

# Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 9 March 2016

Time: 7.00 - 8.30 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Miss S Brown, H Bull, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, M E Knight, D Knights, Ms C J Oliver, S K Raja, R Raja and A Turner, H L McCarthy\* and L Wood\*.

\*Standing Deputies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs L M Clarke OBE, C Etholen, M Harris, A Lee and J A Savage.

Also present by invitation Councillors Mrs J Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing) and Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

## 29. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillor A Turner to his first meeting as a Commission Meeting. He also thanked the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Housing and Chief Executive for their attendance and input into the Meeting.

## 30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 31. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 13 January 2016, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 32. HOUSING UPDATE

The Meeting was given a comprehensive presentation by Councillor Mrs Julia Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing) in respect of the Housing Service.

Councillor Mrs Langley referred to the Information Sheet 1/2016 issued alongside the agenda for the meeting. The Information Sheet outlined the Cabinet's current responses to the recommendations of the Commission's House in Multiple Occupation Task and Finish Group. Consideration of the recommendations was on

hold awaiting the Government's response to the recent consultation in respect of a possible extension of the mandatory licensing scheme to avoid any abortive work. Personally the Cabinet Member outlined her preference to extended registration given the need to ensure safe housing for the many disadvantaged and vulnerable tenants housed in such premises.

Members made a number of points and received clarification on a number of issues:

- From a planning perspective Members were noting a growing number of HMO's often with tenants from London Borough's within clusters within their wards, as the planning system could not effectively control their proliferation or standard;
- The extended mandatory scheme was seen as a far more effective means of enforcement than that which currently prevailed;
- The need for sufficient budget to cover any extended scheme was key to its success; and
- Members were keen to establish a Task and Finish Group in due course in respect of Housing as a whole, however, this would be after the work or recommendations of the Regeneration Delivery Task and Finish Group which would consider the merits of establishing delivery vehicles that could deliver on both commercial and housing development.

The Cabinet Member then updated the Meeting on the status of Saunderton Lodge, in that an agreement had just been signed to commission an options appraisal. This was being done by an outside consultant. Members were encouraged to visit the Lodge to see the current provision and scope for development, refurbishment etc. Members were asked to contact Mr B Daly (Housing Service Manager) to organise such a visit.

The appraisal was to be carried out over the next three months, with a final report to Cabinet in the summer, and the Cabinet Member agreed to update the Commission on progress at their next meeting in June.

Members again made a number of points and received clarification on a number of issues:

- The provision of temporary housing away from this site by another provider was highlighted as an option that should also be pursued;
- The site had provided much needed respite for many residents over many years and its success in this was much attributable to the staff some who had served at the hostel for many years; and
- Some members noted that the location though good for some residents did at times result in inability to retain employment for residents and disrupted

education for resident children. The need for the Council to look at best practice re: temporary housing as provided by other authorities was noted.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for her informative and comprehensive update on the work of her service. A revisit by the Commission to the subject matter in 6 months hence was agreed with a specific update on the Saunderton Lodge options appraisal at the next meeting in June 2016.

### **33. BUCKS INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN CABINET REPORT**

The Meeting considered the Bucks Infrastructure and Investment Plan (BIIP) as submitted to Cabinet the previous Monday (7 March 2016).

Presented by the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ms Katrina Wood) and Chief Executive of the Council (Ms K Satterford), the BIIP was explained and its roles in underpinning the Buckinghamshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), these being achieved by setting out the key strategic infrastructure investments that Buckinghamshire required in order to enable sustainable growth to be successfully delivered over the next twenty years.

The Commission was being invited to identify any issues and projects that the Commission wished to see promoted as the Plan was implemented, bearing in mind that it would evolve over time as existing priorities were met and new ones emerged.

The Leader emphasised that all monies from central government for such infrastructure projects came through the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) as a result the 5 local authorities in Buckinghamshire needed to have this document with agreed prioritised schemes featured. The Leader outlined her membership and input into the LEP whilst the Chief Executive outlined her role as a director of Buckinghamshire Advantage the delivery arm of the LEP.

The announcement of the criteria for Local Growth Fund 3 monies post Easter was explained and when known the appropriate worked up infrastructure schemes, highlighted in the Infrastructure Plan would be used to inform the projects that should be submitted for funding.

Again Members made a number of points and received clarification on a number of issues, as follows:

- Though a commendable list of well thought out schemes, the funding challenge was highlighted for major infrastructure schemes, for example the much needed ring road at Princes Risborough given planned development;
- The key linkage of the Plan to the Council's Local Plan was noted;
- The inclusion of sustainable transportation and both NEP (Natural Environment Partnership) and Health & Wellbeing Board input in the Strategic Economic Plan which overarched the BIIP was outlined; and

- The fear that development, as in the reserve sites would be allowed to go ahead without the need for adequate infrastructure, was expressed.

The Commission thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for their presentation and for answering Members queries, the Commission formally noted and commended the Plan.

### **34. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

The status of the current task and finish groups was considered and discussed.

Members agreed to set up a further Task and Finish Group to look into Members' ICT and the wider contract with Capita.

The purpose of the Group being to focus on IT support to Members; but to also look at support to the organisation as a whole and to consider the effectiveness of the current arrangements. Concerns were expressed regarding the Council's IT resilience in respect of the roll out of Windows / Microsoft 10 and the lack of backwards compatibility for previous products now being provided by the supplier, which was a new issue that had arisen since the current arrangements had been put in place.

It was agreed that Councillor L Wood would be the Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, and the timescales of the review provided for it to report back to the Commission in June. Councillors K Ahmed, H Bull, M Davy, D Knights & S Raja agreed to join the Group for which it was indicated daytime meetings would be scheduled.

Councillor A Turner agreed to join the Local Plan Task & Finish Group, the Chairman of Commission pointing out his invaluable knowledge of planning policy and particularly in respect of matters concerning Princes Risborough, which he would bring to the Group.

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

#### **RESOLVED:** That

- (i) The update on the Work Programme and current task and finish groups be noted; and
- (ii) An ICT Support Task and Finish Group as outlined above be established, reporting back to the Commission at its meeting in June 2016.

### **35. INFORMATION SHEETS**

The Commission noted the submission of following information sheets issued since the previous meeting:

- 1/2016 Houses in Multiple Occupation

### **36. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

There were no Councillor calls for action.

### **37. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman thanked all the Members, especially his Vice Chairman (Cllr Collingwood) and the officers, for their invaluable support and contribution during the Council year. He confirmed that he and Cllr Collingwood would be standing for election as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission respectively, next month for another term of office.

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Chairman

#### **The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

Peter Druce	- Democratic Services
Charles Meakings	- Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive