

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 12 November 2014

Time: 7.00 - 9.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, D H G Barnes, I Bates, D J Carroll, A E Hill, M E Knight, Mrs J D Langley, Mrs W J Mallen, Mrs M L Neudecker, J L Richards OBE, J A Savage, A Slater, T Snaith, R Wilson and Ms K S Wood,

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G C Hall and A Hussain

Guests: Councillors N B Marshall (Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability) and R J Scott (Leader of the Council).

Also present: Councillors M C Appleyard, Ms P L Lee, R Farmer, I L McEnnis, R Metcalfe, S F Parker, B R Pollock & P R Turner

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 15 September 2014, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

19. RESERVE SITES AND PROGRESSING THE LOCAL PLAN - 'CALL-IN' OF THE CABINET DECISION OF 20 OCTOBER 2014

The Chairman of the Commission welcomed all to the Meeting, particularly those in the public gallery, many present due to an interest in this 'call-in' item.

The Chairman explained the points and procedures that would be followed in respect of the 'call-in':

- The decision taken in respect of the Reserve Sites and progressing the Local Plan; could not currently be implemented until the Commission had considered this item and, if recommendations were made, until the Cabinet had in turn considered any recommendations that the Commission may make in respect of the decision.

- No members of the Commission (including the Chairman and Vice Chairman) were members of the Cabinet. Commission membership was on a mixed party basis, but all its work was carried out on a non-political basis.
- The Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainability and the Leader of the Council had been invited to assist the Commission, so that the Commission could hear both sides of the argument. They were not permitted to vote.
- Initially a vote would be taken as to whether the 'call-in' was to be debated. Then all Members of the Commission would have the opportunity to ask Councillor Snaith (the lead 'call-in' Member) and the Cabinet Member and Leader questions relating to the 'call-in' before any vote was taken. .
- As this was a call-in to the Commission of the Cabinet decision the debate would be by the Commission itself.
- The Chairman's role was to ensure a balanced debate and raised a number of points for the proposer of the call-in to address.

The decision as to whether to debate the 'call-in' required under paragraphs 43 and 44 of the Commission's protocol was put to the Meeting, and a majority for debate was indicated.

Councillor T Snaith elaborated on the reasons for the call-in submitted, and tabled a series of 6 recommendations, with supporting reasons, for the Commission to consider for referral to Cabinet as follows:

- 1) To look into and re-assess the objectively assessed figures for the known homes, homes in pipeline and windfall homes, and that this be done ahead of any decision to release any reserve sites;
- 2) To look at the sites in more detail with the aim of increasing density on some of them, thereby relieving the need on other reserve sites and the release of other reserve sites;
- 3) Re-assess the core strategy with particular reference to the Green Belt review, before releasing any reserve sites;
- 4) Revisit and test the case for less dwellings because of the District's AONB/green belt circumstances with Government/Planning Inspectors, before releasing any reserve sites;
- 5) Consult with Officers to revisit what Wycombe District Council can do as a result of being constrained by AONB and Green Belt and to discuss this with DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) as to reducing the number of homes needed, as a result of these constraints, before releasing any reserve sites; and

6) Investigate and bring forward robust District-wide infrastructure plans in conjunction with other statutory partners, before releasing reserve sites.

Councillor Marshall (as Portfolio Holder for Planning & Sustainability) was then given the opportunity to respond and to explain the consequences of the Council not taking the decision to release the reserve sites at this time.

Councillor Marshall emphasised that he was aware that the decision to release the sites was a difficult step to take but it had been judged as being for the benefit of the District as a whole. A neighbouring District that had not correctly formulated their local plan, met their housing targets or abided by the 'duty to co-operate' with their neighbouring districts now faced the possibility of up to 10,000 homes being imposed upon them on developers' appeals.

The release of reserve sites in the Wycombe District meant the Council retained more control. The principle of development on these 5 reserve sites had existed for some decades.

Wycombe District Council wished to be proactive, not having developers schemes forced upon them, engaging with its communities and mitigating the impact of development.

A planned working group with partners and providers in respect of the overall infrastructure requirements of the 5 sites was explained.

Members made a number of comments and received clarification on a number of queries related to the following points:

- The apparent confusion between the core strategy, which required infrastructure to be provided ahead of development, and the decision of Cabinet, whilst recognising the Council was having to react to changing Government requirements;
- The need for infrastructure requirements to be looked at in the round as part of an agreed strategy to ensure the area coped with any future developments on the scale envisaged. The need for considerable infrastructure work even without the release of sites was also raised;
- There was a concern that a considerable number of residents questioned the value of the recent consultations as they felt their views had not been taken into account;
- There was a fear Wycombe in particular would become a 'dormitory town' if suitable business development was not undertaken in conjunction with housing development;
- The inevitability of having to release the sites in order to avoid inappropriate ad-hoc developers' schemes being foisted on the District by means of the appeal to Inspectorate route, was acknowledged;

- Whether market, affordable or social housing, it was obvious that a new housing supply was required, and whether there were any other options to the release of these sites?
- The difficult balance of environment, infrastructure and the mixture of housing provided in all developments was acknowledged;
- Members received confirmation from the Cabinet Member that in negotiations with Central Government and the Inspectorate, Wycombe District had challenged at every opportunity;
- It was confirmed that every other option (e.g. brownfield sites, innovative design etc.) was and would continue to be considered. Wycombe District Council's Planning Department was second to none and held in the highest regard nationally; the Cabinet Member was confident it would continue its good record of delivery.

