lockdown. There was concern however that staff had been working when they were not well enough to do so, because there were at home. Managers were monitoring this.

The Chief Executive informed committee members that staff were remaining connected using Microsoft Teams on which they could call or chat with each other easily. Thought was being given to create informal spaces for staff to meet virtually and communicate informally.

Committee members noted the report and commended staff for keeping services going during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted its work programme.

#### **9. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 5.20pm.

#### **10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The committee agreed that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 11 (Potential Property Investment Decision). This was in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act). Paragraph 3 refers to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

#### **11. POTENTIAL PROPERTY INVESTMENT DECISION**

Councillor Douglas de Lacey declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to this item and left the meeting before the item was discussed.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report which the committee discussed in detail in confidential session.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee did not support Cabinet proceeding with this investment.

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**The Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.**

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