

**POLICY SCRUTINY GROUP
10TH JULY 2018**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
The Vice-chair (Councillor K. Harris)
Councillors Brookes, Gerrard, Hamilton, Murphy,
Paling, Parton, Shepherd and Smith

Councillor Fryer (Chair of the Performance
Scrutiny Panel)
Councillor Barkley (Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and
Property Services)
Councillor Mercer (Cabinet Lead Member for
Housing)
Councillor Vardy (Cabinet Lead Member for
Planning, Inward Investment and Tourism
Strategy)

Head of Landlord Services
Head of Planning and Regeneration
Team Leader Local Plans
Procurement Manager
Corporate Improvement and Policy Officer
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (MH)

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2018 were confirmed as correct record and signed.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures of interests were made.

3. DECLARATION OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

4. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY PROCEDURE 11.17

No questions had been submitted.

5. PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

The Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Improvement and Policy Officer provided a verbal update on the current position regarding the work of the Performance Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Improvement and Policy Officer described the changes that had been made to enable performance information to be reported to the Panel more quickly and the matters that had been scrutinised by the Panel.

The Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Panel and members of the Group expressed disappointment that a recent Panel meeting had been inquorate.

RESOLVED

1. that the information be noted;
2. that future updates include information about the outcomes of the Panel's work as well as its activities.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To provide the Group with more information regarding the work of the Performance Scrutiny Panel.

6. SINGLE LOCAL PLAN

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration, enabling the Group to review the development of a new Single Local Plan, was submitted (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Planning, Inward Investment and Tourism Strategy, the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Team Leader Local Plans assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The Council had collected evidence regarding the delivery of housing from sites that had been identified for development. That evidence showed that the Council had identified sufficient sites but that it had not been possible to deliver the planned number of houses within the plan period. The Council was therefore considering how much committed development would be delivered with the period of the new plan, ie to 2036. Some of the housing in the sustainable urban extensions identified in the Core Strategy would be delivered after 2036.
- (ii) The Council could consider different scenarios to address possible issues regarding the delivery of planned sites. With a low growth scenario there was a risk that the Council could not sustain a five year housing land supply. A high growth scenario would provide the Council with more

flexibility and control but could result in more houses being provided than were needed. Over the next year the Council would calculate the amount of new housing that was needed. Reserve sites could then be identified if development of the sites identified to deliver that housing was delayed.

- (iii) It was not necessarily significant how many times a particular issue was raised during the consultation. If an issue was raised that had merit it had the same weight whether it was mentioned in one response or in many.
- (iv) The Council would seek evidence from the local education authority and clinical commissioning groups regarding capacity issues. The response received from an individual school was related to the impact of possible changes to the limits to development in that location.
- (v) Consultation at this stage of the process of developing the Local Plan was in addition to the requirements set out in legislation. Additional periods of consultation had been included in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement in order to let people (including infrastructure providers and developers) know what stage the Council had reached and to try and reach a consensus on matters such as the settlement hierarchy. A greater number of responses would be expected in future stages when specific proposals were made.
- (vi) No comparison had been made with the number of responses received during other consultations. A comparison could be made with the corresponding stage in the development of the current Core Strategy.
- (vii) Work on the Local Plan was being undertaken with the draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in mind. The revisions would have an impact in a number of areas when implemented. It was expected that the revised NPPF would be published by the Government in July. If that was the case it would not impact on the timetable for developing the Local Plan.
- (viii) The impact of migration was included in the preparation of the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment. If the standard methodology proposed in the revisions to the NPPF was introduced then calculations of housing need would be updated with Government housing projections figures which also took into account migration.

Members of the Group made the following comments:

- (i) There could be a fine balance between pursuing a policy of urban concentration in order to enable infrastructure to be provided in those locations to support new development, and focussing on too few sites which could add to the pressure on infrastructure.

RESOLVED

1. that the report be noted;
2. that information be provided to members of the Group on the number of organisations and the number of individuals contained in the database used for the consultation.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To provide further information regarding how the consultation had been undertaken.

7. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services, enabling the Group to review the development of a revised Procurement Strategy, was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and Property Services and the Procurement Manager assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) An alternative, shorter format for the new version of the strategy had been considered but it was proposed that the format of the existing strategy was used and the content updated.
- (ii) The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 governed the Council's procurement activity. The Regulations had incorporated European Union requirements and the Government's response to recommendations by Lord Young into United Kingdom law. As a result the only effect of the UK leaving the EU may be that contracts would not have to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union.
- (iii) Some of the Council's contracts, for example street cleaning and managing open spaces, were output based. For those contracts the contractor was required to maintain areas to standards defined for them. If the standard was not maintained the contractor was required to bring the area back to the standard. The Council could be alerted that areas were below standard by the public.
- (iv) Council officers did spend time with small, local suppliers to explain how the Council's procurement processes operated to help them understand what they needed to do if they wished to submit tenders or quotes for public contracts.
- (v) The Public Services Social Value Act was aimed at contracts with a value that exceeded the threshold for advertising in the Official Journal of the European Journal (c£180,000). However, the Council included a section in its forms for submitting tenders for lower value contracts about what bidders could do in terms of local purchasing, open days and work experience opportunities. It was recognised that a contract would have to have a value in excess of £1million before it was viable to take on an apprentice.

