

MINUTES

of the

DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

held on 15th October, 2009

Present:

Councillor D Ashford (Chairman)

Councillors R.A. Alcock, I. Fuller, J. Galley, N. Gulliver, J.E. Hunnable,
D.A. Lumley, M.J. Mackrory, G.H.J. Pooley, R.A. Ride, C.A. Rycroft,
R.J. Shepherd, A.B. Sosin, M.H. Taylor and R.T. Whitehead

Substitute Member Councillor N. Chambers

1. **Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

The following apologies for absence was received and substitution appointment made:

- Councillor T.E. Roper – Substitute Councillor N. Chambers

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th September, 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September, 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. A motion was proposed to amend the minutes but this was lost.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September, 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Public Question Time**

Three questions/statements were made regarding the item on Essex County Council Minerals Development Document Issues and Options Paper and at the appropriate time a representative of Little Waltham Parish Council made a statement regarding the same item.

4. **Announcements**

Community Infrastructure Levy consultation

The Committee was informed that the Government was proposing a new approach to S106 agreements which was very similar to this Council's standard charges scheme. A consultation document had been received by the Council which contained 54 detailed questions and a response was required by 23rd October, 2009. The Committee noted that

it would effectively be optional for Councils to take on this scheme and if they did a two year transition period had been suggested, although Officers felt that five years would be more appropriate. It was agreed that the consultation response would be agreed with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group

5. **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – Consultation Document**

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – Consultation Document to be published for public and stakeholder consultation. It was noted that the requirement for a SCI was set out in Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Its role was to inform the community about how and when they could expect to get involved in preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework and in the consideration of planning applications.

The Committee was reminded that the current SCI had been adopted in February 2006 together with a commitment to review it after three years. The Council had commissioned independent consultants Entec to help undertake the review. The key findings had been good and were outlined to the Committee but showed that because of recent changes in legislation and an opportunity to learn from the experience of applying the SCI to the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and to ensure it aligned with other Borough Council recent strategies, the SCI should be revised.

It was noted that the next steps were to finalise the Consultation Document with a view to it being published for public consultation for 6 weeks from 10th November, 2009, this would coincide with other LDF consultations and joint events were being planned across the Borough.

The Committee welcomed the report and made the following comments and queries.

- Would there be consultation with older school children?
- It would be a good idea for the summary leaflet to be available alongside the consultation document.
- The document didn't always seem to comply with the 'plain English' requirements.
- The need to make sure that the public want to be engaged and for them to feel a sense of involvement. This was outlined in a pamphlet published by the Regional Empowerment Department for the Eastern Region.
- The document contained references to design briefs and development briefs; were these still in existence or was it an old reference?.

In response the Committee was informed that all Schools would be notified and that the Council did try to engage with young people. A summary leaflet was being worked on now and would be ready and published alongside the consultation document. Development and design briefs were still in existence and it was agreed that a copy of the pamphlet from the Empowerment Department for the Eastern Region would be forwarded to Officers.

The Committee was asked to submit any further comments to Officers by 22nd October, 2009.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Statement of Community Involvement - Consultation Document as set out in Appendix 1 of the report before the Committee be approved; and
 2. The Director of Sustainable Communities, in conjunction with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to settle the final content of the Consultation Document ahead of publication for formal consultation under Regulations 27 and 28 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended).
6. **East of England Regional Assembly Consultation Review of East of England Plan – Scenarios for Housing and Economic Growth to 2031**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the Council's suggested response to the consultation on the review of the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) East of England Plan to cover the period up to 2031. The Plan set out the long term planning strategy for the region which included targets for new homes and jobs in each local authority area and would cover the period 2011 – 2031.

It was noted that the primary focus of the consultation sought responses on four scenarios for the amount and distribution of new homes in the region. The scenarios contained minimum housing targets.

