

Environment Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2021 AT ONLINE.

Present:

Cllr Paul Sample JP, Cllr Liz Alstrom, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Bob Jones MBE (Vice-Chair), Cllr Jerry Kunkler (Chair), Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Charles McGrath, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Dr Nick Murry, Cllr Bill Parks, Cllr Rich Rogers, Cllr Iain Wallis and Cllr Mary Webb

Also Present:

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr Jacqui Lay and Cllr Christopher Williams

38 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

39 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

40 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

41 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

42 **Local Plan review**

The Select Committee received a report considered by Cabinet on 29 June 2021 which provided an initial summary of the main issues that were raised through the Local Plan consultation and the next steps.

The Chair highlighted that as report had already been discussed at Cabinet and, to avoid duplication, invited members to focus their questions and debate within this select committees' remit only. In particular focusing upon the more strategic aspects of the report and not, unless illustrating a wider point, upon the detailed questions regarding specific localities.

The Select Committee noted there were many questions raised by members of the public which were answered by officers and these have been attached to the agenda, to avoid repetition of questions already raised and answered.

Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change introduced the report. He explained that the Cabinet agreed to continue the Local Plan process and work on further consultation. It was noted that officers had faced many challenges due to COVID, especially during the consultation process between January and March 2021. A key part of the Local Plan process was the testing of the lower and upper range of housing need for the Plan period. This would need to be evidence based and would be considered by the Inspector at the end of the process.

In response to comments and questions from the Select Committee, the Cabinet Member and officers highlighted that:

- The gathering of evidence was vital for further work to be progressed on the Local Plan. In particular, consideration would be given to the housing need for all housing market areas in the County, rather than one area in isolation, for instance Chippenham and the associated HIF proposals. Officers would work through the evidence, taking into account the full range of consultation comments received, in order to provide a further report on the draft Plan at future Cabinet and Full Council meetings, prior to a further stage of consultation.
- If submissions for additional sites are provided during the consultation in areas of interest these would be considered alongside other comments received as the Plan is progressed.
- It would not be sustainable to favour one demographic group over another group. Proposals in the Local Plan had to be balanced to reflect mixed communities.
- A range of broadband coverage improvements currently being undertaken in the county and with the changing dynamic, broadband needs would need to be factored in on the work being undertaken on the Plan.
- The impact of COVID on the potential for brownfield development, alongside difficulties arising from the conversion of commercial/retail sites to residential sites. Town centre sites in particular required the right mix of development for their sustainability.
- The number of responses received during the consultation process were encouraging especially with the challenges faced during the pandemic. Digital consultation allowed for 24/7 response, although there was awareness of those unable to respond digitally.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders have been used by the Council to aid the development of infrastructure and will continue to be used in a positive way in the future.
- Engagement would take place with local communities in relation to proposed sites in the Local Plan, with brownfield sites being a priority.

- Climate change and Health & Wellbeing issues were a golden thread throughout the Local Plan.
- Transport access to new and existing rural business sites was difficult in some circumstances.
- There were no development proposals for land in the Hullavington airfield area from local residents or landowners. It was noted that new settlements could take years to come to fruition, especially where land deliverability issues existed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet member and officers for their input.

Resolved:

- 1. Notes this initial summary of the main issues arising through the consultation**
- 2. That the Committee is further updated on progress with the Local Plan review**

43 Leisure facilities insourcing

The Select Committee received a presentation from the Director of Communities and Neighbourhood Services and the Head of Community Development which provided an update on the programme to bring all Wiltshire Leisure Centres under the Council control by 1 October 2021.

Following an introduction to the presentation from Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Libraries, Governance, Facilities Management and Operational Assets, officers commented on the steps undertaken to reach the current position. This included various approvals from Cabinet between March 2020 and December 2020, the challenges faced during COVID 19 and its significant impact on the market place, the number of bids received at the close of the tender submission phase, the assessment of the bid and decision that it was not a commercially viable bid for the Council and agreement of the management arrangements by Cabinet to bring all of the Leisure Centres under Council control by 1 October 2021.

The Select Committee were introduced to 'insourcing', the key principles and how it would be undertaken to (i) ensure business critical systems and processes were in place for day 1; (ii) minimise the impact to staff and customers; (iii) to align services across the full estate where feasible and (iv) maintain the activity programme. Details of the governance structure were reported to the Select Committee and how the programme would be delivered for the following priorities – ICT, procurement and legal, Comms, HR and leisure.

In response to comments and questions from the Select Committee, the Cabinet Member and officers highlighted that:

- That maintenance issues had been part of the Council's responsibility since 2013, with available capital funding facilitating work on immediate issues.
- Wet side facilities would be updated with a priority for Lime Kiln Leisure Centre at Royal Wootton Bassett. The Olympiad Leisure Centre in Chippenham was further down the priority list.
- It was anticipated that maintenance of facilities would increase, and CCTV would continue to be maintained going forward.
- Operating facilities during Bank Holidays was not cost effective as it had been established that demand was very low at these times, however this would be reviewed in order for the facilities to remain competitive. It was also noted that staff contracts would require renegotiation to allow for facilities to be open on Bank Holidays.
- Reassurances were provided that a robust booking system would be in place and that the transition process would be managed as effectively as possible.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet member and officers for the presentation.

Resolved:

1. **To note the update**
2. **To receive a further update at the Select Committee's meeting on 9 November 2021.**

44 **Forward Work Programme**

The Select Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Comments made include:

- Cllr Murry raised an issue about the inclusion of adaptation and resilience as part of the work of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group. The Senior Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Task Group agreed an outline work programme at its last meeting and issues surrounding adaptation and resilience were included in the Work Programme, although further discussions were needed about how the Task Group would reflect this going forward.
- Cllr Jackson asked for information on responsive bus services to be included in the 'A Better Deal for Bus Users' report.
- Cllr Mathew asked if consideration could be given to further subsidies being provided to existing bus routes to encourage greater use.
- Cllr Parks asked if officers to consider seeking and including feedback from Town and Parish Council's about their experiences of CATG funding over the last 10 years and feed in comments to the 'CATG – 10 Years on' report.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme and comments above.

45 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

46 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Environment Select Committee will take place at 10:30pm on Tuesday 7 September 2021 (rearranged from 14 September 2021).

(Duration of meeting: 2.30 - 4.50 pm)

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