

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 December 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Alex Anderson (Vice-Chair), Vikki Hartstean, Jacqui Maney, Lee Watson and Ben Maney

Apologies: Councillors Tom Kelly

In attendance: Mark Bradbury, Interim Director of Place
Kirsty Paul, Local Plans Manager
Luke Tucker, 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.

28. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15th November 2023 will be presented at the February 2024 meeting of the Committee.

29. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

30. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

31. Local Plan Report - to follow

The Director of Place presented the application and highlighted the following points:

- There is a statutory requirement placed on all local authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan.
- The current Local Plan was adopted 8 years ago.
- A report seeking approval to commence consultation on the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document and the Initial Proposals Integrated Impact Assessment will be presented to an extraordinary meeting of Council on 6th December 2023.
- The consultation will run for a minimum of 8 weeks.

Members asked the following questions to the Director of Place and the Local Plan Manager:

- The Chair questioned how the figures were reached in the Local Plan and if those figures are tangible.
 - Figures would be fleshed out throughout the year.
 - Biodiversity is new and only published on recently.
- The Chair wanted to see more information on biodiversity in the report.
 - Biodiversity of 20% is appropriate for the Local Authority.
- Councillor Anderson asked if local authorities cooperate with one another in the creation of Local Plans near border areas, for example West Horndon.
 - Thurrock Council cannot plan for other local authorities but there is a duty to cooperate and review impacts on the Greenbelt.

Councillor Watson arrived at the meeting at 19:16pm

- Councillor Anderson asked what the Local Plan would do to level the playing field.
 - Housing and health are the main concerns. There is a need for affordable housing. The Local Authority is not a provider of GP's but needs to think of facilitating health needs of people where they live.
- Councillor Anderson asked how similar the plan will look actualised on the map.
 - Plan for 17,000 new homes
 - Lower Thames Crossing could add time.
 - Plan contains many options.
- Councillor Anderson asked what would happen if the Lower Thames Crossing were cancelled.
 - Plan has factored in the Lower Thames Crossing but is flexible.
 - Other sites may need to be revisited.
- Councillor Watson asked why no sites are going through Planning.
 - Waiting for approval and permission.
- Councillor Watson further asked if it would cause an impact.
 - Not a direct impact, if approved it would need to be considered.
- The Chair asked what net-zero means for the Local Authority.
 - Net-zero carbon emissions.
- Councillor Anderson asked what net-zero means in practice.
 - A result of no additional carbon emissions when building homes.
 - Net-zero homes are more expensive to build but cheaper to run.
 - Net-zero will be more clearly defined in future reports.
- The Chair noted the cost to build a net-zero home being £20,000-£30,000 more expensive and an impact on affordability.
 - New technology is hoped to bring the price down.
- Councillor Anderson asked if all homes in the plan are net zero.
 - Only homes in new neighbourhoods.

- The Chair asked what affordable housing means and if there were plans for social housing.
 - Social housing is included as well as first time buyer homes.
 - The plan is to blend social and other rents.
- The Chair would like to see a commitment of affordable homes.
- Councillor Watson stated the Local Plan is an ideological approach, the plan is fluid and that it is the residents plan.
- The Chair disagreed. The committee debated the pros and cons of the plan.
- The Chair asked about traffic modelling.
 - A detailed model to show the impact has not yet been created but will be developed with stakeholders throughout the year.
- Councillor Watson asked if there is any way to improve the flow of traffic at junction 31 of the M25.
 - Possibilities of moving traffic offences at the junction
 - Traffic modelling work is the next stage.
- The Chair noted that traffic was a major concern, traffic improvements would improve the quality of life of residents.
- The Chair asked why he should vote for the Local Plan and informed the committee he was not happy with the progress framework prioritising growth over people.
 - To give residents a say.
- Councillor Maney informed the committee that if the council does not vote for the plan, a plan would be forced upon the Local Authority.
- Councillor Watson stated you have to weigh up the risks and said the Council should take the risk.
- The Chair asked if there were concerns of cynicism from residents regarding health and medical services.
 - Infrastructure delivery plan includes health, education and community facilities.
 - Land cannot be allocated if infrastructure isn't there.
- The Chair asked how the Local Authority can make Thurrock more attractive for health professionals.
 - The infrastructure plan sits alongside the Local Plan.

The Chair put the recommendation to vote.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport & Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny note that Council will be recommended to approve the contents of the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Regulation 18) for public consultation.

32. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme.

- Members sort updates on regeneration projects (Grays underpass, Stanford-le-Hope station)

- Members sort an update on the Towns Fund for Grays and Tilbury
- Members sort an update on Purfleet-on-Thames funding.

The meeting finished at 8.41 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**