The report before the Committee outlined the four scenarios and Officer comment on them, it was noted that each scenario would be challenging for the Council to implement especially scenario 2 which sought 1,700 dwellings annually and a total of 34,000 and would require a fundamental review of the Council's Core Strategy adopted in February 2008. It was Officers' opinion that robust objections should be made to EERA based on the following issues.

- The process and scope was not fit for purpose as it provided housing number scenarios in isolation from a future overall strategy and was not accompanied by job targets. There was no reference to actual locations but just local authority administrative areas therefore making it difficult to assess the impact. There was no detailed assessment of existing infrastructure and the need for future infrastructure to support development and in particular transportation.
- That serious concerns should be raised over the credibility and robustness of the evidence base which supported the consultation document especially in relation to scenario 2.

It was noted that Chelmsford Borough Council was working in partnership with Essex County Council and other District Councils in the region and it was hoped that a collective response could be made, which it was felt would have a greater impact. The timetable outlined was also very tight.

The Committee congratulated Officers on the report before it and supported the recommendation to reject the proposals. It was noted with disappointment that Government had cut funding for infrastructure and there was no evidence that this would be forthcoming if any of these proposals went ahead. The point should also be made that this lack of funding put the existing plan under threat.

A member of the Committee had attended a meeting at Essex County Council together with other District Councils and all had agreed with the recommendation of this report. It had been stressed however by independent consultants that Councils should not rely entirely on the lack of infrastructure as the main basis for their objections.

It was also agreed that individual people and Parish Councils should be encouraged to make representations to EERA about these proposals.

The Committee was asked to submit any further comments to Officers by 29th October, 2009.

RESOLVED that;

1. The responses as set out in Appendix 4 of the report before the Committee form the basis of this Council's response to the East of England Regional Assembly consultation; and
2. The Director of Sustainable Communities, in conjunction with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group, be authorised to agree the detail of the final representations to be submitted incorporating any relevant additional responses, where appropriate, formulated as part of the ongoing and yet to be completed partnership work with Essex County Council and other Essex districts.

7. **Essex County Council: Minerals Development Document – Issues and Options Paper**

The Committee considered a report informing it of the current consultation taking place on Essex County Council's Minerals Development Document. The Issues and Options document, containing four mineral extraction sites within, or partly within, the Borough of Chelmsford which had been put forward by landowners. The document had been published on 17th September, 2009 and comments had been invited by 12th November, 2009.

The Committee noted concern from members of the public and Little Waltham Parish Council in relation to the proposed site at Alsteads Farm, Little Waltham on the grounds that the environmental constraints, likely noise pollution and insufficient infrastructure for the amount of extra traffic rendered the site inappropriate and therefore would have an adverse effect on the local community. Concerns on this site and also the Great Leighs and Shellow Cross Farm site were expressed by Members,

The Committee agreed that there were significant potential adverse environmental impacts arising from mineral working at each of the sites, particularly in relation to nearby residential properties and the surrounding countryside.

The Committee was asked to submit any further comments to Officers by 29th October, 2009. It was also agreed that individual people and Parish Councils should be encouraged to make representations against these proposals.

RESOLVED that;

1. The principle of raising strong objections to suggested sites in the Borough of Chelmsford be endorsed; and

2. The detailed representations be approved by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group.

8. **Stock Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The Committee considered a report concerning the Village Design Statement (VDS) which had been produced by the Stock community and which sought approval to proceed to public consultation in preparation for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

It was noted that Chelmsford Borough Council had been the first authority in Essex to have an adopted VDS as approved guidance and it would be used as a material planning consideration.

The Committee was informed that Officers had been closely involved in the preparation of the VDS and the aim was for it to be ready for public consultation for six weeks alongside other Local Development Framework documents.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Director of Sustainable Communities be authorised to issue the Stock Village Design Statement SPD for formal consultation in accordance with Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004;
2. The Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development be authorised to secure detailed corrections to the Statement prior to publication.

9. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the Committee.

10. **Reports to Council**

There were no reports referred to Council.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm

Chairman