

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 11 November 2015

Time: 7.00 - 9.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Ms A Baughan, Miss S Brown, H Bull, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, C Etholen, M Harris, M E Knight, A Lee, Ms C J Oliver, S K Raja, R Raja and J A Savage

Standing Deputies: Councillors H L McCarthy

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs L M Clarke OBE and D Knights

Also present: Councillors D H G Barnes (Deputy Leader of the Council), D A Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning), Mrs G A Jones (Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning), Ms K S Wood (Executive Leader of the Council) and L Wood.

13. TWO MINUTES SILENCE

The Meeting commenced with the Chairman, in view of the date, calling for the Members present to stand for 2 minutes silence.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Both the Chairman; Councillor R Gaffney and Councillor C Etholen declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 17 the recommendations of the Local Plan Task and Finish Group in respect of the Saunderton Area Action Plan, in that they were both residents of Saunderton. Both remained in the chamber for the consideration of the said recommendations and Councillor Gaffney vacated the Chair during that item.

15. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 16 September 2015, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN UPDATE

The meeting was given a comprehensive and informative presentation on the achievements of the Wycombe Community Safety Partnership by Daniel Sullivan (Wycombe District Council – Prevent Strategic Co-ordinator - Community Services) aided by Chairman of the Partnership Karen Satterford and Superintendent Ed McLean (Commander Wycombe Local Police Area – Thames Valley Police).

Karen Satterford, as Chairman of the Partnership, explained that the Community Safety Partnership was obliged to publish a 3 year plan to be updated annually, the current 2015-16 plan being appended to the agenda. The Partnership by statute was obliged to refer the plan annually to the appropriate scrutiny body of the Council. Referring to a power point presentation Daniel Sullivan outlined the key crime statistics for the District:

Crime type	% changes -2013/14 to 14/15
Burglary Dwelling	+9.2% (25 more victims)
Theft of motor vehicle	+26% (25 more victims)
Theft from motor vehicle	-12% (82 fewer victims)
Violence against the person with injury	+21.3% (110 more victims)
Violence against the person without injury	+9.2%
Non Rape Sexual Offences	-2.4%
Rape Sexual Offences	+26.1% (12 more victims)
Harassment	-36.7% (47 fewer victims)
Public Order	-21.8%
Drug Offences	+6.6%
All Crime	-1.1

It was acknowledged that the percentage increases noted were worrying, though in some cases these represented only limited numbers of victims, the base number of victims was often very small.

The reduction in public disorder offences was heartening; High Wycombe Town Centre continued to enjoy a good safety record.

The continued work of the Nightsafe Partnership was emphasised, which was currently concentrating on the PURPLE Flag re-assessment due later this month. The problems of shoplifting often fuelled by substance misuse was noted, along with the work being done in tackling anti-social behaviour and gang activity with the dedicated officer based at the Police Station.

The various Anti-Social Behaviour tools were outlined and it was noted that Police had been using the dispersal powers therein and had obtained five Criminal Behaviour Orders to date.

Child Sexual Exploitation was still of great concern both nationally and locally, it had been a previous key priority and this status had been retained, close work with Barnardo's was in place; this was often a hidden crime, and the Partnership were well aware that there should be no complacency in tackling it.

The work of the very active local 'Prevent' board was outlined, where partners' actions had now been added to the action list (totalling 27) for Home Office submission.

Superintendent Ed McLean acknowledged the increases may well represent previous reduction successes levelling out. Confidence of victims to report crimes along with some small boundary changes to the data collection also contributed. Burglary reduction success from 600 over 3 years ago to 200 now was commended.

Historic crimes were becoming a capacity issue for the Police, and Members were made aware of the increasing problem of adult abuse by crime gangs (car washes, nail bars) a planned scheme of police accreditation was explained.

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

- The broad definition of harassment was explained which could cover text abuse, to moving wheelie bins to car parking.
- It was confirmed that burglaries in High Wycombe were as a whole attributable to a known number of perpetrators, once successfully jailed, incidents reduced, to re-occur upon their release. It was a vicious cycle, only a few outsider burglaries occurred.
- Vehicle crime was explained; currently motor cycle thefts were a problem.
- Cyber-crime and fraud involving the elderly was of concern and was a priority.
- The requirement to log all domestic violence where children are present on the multi-agency accessible registers was explained.
- Hate crime was of concern; particularly the abuse suffered by taxi drivers late at night, encouragement / ease of reporting was being worked on.
- The importance of tackling rural crime was emphasised, technically a £50 bike theft had the same level of investigation of that of a £500,000 harvester. But where necessary authority to allocate any crime to the investigation division existed.
- The Superintendent outlined his preference to retain a station in Marlow.

