

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 22 January 2014

Present: Mr Reed (Chairman)
Mr Bagge, Mr D Dhillon and The Earl of Stockton

Also Present: Mr Harding, Dr Matthews and Mrs Woolveridge

Apologies for absence: Mr Denyer, Mr Egleton, Mr Lidgate and Mr Samson

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2013 were received.

19. WESTERN RAIL ACCESS TO HEATHROW (WRATH)

The PAG received a report which provided Members with information on the Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH) project which will provide a new rail service (four times an hour) from Reading and Slough directly to Heathrow Terminal Five.

The PAG discussed the two options which were still being considered by Network rail as possible routes:

- a) Via the Colnbrook freight branch
- b) Via tunnel from south of the track between Langley and Iver

Maps were circulated to the PAG illustrating the proposed routes.

The PAG noted with concern the implications of these options for South Bucks, including the loss of Green Belt, increased noise levels from the trains, the possible visual impact of the new route, HGV traffic and noise concerns resulting from the construction process and the implications regarding the Safeguarded Waste transfer station.

The PAG were advised that officers from South Bucks District Council and Bucks County Council would pursue these issues in negotiations with the scheme promoters in the interests of residents and businesses of South Bucks.

The PAG noted that Network Rail had announced that it would decide on the preferred option by the end of January 2014 and would make a public announcement about the scheme in February. Network Rail would be giving a presentation on the WRAtH project at the next Council meeting on 25 February. The Deputy Leader advised that this would give Members an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns that they had with Network Rail.

The PAG noted the report and supported the proposal to continue negotiations with appropriate parties to achieve the best outcome for the District.

20. HS2: UPDATE AND POSSIBLE PETITIONING ISSUES

The PAG received a report which provided Members with an update on the High Speed Rail Project. The report outlined the impact of the scheme on South Bucks, taking account of the project's Environmental Statement, and the Council's response to the Environmental Statement. The report also highlighted the potential petitioning points against the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) for approval by the Cabinet and Council together with the cost of pursuing this course of action.

With regard to the HS2 legal challenge, it was noted that the Supreme Court had dismissed both the appeals that had been made by HS2AA and the remaining local authorities.

The PAG noted the Council's response to the Environmental Statement. Members were advised that the Council now had until 27 February 2014 to respond to the Environmental Statement.

The PAG discussed the potential petitioning points against the High Speed Rail, which were set out in the report, and were of the opinion that these reflected current thinking. With regard to the evidence to be submitted to Parliament, the PAG were of the view that the Council should ensure that:

- the evidence is comprehensive;
- the important points are prioritised; and
- duplication with other authorities' evidence is avoided.

With regards to resources, it was noted that a fee of £20 for submitting a petition could be met within budget. Taking the petitioning process to the stage of presenting evidence to Parliament could incur additional unbudgeted costs up to £25,000 which would require the approval of Full Council.

The PAG were in full support of all the recommendations set out in the report, including the need to allocate a sum of up to £25,000 for the purpose of presenting evidence to Parliament. The PAG stressed the importance of ensuring that the residents of South Bucks are represented on this issue.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that

- 1) it notes the responses prepared by officers and experts to the formal Environmental statement on behalf of the Council.
- 2) it notes the issues raised in the report as matters of concern for the Council and that these reflect current thinking which will be developed by the officers/experts in the lead-up to the submission of the Petition to the Select Committee in April/May 2014.
- 3) it be **RECOMMENDED** to Council that
 - a) it is expedient for the Council to oppose the High Speed rail (London-West Midlands) Bill introduced in the Session of parliament 2013-14.
 - b) the Common seal of the Council be affixed to any necessary documents and that confirmation be given that Sharpe Pritchard (Parliamentary Agents) be authorised to sign the Petition of the Council against the Bill.
 - c) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Sustainable Development, to take all necessary steps to finalise the matters of concern and carry the Resolution referred to above into effect.
 - d) a sum of up to £25,000 be allocated for the purpose of presenting evidence to Parliament.

21. A SHARED FRAMEWORK FOR THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCILS ON DUTY TO CO-OPERATE ETC

The PAG a report outlining the vision for a Shared Framework for the Buckinghamshire Councils on the Duty to Co-operate and the Alignment of the Local Plan Timetables and Shared Evidence Base. The Shared Framework was noted to be the outcome of discussions between the Heads of Service and Cabinet Members responsible for planning at the Buckinghamshire Councils.

The PAG were advised that before the framework could be signed the following two issues would need to be addressed:

- a) The current wording in paragraph 14.1 of the Shared Framework would need to be made clearer as to the fact that relevant development plans (Local Plans) have been agreed by those authorities responsible for them, rather than collectively agreed, as could currently be inferred.
- b) The legend on the map would need to be made clear that whilst HS2 is a Government proposal, it does not have the Council's support. Accordingly, the legend would need to be made less ambiguous.

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In order for these adjustments to be made, it was proposed that that Cabinet delegate authority to the Head of Sustainable Development and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, to agree the final wording and sign the Shared Framework Agreement.

The PAG were of the view that, subject to the wording of the framework in paragraph 14.1 and the map's legend being made less ambiguous, the Council should sign the Shared Framework Agreement.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that authority be delegated to the Head of Sustainable Development and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, to agree the final wording and sign the Shared Framework Agreement for the Buckinghamshire Councils on the Duty to Co-operate and the Alignment of the Local Plan Timetables and Shared Evidence Base.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The meeting terminated at 6.54 pm