

Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Martin Kerin (Chair), Peter Smith (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, James Baker, Terry Piccolo and Jane Potheary

In attendance: Steve Cox (Corporate Director Place)
Sean Nethercott, Growth & Strategy Team Leader
Wendy Le, 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.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

13. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

14. Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2)

The report was presented by the Corporate Director which outlined changes within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and was summarised in paragraph 3.1. With this, an update on the consultation paper 'Issues and Options 2 (IO2)' was given in regards to the implications the new NPPF would have on Thurrock's plan-making process. Comments taken from the Member Ward Meetings were also included in the report which would help to shape the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Councillor Baker arrived 7.15pm.

Councillor Potheary thanked the Corporate Director for the report and sought clarification on the narrative around the report regarding the motion back in July 2018 that seemed to be around affordable housing and not social or low cost housing. Councillor Potheary went on to say people had different terms on affordable housing in the meaning that it was not actually affordable. Pointing out paragraph 3.17, she noticed 48% of new dwellings built were needed to be affordable but paragraph 3.22 showed that 35% was available.

Then referring to appendix 1, section 3's title 'Development plans must...seek to meet the area's objectively assessed needs', Councillor Potheary went on to mention the problem in this. Going on assumptions based in the report, it would then not be possible to meet the 'objectively assessed needs' which was 48% but only 35% could be attained, she asked for the Officers' thoughts on this.

The Corporate Director agreed that the motion in 3.16 was on low cost affordable housing rather than on just affordable. Mentioning of two points, he went on to say that the IO2 was filled with questions particularly regarding housing and would give people the opportunity to give their thoughts on what percentage of affordable low-cost housing Thurrock actually needed. This would become clearer once the IO2 went to consultation.

Continuing on, the Corporate Director said the second point linked back to the standard methodology used for the number of homes needed which would fluctuate as autumn came around with more changes to come. It would be difficult to pinpoint a number. The challenge was what the service could do to deliver low cost housing and there were different mechanisms. The LDP was one mechanism which had to work within the NPPF and another was through Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL). Council housing could be attained through TRL to address the issue of social renting. There were also Housing Revenue Account schemes and the proposed abolishment of the debt cap, would enable local authorities to borrow more to get social rent housing. Low cost affordable housing was a priority for Thurrock and the Council could also help in other ways.

In response, Councillor Potheary commented that a shift in thinking imaginatively on the LDP could be felt and the question of how people wanted Thurrock to be should be asked as well as the issues faced. This shift was not reflected well in the presented report and Councillor Potheary felt more detail could have been reported on the important issues that had progressed. There had been a lack of detail on low cost and affordable housing.

The Corporate Director agreed that there was a sense of shift and that the LDP was reflecting the local issues. The question now was how the LDP could be a solution to the current problems that Thurrock faced.

The Vice-Chair mentioned receiving details of a private development for 250 new homes but had no specifications to affordable housing or to the s106 scheme. He felt the service needed to toughen up on the planning stages and there needed something in place for these types of private development. The Vice-Chair went on to ask if the IO2 consultation would include thoughts on potential singular developments on a larger scale.

Stating that the IO2 would ask questions instead of giving answers, the Corporate Director went on to mention that one of the questions put to residents were on types of developments. The IO2 would have options open for thought such as urban expansion, expansion around villages and major new settlements. Residents were encouraged to give pros and cons of these options.

Councillor Anderson questioned if the NPPF would affect Thurrock's interaction with neighbouring authorities. Responding that the service was working with neighbouring authorities, the Corporate Director said it was important to support each other across the housing market. The service was

also looking beyond Thurrock, across South Essex on other developments to get a wider picture on the housing market.

In regards to Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), Councillor Piccolo felt that the delay in defining the eventual route of the crossing 'put a spanner' in the LDP. He thought the idea to build on brownfield sites did not exist as there was not much for Thurrock. This meant building would have to take place on the green belt. He put forward questions of whether to develop 2 bands for building on the green belt; how to decide which green belt to build on, if there were to be any green belt left after the LTC.

In answer, the Corporate Director stated the service was challenging Highways England (HE) on the route of the LTC. The service would ensure LTC delivered Thurrock's priorities, not Highways England. For IO2, the hope was to gain thousands of responses to determine what local residents' priorities were and then to present the results to HE. The Corporate Director went on to agree that the LDP was affected by the LTC and would impact on what would happen as the LTC would take a lot of Thurrock's green belt.

Councillor Piccolo gave the suggestion that Thurrock's residents could put forward the idea of where they would want the LTC to be. The Corporate Director thought that with more questions, it would give the service a good idea of what residents wanted. It would provide the best spatial solution for Thurrock.

Echoing the Corporate Director's comments, the Vice-Chair said HE should adopt the route that Thurrock's residents wanted. The erection of the LTC would affect not only housing but also the amount of movement across the crossing. The Vice-Chair ended by saying that he wanted to see that the IO2 would have options and questions on protecting Thurrock's heritage and provisions. The Corporate Director answered that the front of the IO2 document would have Thurrock's principles and whether residents would agree that these would be the principles to guide the IO2 forward.

Asking for clarity on paragraph 3.14, Councillor Potheary queried if national government would know if LTC were to invalidate the LDP. Giving assurance, the Corporate Director said the service was conversing with different bodies within the government. If a certain part of the LDP could not go ahead due to the LTC, this would also be challenged back to HE.

Referring back to the issue of affordability in paragraph 3.8, the Chair queried what the solution would be if the LDP could not be adopted. He also raised questions on the definition of affordability and what mechanisms were set for it as the word had different meanings for people. The Corporate Director answered the LDP would address the issue.. It was limited but what levers there were, would be used and the service would be tough on developers. The types of affordable housing were to be considered and with the lift of the debt cap, the service would use this to their benefit.

The Chair stated homes should be Thurrock affordable and went on to say the LTC was delaying Thurrock's plan. Seeking reassurance, he asked how Thurrock could fight for their LDP. The Corporate Director stated Thurrock needed to be clear and firm on what they wanted. Thurrock would challenge and ensure the LTC design addressed Thurrock's priorities.

Pointing out recommendation 1.1, the Vice-Chair asked how the service planned to reach out to the public once progress was made. Holding up a document of the first consultation, the Vice-Chair noted there had been 13 responses back then. He went on to say he wanted to see a large and transparent consultation with the public on IO2 and the service should reach out to businesses, people who travelled in to Thurrock to work and to go viral with the IO2.

In response, the Corporate Director said there was a need to make the LDP as interesting as possible. There had been good feedback from the Your Place, Your Voice consultation back in spring 2018 and the service would use a similar approach on the IO2. The aim was to challenge the LTC and developers so the Corporate Director was confident voices would come through.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the approach being taken to progress the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation Document.

15. Establishment of a Task Force in relation to the Local Development Plan

Presented by the Democratic Services Officer, the report proposed the establishment of a working group for the LDP which had been voted on by Members in the Committee meeting from 4 July 2018. The group would be called the Local Development Plan Task Force.

The Vice-Chair supported the idea of the task force as he felt the Committee would gain a major workload over the next 5 years alongside other projects. By having the LDP Task Force, it would save the Committee some time to look at other plans. The Chair agreed and said he was satisfied with the terms of reference attached in appendix 1.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a working group under the title of Local Development Plan Task Force.

1.2 That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopted the terms of reference (attached as appendix 1) for the LDP Task Force.

The meeting finished at 7.37 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**