Members of the Group made the following comments:

- (i) It was important that the key objectives of the strategy were set out as clearly as possible.

RESOLVED

1. that the report be noted;
2. that it be noted that the Group supported the approach of using the current, longer form of the strategy as a template for the new strategy and the statement regarding the role that the Council played regarding social impact and cohesion in the current version of the strategy.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To record the outcome of the Group's scrutiny of the matter and in particular to highlight that a longer version of the strategy would provide less scope for misunderstanding and the impact of the Council's procurement activity.

8. HOUSING INCOME AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION POLICY 2018-2021

A report of the Head of Landlord Services, enabling the Group to review the proposed Housing Income and Financial Inclusion Policy, was submitted (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Landlord Services assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) All letters that were sent to tenants emphasised the importance of contacting the Council if they had financial difficulties and highlighting the type of help that was available.
- (ii) Rent arrears were monitored on a weekly basis by case officers. The level of arrears was increasing slightly year on year but the Council had met its targets for rent collection in the first quarter of the financial year. The rollout of Universal Credit was likely to increase the level of arrears in the short term. However, it was expected that the effect would diminish as the system became established and some tenants were transferred to managed payments with rent being paid directly to the Council.
- (iii) There were 1379 of the Council's 5459 tenancies with arrears. However in many of those cases the arrears were small. There were 100 tenancies that had been in arrears for 12 weeks or more.
- (iv) People with mental health problems were considered to be vulnerable as they could find it more difficult to manage money and would be covered by the description set out in the footnote to section 2.1 of the draft policy. However that could be clarified by changing the word 'disabilities' to 'mental and physical disabilities'.
- (v) The Council used a timetable with a series of scaled interventions that was designed to stop debts building. Specific interventions would depend on the individual circumstances of the case and would take into account such factors as whether the tenant was working with the Council and the time taken to process initial Universal Credit claims.

Members of the Group made the following comments:

- (i) There were issues with the formatting of the draft policy that could be improved.
- (ii) It was important that officers were able to take action at the earliest possible stage and had the confidence to escalate cases when that was necessary.

RESOLVED

1. that the report be noted;
2. that it be noted that the Group supported the draft policy and the style in which it was written which was sharp, to the point and easy to read;
3. that it be noted that draft policy would be amended to change the word 'disabilities' to 'mental and physical disabilities' in the footnote to section 2.1 of the draft policy and that the formatting of parts of the draft policy would be reviewed.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To record the outcome of the Group's scrutiny of the matter.
3. To acknowledge how issues raised by the Group would be addressed.

9. PROGRESS WITH PANEL WORK

A report of the Head of Strategic Support, providing an update on the current position with scrutiny panels, was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager and Councillor Seaton (Chair of the Five Year Housing Land Supply Scrutiny Panel) assisted with consideration of the item and stated that a meeting had had to be postponed because of the availability of witnesses and to ensure that the impact of any changes to the National Planning Policy Framework could be considered. However it was still the intention for the Panel to submit its report in the Autumn.

RESOLVED that the current position with scrutiny panels be noted.

Reason

To ensure that the Group was aware of the current position with scrutiny panels.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support, enabling the Group to consider its work programme and propose to the Scrutiny Management Board any additions, deletions and amendments as appropriate, was submitted (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with consideration of the item.

RESOLVED

1. that the changes made by the Scrutiny Management Board to the Group's work programme be noted;
2. that the current position with the Group's work programme and the Notice of Key Decisions and Decisions to be Taken in Private be noted;
3. that a further report in respect of the Single Local Plan be scheduled for the Group's meeting on 25th September 2018 and the focus of the Group's scrutiny at that meeting be on how conclusions from the first phase of consultation had been incorporated into the consultation documents for the second phase and how the value of the two additional stages of consultation set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement could be demonstrated;
4. **that it be recommended to the Scrutiny Management Board** that scrutiny of the Lightbulb Service Implementation be allocated to a different scrutiny body.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the decisions made by the Board.
2. To make the Group aware of the current position with its work programme.
3. To determine the timing and focus of the next stage of the Group's scrutiny of the development of the Single Local Plan.
4. The item had been transferred to the Group's work programme, from the work programme of the Overview Scrutiny Group, and scheduled for 25th September 2018 by the Scrutiny Management Board. The Group already had a number of items scheduled for its September meeting and considered that while the matter should be scrutinised it did not fit within the remit of the Group.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 3rd September 2018 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Policy Scrutiny Group.