

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders' Meeting held  
on  
Friday, 19 June 2009 at 2.00 p.m.

Portfolio Holders: Dr DR Bard and NIC Wright

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Mrs VM Barrett

Opposition spokesmen JF Williams

Also in attendance: NN Cathcart, Dr DR de Lacey, Mrs JM Guest, RMA Manning, DC McCraith, Mrs BZD Smith, Mrs HM Smith and TJ Wotherspoon

### **Officers:**

Jonathan Dixon	Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport)
Caroline Hunt	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Gareth Jones	Corporate Manager, Planning & Sustainable Communities
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, New Communities
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer

## **1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2009 were a correct record, and signed them accordingly.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor NN Cathcart declared a personal interest because he lives close to one of the sites under discussion, in Bassingbourn.

## **3. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (GTDPD): ISSUE AND OPTIONS 2 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking agreement to consult the general public and relevant organisations about the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document Issues and Options 2 - Site Options and Policies, and supporting documents.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) gave a short PowerPoint presentation, explaining the process to date. He said that public consultation would take place over 13 weeks between 10 July 2009 and 9 October 2009. This period was longer than usual, but took into account timing of the consultation period in August, during which months many interested parties could be away.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder stated that he was minded to allow all sites listed in the report to go forward to consultation, as proposed. Representations would be possible in a number of ways, including online, and any new proposed sites would be consulted upon in early 2010. Council would agree on the plan to be submitted to the Secretary of State in Autumn 2010, prior to it being subject to public examination.

Councillor RMA Manning, in attendance not as Leader of the Council but as a local Member, suggested that consideration be given to the idea of allowing one or two transit plots on each pitch or site, to be managed by one of the residents there. This might encourage greater personal responsibility and instil in Travellers a sense of ownership. Councillor Manning also urged a closer relationship between the location of new Traveller sites and existing medical facilities, and the availability of funding, through Section 106 Legal Agreements, from developers. On this last point, the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) confirmed that the GTDPD would assist the accepted principle of Section 106 funds being available for schemes connected with the main development.

Councillor NN Cathcart referred to the relatively small number of proposals coming forward, clustered in particular parts of the district but not in others. He questioned the vigourousness of the search for possible sites, and expressed disappointment that the proposals related mainly to publicly owned land only. Equality of application was important. He expressed concern at the extent of the consultation period, given the complexity of planning issues in Bassingbourn and the level of concern locally. In reply, the New Communities Portfolio Holder said he would consider carefully the suitability of private land that might be identified during the public consultation exercise. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Housing) added that proposals had to be deliverable and that, at this stage, public land offered a greater potential for that. Responding to concern at the likely timescales involved in seeking private land, the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) reminded members that the Council would have to consult on any new options coming forward as a result of initial consultation.

Councillor Dr DR de Lacey expressed concern at options within proposed new developments, implications for Section 106 monies, and possible developer resistance. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Housing) said that Traveller site provision would be dealt with alongside a requirement for affordable housing. Phasing of provision was crucial.

Members noted that Cambridge City Council was also addressing the issue of new Traveller sites.

Councillor SM Edwards noted that current Traveller site options seemed to be concentrated in areas to the north of Cambridge. He wondered whether compulsory purchase was an avenue open to South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) stated that while the Council could use compulsory purchase powers, they had to be essential in the circumstances and justifiable. On the point about the apparent grouping around villages to the north of Cambridge, the New Communities Portfolio Holder said that some other villages, for example in the southeast of the district, did not meet all the criteria, including the availability of local shopping and medical facilities.

Councillor Bridget Smith was worried about the impact on local schooling and public perception. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) confirmed that the local education authority was aware of the GTDPD process.

Councillor Hazel Smith urged officers to keep the residents of the Blackwell Traveller site informed about proposals to return that site to its previous status of a transit site. Communication would have to be handled with care given the likely availability or otherwise of key parties during August. Another issue to address should be business use on pitches. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) assured members that all of these issues were already being dealt with.

Councillor DC McCraith raised the issue of flooding. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) referred members to the Environment Agency's flood zone maps.

Councillor TJ Wotherspoon noted that members had visited existing Traveller sites in South Cambridgeshire, and urged officers to arrange member site visits to Traveller sites in other parts of the country as well.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder then invited statements from members of the public and parish councils present. Points made included:

- Equality and fairness was essential
- Option sites should be visited to assess their local impact
- Options, including those in Cambourne, should be detailed
- The danger of developer resistance
- Perceived double standards
- The Council should re-double its efforts to identify private land
- Implications for law and order
- Impact on local infrastructure and services
- Responsibility for addressing any resultant flooding issues
- The appropriateness of certain options
- The need to review the search in the southeast of the district

Concluding the debate, the New Communities Portfolio Holder **agreed** for public consultation

- (i) Issues and Options 2 - Site Options and Policies (Appendix 1 to the report)
- (ii) Technical Annex (Appendix 2)
- (iii) Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 3)
- (iv) Further Addendum to Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Appendix 4) and
- (v) Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 5).

The New Communities Portfolio Holder **delegated** any further technical amendments to the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities).

#### 4. FORWARD PLANS

This item was noted.

#### 5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' meeting would take place on Tuesday 7 July 2009, starting at 10.00am.

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**The Meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.**

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