The Leader of the Council re-iterated the extensive nature of the Local Plan / Reserve Sites Release consultation. A six month in depth dialogue with the public, where residents had been both listened and responded to had been effected.

The Meeting then turned to the question as to whether the 'call in' on the basis of the recommendations tabled by Councillor Snaith should proceed and be referred back to Cabinet

Each of the six recommendations was put to the vote individually and all were to be referred to Cabinet with the exception of No.2.

The resulting 5 recommendations, with reasons summarised below are as follows:

- a) Look into and re-assess the objectively assessed figures for the known homes, homes in pipeline and windfall homes, and that this be done ahead of any decision to release any reserve sites;

Reason for this Recommendation

To examine the scope for reducing the objectively assessed housing need towards the lower range of 500 dwellings per annum, rather than the top of the range (700) dwellings per year.

- b) Re-assess the core strategy with particular reference to the Green Belt review, before releasing any reserve sites;

Reason for this Recommendation

An urgent review of the core strategy is required as it is now out of date in terms of its design infrastructure and the implementation of recommendation (a) above could provide sufficient land/dwellings.

- c) Revisit and test the case for less dwellings because of the District's AONB/green belt circumstances with Government/Planning Inspectors, before releasing any reserve sites;

Reason for this Recommendation

The Council can demonstrate it has a good track record in terms of its land management and can show just reasons for less dwellings because of the large part of our District covered by AONB and green belt designations.

- d) Consult with Officers to revisit what Wycombe District Council can do as a result of being constrained by AONB and Green Belt and to discuss this with DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) as to reducing the number of homes needed, as a result of these constraints, before releasing any reserve sites; and

Reason for this Recommendation

These discussions would enable the Cabinet to explore the extent of flexibility possible as a result of the recent DCLG statement of 6 October 2014, which stated that Councils that have high areas of green belt may be restricted on the number of homes they can deliver. This applies to Wycombe District and supports the argument that we cannot meet our objectively assessed need.

- e) Investigate and bring forward robust District-wide infrastructure plans in conjunction with other statutory partners, before releasing reserve sites.

Reason for this Recommendation

Wycombe District and, in particular, High Wycombe has seen massive development over last 15-20 years, with more developments underway. This has not been matched by any noticeable infrastructure improvements, which are required before any reserve sites are developed.

RESOLVED: That the 'call-in' in respect of the Cabinet Decision of 20 October 2014 'Reserve Sites and Progressing the Local Plan' be accepted; and

(ii) Cabinet be recommended at its meeting on 17 November to agree to the 5 recommendations as featured above.

20. URGENT HEALTH CARE REVIEW - STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The Commission being part way through its review into urgent health care, considered the report on the agenda which fed back on the public listening event that was held on 15 October. This feedback was to be further considered at the special meeting on 11 December, when Healthwatch Bucks were to be presenting the findings from their recent survey of users in Buckinghamshire of urgent health care services.

This meeting gave an opportunity to hear from the local health service providers representing the Chiltern Clinical Commissioning Group, Aylesbury Vale Clinical Commissioning Group, Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust, Bucks Urgent Care and South Central Ambulance Service. A written submission had also been received from Steve Baker, MP.

From the Listening event four themes had been identified, it was recognised that they were all connected and reinforced the overall experience and treatment received. These themes were:

1. Communication and Access to urgent health care services
2. Treatment received
3. Urgent health care facilities
4. Distance and travelling between SM A&E and HW MIIU

The providers gave a presentation to the Commission with the aid of power point which outlined the following:

- The background to the centralisation of A&E to Stoke Mandeville and the establishment of the MIIU at High Wycombe.
- How services were now commissioned and the need for public involvement and feedback on performance.
- The 'right treatment, right place, right time' initiative featuring:
 - NHS111
 - MIIU and out of hours GP's
 - A&E
 - Regional Specialists
- The Bucks Set-up was in line with the NHS England template.
- The out of hours GP's service contract had been extended to next year in order to align all services.

