

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 22 JUNE 2015 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.35 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman),
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight and Alison Swaddle

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Mark Ashwell, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration and Committees

Officers Present

Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Bernie Pich, Head of Town Centre Regeneration

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Chris Bowring, (substituted by Councillor Alison Swaddle), Ken Miall and Shahid Younis.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

4.1 Tom Berman asked the Chairman of the Committee the following question

At the March committee meeting of the Committee Councillor Jorgensen report that in June the Committee '*would review the progress of the Planning Enforcement Service Action Plan and the outcome of the consultation on the Local Planning Enforcement Plan*'. As a result of that we, the residents had a reasonable expectation that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny would be doing its job at this meeting of critically examining the results of the consultation on the LPEP and any revisions to the LPEP proposed by management and that this would be done today before any revised went for approval by the Executive. The LPEP was put out to public consultation in the first quarter, with a closing date of 22 March 2015, so the Officers would have had the best part of three months to consider consultees comments and to respond appropriately. I have not been able to find on the Wokingham Borough Council website under 'Current Consultations' or Consultation Responses' any reference to the LPEP consultation.

So my question is, when and how may the public have access to a summary of consultees' responses to the LPEP consultation and to the consequent amendments to LPEP, and when and how will the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee carry out its duty to scrutinise any such amendments before seeking the approval of the Executive?

Answer provided by the Chairman:

I am told that the outcome, the summary of consultee responses to the LPEP exercise is in the Development Section in the Planning area. If you still cannot find it then I suggest to

you come back to Officers within Democratic Services. The summary should be there now I believe.

The Council's Executive is the appropriate decision making body to consider consultation responses received and how that is incorporated into the LPEP. The comments and the resultant amendments to the document will be presented to the Executive meeting which is scheduled for July 2015. The papers for that will be published as normal about a week or so in advance of that meeting.

I am satisfied that the Committee has had full opportunity to review the document previously and input to it. I have been informed that comments have been taken into consideration and amendments suggested by the Committee have been included in the final draft, which I have not yet seen.

The papers for the Executive meeting will be obviously be made available before the meeting and if there are any issues raised by members of the Committee or if I see anything that I do not like then I will raise on behalf of the Committee with the Executive Member John Kaiser prior to the Executive meeting. So I think that is how this Committee will have any further input if required. If you recall, we only had a couple of comments the last time we saw it and I have been assured that those comments have been taken into consideration.

Supplementary question:

You say that you are satisfied that Members have had the opportunity to comment. My question is when did that occur? Because the last meeting of this Committee was in March and the results of the consultation came out subsequently to that. So, I do not understand how the Members of the committee have had the opportunity that you refer to.

Supplementary answer provided by the Chairman:

I am referring to the previous time it came before it went out to consultation. So we had our comments which were submitted as part of the consultation. I have been assured that those have been taken into account so that is why we have done our bit. I have to stress that the decision making body is the Executive. This committee does not have the decision making power. So it's the right place. Again, if you have further questions then probably address them to that Executive meeting because again public questions can be asked at that and if we have any further comments, we will make those comments as well.

4.2 Philip Meadowcroft asked the Chairman of the Committee the following question

Given the absence from this meeting's agenda of consideration of the LPEP public consultation responses and the proposed amendments to the LPEP document, the Committee will have no input prior to the matter coming before the Executive on July 30. This contradicts the plan the Committee had previously stated. It did want to have input to this plan. Yes you have just mentioned in your previous answer that the Committee did have input to the first plan, but in fact the two particular areas that this Committee raised, (by Councillor Bowring particularly) were largely evaporated because if you see the minutes, he was satisfied with Clare Lawrence's, Head of Development Management words to the effect that it was largely impossible to sort out what planning harm might be or to define may or may not be expedient. Perhaps it is the public consultation event that has brought this particularly to the forefront as being grappled by Ms Lawrence's department but is unable to present its revision here. I think the fact that you have had input prior to this meeting, yes I agree on the first, but not on the second

which could be rather more important now in that we might have an LPEP document which meets needs rather better than the first one.

Is the Committee sufficiently concerned to implement its purpose to overview and scrutinise, bearing in mind that the Executive is the decision making authority, but this is overview and scrutiny area, by insisting on arranging a meeting of the Committee prior to the July 30 Executive meeting so that it can submit to the Executive its own conclusions on the LPEP consultees' responses and the redraft by officials of the LPEP proposals because that is not what you have done and I think it is your job to do so? To not to do so is in my view an abrogation of the responsibility of Overview and Scrutiny.

Answer

Most of my answer is fairly similar probably to the previous question.

As you are aware, the Committee has looked at the planning enforcement area a number of times over the last couple of years so we have played quite an important role in the review of the Planning Enforcement Service and then in helping to prepare the plan,

The Committee has reviewed the draft Local Planning Enforcement Plan document and made comments at that stage. As stated previously, I have been informed that the views of the Committee have been taken into account although I have not seen the draft document.

The formal process now is for the Plan to be presented to the Executive. That is the decision making body and it is quite unusual for something to come back repeatedly to overview and scrutiny whilst it is being developed so we have done quite a lot in that regard so far. All the Members of the Committee will receive the papers before they go to the Executive, I will certainly read them and if Members of the Committee have concerns I will get them to raise them with me and I will raise them with the Executive Member so that they are taken into account before the Plan is put into place.

In terms of the action plan, I am intending that the action plan will come back to Overview and Scrutiny in a few months' time so we can see how things are going to the plan that they have set themselves.

Supplementary question:

You have answered me as Chairman, do your other colleagues have a similar view about my concern that you possibly meet just for this one item between now and July 30 so that you can clearly feel that the level of scrutiny you do will have been done? Bearing in mind, that the Executive is not a scrutineering committee. I have been to those meetings. There is very little detail. It is rather presentation, rubber stamp, move on to the next question. That concerns me. I have been to the last nine meetings of this committee. Nine consecutive meetings and I have seen that from the moment this committee voted nine to nil that this was going to be its main task in 2014 and I think it dates back to a decision in September 2013. We are now nearly 2 years on and I think this committee can be proud that it decided to make this a major item as it was something of a blot on the landscape and has tackled it and we have got an excellent report from John Sylvester. But I do not know how many Members of the Executive have read it. My copy has been loaned to a member of the Planning Committee who had not even seen it. That is why I am concerned that somebody somewhere on this committee which I think it is very good vehicle, really gets to the nuts and bolts of what has been proposed not just in this

document but in the LPEP proposals that have come from the council Officers and the revised ones because the revisions are important because we all feel a little bit uncomfortable about what planning harm and not expedient meant. Therefore I would ask you again to consider even though it is July and short notice, and there are plenty of other meetings, that there is a focus because if you say no I will have to come to another conclusion about what overview and scrutiny is really meaning.

Supplementary answer provided by the Chairman:

I think the papers will only come out a week before the meeting so the most convenient thing to do is for members of this committee to review the papers and if people have concerns then we will correspond with each other. If is absolutely necessary, if it is so serious we can call a very quick meeting to discuss. I think that's the most expedient way of dealing with it. It is not that we do not want to deal with it. I think that we deal with it that way and it will get done and then, as I say, we will correspond if we have got concerns when we read it. So I think that is the way that I am proposing that we deal with the issue. So we will certainly look at it.

Of course this is to put in place the plan. There is the action plan running which is running alongside. As you are aware there have been a large number of changes over the last couple of years in the planning enforcement and I think most Members have seen a ramping up of enforcement action in their areas. So it is not that things are standing still. It is just putting formal plan in place so that we can rely on it in planning terms.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

5.1 Question submitted by Councillor Prue Bray

Councillor Prue Bray asked the Chairman of the Committee a Member question relating to the Agenda item on the Review of Town Centre Regeneration Scheme. The answer to the question was provided as part of the exempt part of the meeting after the Committee had voted to exclude the public. As set out in paragraph 4.2.10.5 of the Council's Constitution a full written answer has been provided to Councillor Bray.

5.2 Question submitted by Councillor Tom McCann

Councillor Tom McCann asked the Chairman of the Committee a Member question relating to the Agenda item on the Review of Town Centre Regeneration Scheme. The answer to the question was provided as part of the exempt part of the meeting after the Committee had voted to exclude the public. As set out in paragraph 4.2.10.5 of the Council's Constitution a full written answer has been provided to Councillor McCann.

5.3 Question submitted by Councillor Lindsay Ferris

Councillor Lindsay Ferris had asked the Chairman of the Committee a Member question relating to the Agenda item on the Review of Town Centre Regeneration Scheme, but was unable to attend the meeting. The answer to the question was provided as part of the exempt part of the meeting after the Committee had voted to exclude the public. As set out in paragraph 4.2.10.5 of the Council's Constitution a full written answer has been provided to Councillor Ferris.

5.4 Question submitted by Councillor Beth Rowland

Councillor Beth Rowland had asked the Chairman of the Committee a Member question relating to the Agenda item on the Review of Town Centre Regeneration Scheme, but was unable to attend the meeting. The answer to the question was provided as part of the exempt part of the meeting after the Committee had voted to exclude the public. As set

out in paragraph 4.2.10.5 of the Council's Constitution a full written answer has been provided to Councillor Rowland.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme, as set out on Agenda pages 13 to 18.

The Committee noted the proposed work programme. In relation to the item on the upkeep and maintenance of sports pitches, the Chairman commented that it would be helpful if the Committee could be provided with information on levels of usage of the sports pitches relative to capacity as well as the level of revenue generated.

Members requested that in addition to the items in the work programme the following items be included:

- a report on the impact on the Borough of new Right to Buy Legislation. The report should consider the impact on housing lists. The Committee requested that the report be brought to the November 2015 meeting;
- A report on the possible income generation from car parks benefitting from the Cross rail users be potentially brought to the March 2016 meeting depending on the outcome of the review into commuter parking at train stations in the Borough;
- A review of the findings of the Task Group review of External Bodies and an update on the outcome of the recommendations of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to External Bodies. The Committee requested that a report be brought to the meeting in November 2015.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SCHEME

Mark Ashwell, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration and Mr Bernie Pich, Head of Town Centre Regeneration, gave the Committee an update on the town centre regeneration scheme.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was proposed by the Chairman and duly seconded that the public be excluded as the provision of answers to Members' questions relating to the item on the Review of Town Centre Regeneration and discussion of the item would involve the disclosure of exempt information.

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

9. REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE REMUNERATION SCHEME PART 2 DISCUSSION

Mark Ashwell, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration and Mr Bernie Pich, Head of Town Centre Regeneration, gave the Committee an update on the town centre regeneration scheme.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Committee noted the report: and

2. Further financial estimates scheme be brought to the Committee in September.