

Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 23 March 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Paul Arnold (Vice-Chair), Gary Collins, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillor Maureen Pearce

In attendance:
Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead of Strategic Services
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Laura Pattinson
Kirsty Paul, Local Plans Manager
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

25. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

26. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

27. Strategic Housing Market Assessment Presentation

The Chair agreed to hear item 5 on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment before item 4. The Principal Planning Officer provided a presentation to the Committee on the South Essex Housing Needs Assessment and the slides can be found on the following link:

[\(Public Pack\)South Essex Housing Needs Assessment Presentation Agenda Supplement for Local Development Plan Task Force, 23/03/2023 18:30 \(thurrock.gov.uk\)](#)

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the assessment outlines that around 1181 homes are needed annually in Thurrock.

The Chair commented that she doesn't like the word 'affordable' as it is only affordable if you can afford it. The Chair stated that there are 8000 people on the Council list, perhaps we should be looking at doing more to encourage

people to own a home themselves. We should also be looking at Thurrock people being able to stay in Thurrock so families can stay near each other. There are lots of 3 or 4 bedroom houses with just one person in them as there are no bungalows available. More bungalows are needed. None of this is covered in the assessment.

The Principal Planning Officer agreed that the assessment contained a lot of data but confirmed that it does set out the need for different types of housing such as bungalows, flats and houses. The Principal Planning Officer stated that the affordable rent is normally calculated at 80% of the market rent but when market rents are high that isn't affordable for many and therefore we might need to look at a lower figure like 60%. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that First Homes came into place in 2020 and looks at affordable home ownership. It provides for a 30% discount off the market price of a house. We would need to look at whether this is affordable for our residents and if it will allow young adults to be able to purchase homes in the borough.

Councillor Worrall responded that she had not heard of First Homes before and requested more information on it as it seemed like quite an attractive offer.

The Principal Planning Officer stated that it is a new project and there has been some pilots. It replaces Starter Homes which was promoted a few years ago. The idea is that a housing developer will build homes and as part of the affordable housing percentage they will sell them at a minimum of 30% discount. The discount could be higher than 30%. They can also be marketed on a first refusal basis to those who have a connection to Thurrock for say a period of 3 months and then after that it could be marketed more widely to those who live outside Thurrock. There is a price cap and it is limited to homes not worth more than £250,000 so it is more likely to apply to flats and small houses in Thurrock. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that they do need to speak to developers more about this, she commented that she is not aware of any planning applications from developers proposing to use First Homes yet.

Councillor Worrall noted the need for 1181 homes a year. A figure of 32,000 homes was being circulated before. She queried if the figures have increased or decreased.

The Principal Planning Officer responded that the figure of 32,000 came from the South Essex SHMA assessment and this projected that around 1381 houses were needed a year which is 200 more per year than this assessment. The SHMA included an economic uplift which this housing needs assessment does not have as it is just based on the demographic baseline. There is a need to complete further work on this. It is estimated that there will be growth and a work force needed for 21,000 jobs. Different growth scenarios need to be looked at and if these jobs will be filled by people living in Thurrock or whether people will commute into Thurrock.

The Local Plan Manager confirmed that the housing needs figure is one thing and that is the figure the Government tells us we need to work towards.

However, if there are development constraints in the borough, we may not be able to meet those expectations.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Growth echoed these comments and confirmed it is about good growth and knowing the borough.

Councillor Watson noted there is an ageing population and she queried if supported housing was being looked at. She requested that the department start exploring models of 50% / 60% affordability with shared ownership in there so new estates becomes a bit more cohesive and not just filled with privately owned homes. Councillor Watson noted that in Planning Committee it seems that it is always 4 bedroom houses coming forward and they are all likely to be privately owned. Councillor Watson commented that she would like it tied into the policy that houses are offered off plan for the first 3 months or even 6 months to Thurrock residents only as that seems to be working in other boroughs.

The Local Plan Manager noted Councillor Watson's comments.

The Chair thanked the Principal Planning Officer for the presentation.

28. Local Plan Update Presentation

Councillor Watson queried if there is any way we can accelerate the local plan.

The Local Plan Manager responded that the current timescales are already very ambitious.

The Committee discussed whether this item could be delayed to the next meeting due to the time constraints. The presentation slides can be found on the following link:

[\(Public Pack\)Local Plan Update Presentation Agenda Supplement for Local Development Plan Task Force, 23/03/2023 18:30 \(thurrock.gov.uk\)](#)

The Local Plan Manager responded that she would just like to inform the meeting of two consultations due to end on the 9th June 2023.

The Local Plan Manager confirmed that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to National Planning Policy consultation began on the 22nd December 2022 and ended on the 2nd March 2023. Thurrock Council did not prepare a response as we had only a few minor concerns. One of the key things to come out of this is some additional wording regarding the green belt and whether to release green belt. The Planning Department at the Council have always been clear that if we are looking at green belt release it needs to do more than just deliver homes and therefore we are hoping the new proposed wording will give us more leverage to ensure that more is being

delivered to meet local area needs such as improving infrastructure to ensure developments provide a lasting legacy.

The Local Plan manager stated that she wanted to highlight today the proposed new Infrastructure levy which is intended to replace the current S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy. The amount developers pay will now look at the final amount the land will be worth to make sure Council's benefit from increases in land value. The Local Plan Manager confirmed that further information on this is covered in the presentation slides. The new system would be phased in over 10 years and they are looking for pilot authorities. The Local Plan Manager confirmed that the department are still getting to grips with what this might mean. They are proposing a 3 step payment process once the levy is in place, a provisional payment will be made, a valuation assessment will take place and at the end there will be a final payment. The new levy would be more flexible than S106. It is also proposed that the money could be spent on non-infrastructure matters such as social care.

The Chair queried what happens to S106 money now as if it is not used it goes back to the contractor.

The Assistant Director for Planning and Growth confirmed that S106 money is attributed to projects. A list is sent to Members on this and he agreed to circulate it to members again.

The Local Plan Manager stated that there will also be a requirement for an Infrastructure delivery Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan currently being completed will be a key tool going forward. The current consultation closes on the 9th June 2023.

The Local Plan Manager also confirmed that the Consultation on Environment Outcomes Reports also ends on 9th June 2023

29. Work Programme

The task force discussed the work programme for the next municipal year and members noted that flooding and water needed to come back.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their contributions over the last municipal year.

The meeting finished at 9.12 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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