- The development of the MDAS Multidisciplinary Day Assessment Service at Wycombe (for frail and elderly not needing A&E but unable to wait for outpatients).
- 111 was used by some 11,000 people per month in Bucks, importantly it could book appointments to attend primary care units or MIIU, it was often better to use than incurring lengthy A&E waits.
- In respect of accessibility, already following on from the listening event:
 - 4 Wheelchairs were in place at MIIU;
 - Signposting was improved;
 - Staff training had been undertaken; and
 - Porters were in place
- New X-ray unit was due to open in MIIU 26 December 2014
- Plastering simple fractures MIIU 24/7, complex/ compound fractures transferred to Stoke Mandeville.
- Importantly working towards joined up IT between Wycombe and Stoke Mandeville.
- The charts of the self-presenting patient pathway and urgent GP referral pathway were explained, it was hoped the dedicated units featured within these, would reduce duplicate assessments and hence waiting times.
- The vast majority of feedback on the 'Friends & Family' Tests was good if not excellent, but the 'listening event' demonstrated that there was still much work to be done.

Members made a number of points and received clarification on a number of queries as follows:

- In respect of ambulance services the problem in turning around ambulances after arrival at Hospitals was discussed, the use of HALO's (Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers) to reduce this was explained, although it was accepted this remained a challenge nationally and locally.
- The need for effective IT / Communications between all sites was imperative and could not be over stated;

- In respect of the increase use of the MIU, Members were advised that this had not seen a proportional reduction at A&E, as nationally and locally overall attendance was increasing year on year; and
- Accessing the right level of advice / treatment initially was essential, the mantra of 'communication, communication, communication' regarding accessing the right health care service for their condition was seen as key by the providers.

The Chairman thanked the providers for their informative presentation and input and commended them on their implementations already put in place in response to issues picked up at the 'listening event'.

The Meeting noted the planned next steps in respect of the Urgent Health Care Review as follows:

11 December 2014: The Commission was due to receive a presentation from Healthwatch Bucks on their survey results of people in Buckinghamshire who have used emergency, urgent care or the out of hour's services recently or accompanied someone else for these services. The survey results were currently being analysed and Healthwatch Bucks hoped to be in a position to present the findings for Wycombe, as well as Buckinghamshire. A short film was to be shown at the meeting, in support of a current petition to save Wycombe Hospital (www.savewycombehospital.wordpress.com). It was planned that this meeting would also discuss emerging recommendations.

14 January 2015: Draft report and recommendations for consideration and approval for submission to Council on 25 February 2015.

21. FINAL REPORT OF THE SPORTS/LEISURE CENTRE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Commission was invited to note the extensive work of the Sports & Leisure Centre Task & Finish Group and the level of scrutiny that had been carried out in respect of this flagship project for the District.

It was noted that the Sport & Leisure Centre Task & Finish Group had met on two occasions in the last year to scrutinise issues and risks associated with the construction of the new sport and leisure centre. It has received information from WDC and Buckinghamshire County Council officers and representatives from Jacobs and Mace. As progress towards construction was already advanced at the time the group was re-convened, to focus on any risks and issues which might hinder the progress or success of the project going forward.

To achieve its aims the Group had chosen to review the risk register in detail, put questions to officers, and receive a presentation on the traffic modelling which had been undertaken for the scheme to support the planning application.

After receiving information the Group had been satisfied that the risks associated with the construction of the sport and leisure centre were being appropriately managed and that the process to model the traffic implications had been robust.

The Commission noted the outcomes of the work of the Sports & Leisure Centre Task and Finish Group and agreed that its work had now concluded.

22. PROPOSED NEW IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW PROTOCOL

Members noted the new attached Improvement & Review Protocol for consideration ahead of referral to the Council's Regulatory & Appeals Committee for inclusion in the Council Constitution.

The report outlined that the update had been required in order to remove a number of out of date cross references and statutes found in the document. Members decided that the consideration of the protocol needed to be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Commission in order that they could scrutinise the amendments made in detail along with suggesting any further amendments.

Officers to provide Members with a 'track changes' copy of the protocol to identify the amendments, along with complete 'before' and 'after' copies to aid their consideration of this updating exercise.

RESOLVED: That consideration of the proposed new Improvement & Review Protocol item be deferred to the Commission meeting of -14 January 2015.

23. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Meeting noted the update in respect of the Commission's work programme and the current position with regard to Task and Finish Groups, of which the Budget Task & Finish Group was about to start its work later that month, under the Chairmanship of Councillor J Richards.

No topics were identified on the attached Cabinet Forward Plan for review by the Commission at future meetings.

24. INFORMATION SHEETS

The following Information Sheet had been issued since the last meeting of the Commission:

- 2/2014 Follow up statistical data on Community Safety Partnership Item – Commission Meeting 15 September 2014

No questions had been received from Members in respect of this document.

25. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Peter Druce	- Democratic Services
Ian Manktelow	- Team Leader Planning Policy
Charles Meakings	- Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services