The Chairman commended the Partnership on their work and thanked them for their informative and comprehensive presentation.

The meeting then:

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the report of the Wycombe Community Safety Partnership and the data contained therein be noted; and
- (ii) the priorities of the Wycombe Community Safety Partnership for 2015-16 be noted and supported.

17. REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN CABINET REPORT

Councillor Katrina Wood (Leader of the Council) and Karen Satterford (Chief Executive) introduced the item on the Council Priorities and Corporate Plan for 2015-2019 due for consideration by Cabinet on 16 November 2015.

This was the third Corporate Plan that the Council had developed, although primarily an internal working document, it was a key reference point for the public and stakeholders.

Three key challenges had been identified for the next four year period of:

- I. The continuing reduction in our Government financial settlement and the need for us to become financially self-sufficient: looking for new ways to generate revenue streams to support delivery of our services.
- II. Facilitating the delivery of required new home growth in our district and the infrastructure to support this: having robust plans in place to ensure this development is sustainable (including future proofing for climate change and in particular flooding) and of high quality so as not to compromise the quality of our valued natural environment.
- III. The need to continue to engage and work with our residents, of all ages: shaping what we do, wherever possible on local need and remaining as a safety net for those in most need.

In responding to these challenges the Cabinet was proposing three priorities:

- I. Regeneration and infrastructure (a priority focusing on 'place')
- II. Cohesive communities (a priority focusing on 'people') and
- III. Value for money services (a priority focusing on 'pounds').

These three priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2015-19 were to form the Council's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for the Wycombe District.

Having shared this proposed Corporate Plan with Members at the 4 November Members' Training / Seminar Event, the Plan was now due before Cabinet on 16 November for adoption. This evening represented Commission Members' opportunity for clarification on any details / issues they may have had in respect of the Plan.

The following points and clarification on members' queries were made:

- Members were assured that the opportunity for Neighbourhood Plans was available for urban areas as well as Parishes;
- The High Wycombe Masterplan was emphasised as one of the key elements in respect of infrastructure;
- Members felt the roll out Street Associations across the District with support from Wycombe District Council, should be explored and included in the Plan;
- The need to involve local Members in schemes within their ward was seen as essential; and
- Reference to the rural areas of the District within the Plan needed to be emphasised more vigorously.

RESOLVED: That the Council Priorities and Corporate Plan 2015-19 as outlined be supported and Cabinet 16 November 2015 be asked to specifically consider:

- More emphasis on the rural areas of the District and the implementation of District-wide infrastructure;
- Inclusion within the cohesive communities work stream the exploration of expanding Street Associations across the District ; and
- Ensuring local Member involvement as appropriate in taking forward schemes and initiatives within their wards

Councillor R Gaffney vacated the Chair, given his non-pecuniary interest in the following item 'the recommendations of the Local Plan Task & Finish Group'.

Councillor A Collingwood (Vice Chairman of the Commission) stepped into the Chair.

18. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Commission considered the extensive report produced by the Local Plan Task and Finish Group in respect of the Saunderton Area Action Plan and the recommendations contained therein. These were outlined by Councillor Collingwood from the Chair, Councillor Collingwood having been Vice-Chairman of the Group and having chaired a number of the Group's meetings.

Reference was made to the Scope of the Review agreed at the Group's 13 August 2015 meeting in that three specific scenarios would be considered by the Group in relation to the Saunderton Area Action Plan which is located within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) these were –

1. Does the AONB 'trump' development
2. Does the need for housing 'trump' the AONB
3. Could there be some development, but take very careful consideration of possible new facilities and the impact on the AONB.

It was understood that, as a Council, there was a longstanding general approach that there would be no large development within the AONB and that it was the Task & Finish Group's remit to question that in relation to Saunderton.

It was noted that the review had consisted of the following events:

- Meeting with Parish Councils (7 September 2015)
- Meeting with MAG (28 September 2015)
- Meeting with Chiltern Railways (7 October 2015)
- Public Listening Event (7 October 2015)
- Public Listening Event (14 October 2015)
- Meeting with Planning (22 October 2015)
- Written representations (deadline 19 October 2015)

Members commended the work of the Task and Finish Group and the level of successful public engagement that had occurred at the two public meetings that were held to obtain local views, which was considered invaluable, as were the views of the parish councils. The work of Liz Hornby in supporting the Task and Finish Group was highlighted and praised.

Members agreed amendments to two of the recommendations of a minor nature as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The principle of established national planning policy of protecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt must be upheld to safeguard the very purpose of these AONB designated areas.

RECOMMENDATION 3

All statutory Upper tier authorities be encouraged to have a duty to guarantee that provision be made for additional infrastructure to ensure sustainable development, so as to address any increase in population within the Parish of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton.

The finalised recommendations with reasons, for referral to Cabinet were agreed as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The principle of established national planning policy of protecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt must be upheld to safeguard the very purpose of these designated areas.

Reasons for this recommendation

To protect the outstanding quality of the environment it serves.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Saunderton Local Area Action Plan be abandoned in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan and additional resources made available to support the Parish Council to facilitate its production and delivery in the relevant timeframe of the emerging Local Plan.

Reasons for this recommendation

To allow the local community to have a pro-active role in shaping their surroundings with succinct local and neighbourhood planning in line with Section 155 in 'Plan-Making, Local Plans' of the NPPF; "Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made."

RECOMMENDATION 3

All statutory authorities be encouraged to have a duty to guarantee that provision be made for additional infrastructure to ensure sustainable development, so as to address any increase in population within the Parish of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton.

Reasons for this recommendation

In order to address concerns this would apply to local, regional and national authorities e.g. road, rail and flooding.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That there be a local plan policy to incorporate supported living with individual dwellings and communal amenities to count towards housing numbers.

Reasons for this recommendation

To meet the needs of the existing ageing population.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That mixed use developments be actively encouraged within the Parish of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton.

Reasons for this recommendation

This would encourage sustainability as residential and light industrial development would advantage the area.

RECOMMENDATION 6

No street lighting to be permitted on new developments in Saunderton and the wider Parish, in line with AONB policy.

Reasons for this recommendation

In line with Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework that any development would have a detrimental effect on the environment and landscape as it would significantly change the character of Saunderton.

The Meeting then:

RESOLVED: That the recommendations of the Local Plan Task and Finish Group in respect of the Saunderton Area Action Plan as amended above, along with accompanying reasons, be recommended to Cabinet at its meeting on 16 November 2015.

Councillor R Gaffney returned to the Chair.

19. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE / IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW PROTOCOL

As part of the wider review of the Council's Constitution, each Committee of the Council was being invited to review its terms of reference.

The Commission's terms of reference i.e. The Improvement & Review Protocol as featured in the Council's Constitution was attached to the agenda and Members had been invited to review and agree the contents.

This review was to feed back into the wider review, which was to be reported in its entirety for consideration to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee early in March 2016.

Officers had looked at the current Terms of Reference / Protocol and were not suggesting any changes given that a review and refresh of the protocol had been carried out by the Commission and endorsed by the Regulatory & Appeals Committee and Full Council back in January and February of 2015.

The meeting agreed with this and felt that no further changes / updates were currently required.

RESOLVED: That no further changes to the Commission's Protocol be proposed at this time.

20. COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME & CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Meeting noted the update in respect of the Commission's work programme and the current position with regard to Task and Finish Groups.

The completion of the first phase of work of the Budget Task & Finish Group (Strategic Review of Budget) was noted, the Group were reporting their recommendations direct to Cabinet the following Monday; 16 November 2015.

Alongside the recommendations to Cabinet was a recommendation to the Commission to establish a separate Task & Finish Group to investigate the capacity, decision-making process and project delivery arrangements required to achieve targets set, covering both commercial and residential regeneration. The Commission agreed to the suggestion that a scoping report be brought to the next Improvement & Review Commission meeting in January 2016 with draft terms of reference and timescales with work commencing next spring.

The second phase of the Budget Task & Finish Group's work; that of scrutinising the emerging budget, planned for December and January was also noted.

The work of the Local Plan Task and Finish Group was discussed having worked over the last few months on the important Saunderton Area Action Plan, the Group was scheduled to re-convene in the New Year to consider further Local Plan issues.

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

RESOLVED: That a Regeneration Task and Finish Group be established, with terms of reference being submitted to the Commission's meeting in January for a spring 2016 start.

21. 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
Jacqueline Ford	- Corporate Policy Team Leader
Charles Meakings	- Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive & Chair of the Community Safety Partnership