



Planning & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Commencing: 6.00pm
8 December 2004
Bourne Hill
Salisbury

MINUTES

Present

Councillor P D Edge (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs J Green
Councillor Mrs Greville (substituting for Cllr Mrs Chettleburgh)
Councillor Ms Mallory
Councillor Randall
Councillor Mrs Spencer

In Attendance

E Teagle (SDC)
J Meeker (SDC)
J Howles (SDC)
S Draper (SDC)

Apologies

Councillor A Peach
Councillor I Tomes

Public/Observers

I

91. Public Questions/Statements

There were no public questions or statements

92. Councillor Questions/Statements

There were no Councillor questions or statements

93. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2004 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

95. Local Development Scheme

Members considered the previously circulated report, and the previously circulated Local Development Scheme, from the Principal Planning Officer. The Principal Planning Officer gave a presentation to the Panel highlighting the key points of his report.

Members were interested to know how the larger settlements that, initially, had not been identified for a separate area specific action plan, would be considered in the future. The Principal Planning Officer stated that there was ongoing discussion amongst the Forward Planning Team, which would also involve local members, about whether it would be appropriate to have a collection of district wide policies covering general principles which could then be applied to these larger settlements or whether they would need individual area action plans at a later stage. He stated that it would very much depend on the issues of importance in each of the areas.

Members were supportive of the new system because, unlike the Local Plan system, one contentious policy or area of the scheme, would not affect the rest of the Framework. Members were also supportive of the fact that individual parts of the Framework could be reviewed in isolation without the need to adopt the whole Framework again. This would help to keep the Framework relevant to the

future of the District rather than a set of policies which were considered to be out of date as soon as they had been adopted. However, officers did express caution that members should not overestimate the flexibility inherent within the new Framework as every amendment would have to undergo consultation.

Some members expressed disappointment that no part of the LDF could be adopted more quickly than the three-year timetable outlined by the officers. It was felt that some policies, such as those to protect rural shops, would need to be in place much sooner to protect the remaining facilities. Officers stated that because of the requirements set by government there was no way around the three-year timetable. However, officers agreed to hold a meeting with concerned members to try and formulate some internal guidance to address their concerns which could have immediate effect.

A member made the comment that the proposed date for the adoption of the Framework fell immediately after the date of the next District Council election. This would mean that the incoming members might not be the same as the members who helped to formulate the Framework and might therefore not support everything within it. The officers agreed that this may be a potential stumbling block and agreed to highlight it in the potential risks section. However, given the cycle of local elections this potential change of councillors was unavoidable.

RESOLVED –

1. That the officers be thanked for all their hard work during this review.
2. That the contents of the report be noted.
3. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the draft Local Development Scheme be adopted at its meeting in January.

96. Development Services Update Report

Members considered the report of the Head of Development Services (previously circulated). The Principal Planning Officer introduced the key points of the paper to members.

During a discussion the following points were raised:

The report from SERCO, whilst appearing very critical of the Development Services Department, was written before the changes were introduced and members were aware of the vast culture change which had taken place in the department since that time.

Members were supportive of the argument that there could be no going back to the pre-May 2004 system. However, some members did wish to suggest changes to improve communication between the department and its customers, in particular parish councils.

The Officer informed members that the department had held several stakeholder meetings to take on board particular concerns about the new system and the intention was that these would continue.

Members commented that amendments to applications caused a particular problem for parishes as they could often turn up to a meeting and find that the application had changed beyond all recognition and therefore they could not comment on it on behalf of the parish council. The officer explained it was the applicant's right to submit amended plans to overcome reasons for refusal up to the day of the meeting. However, the department was now taking a tougher line and if plans were submitted which represented a substantial alteration, the applicant would be informed that they needed to submit a new application or the application would simply be refused. The Officer informed members that this new policy has led to an increase in the number of withdrawn applications. However, it was accepted that what constituted a substantial change could be a point of contention in itself.

The improvements suggested by members were:

1. To inform parish councils when the officers recommendation (and the final decision) is contrary to that of the Parish Council, the reasons for approval and

- refusal of those applications, including reasons for not incorporating all of the concerns of parish councils as a form of education and to aid understanding.
2. That District Councillors be circulated a full list of decisions including reasons for refusal, approval and conditions every week to educate them also.
 3. That officers consult ward members when a FASTRACK application is going to be refused. At present officers only consult on non- FASTRACK refusals.
 4. That parish councils be sent a copy of the letter which goes out to applicants agreeing any variations to the original approval. This would be a way of keeping parish councils informed of any changes to applications.

The officer informed the members that in relation to suggestion 1, she would be writing a procedure note before Christmas for case officers in the Development Services Department to ensure that parishes are informed about the reasons for an approval or refusal and the reasoning behind the conditions to try and educate parishes. This contact would be made at the point when the decision was about to be made in circumstances where the officer and the parish council hold a different view. However, it was stressed that this would not be an opportunity to reopen consultation but would be an information sharing exercise.

The Officer informed members that in relation to suggestions 3 and 4, she would consult the Head of Development Services to seek his views on the proposals but she did not believe there were any severe resource implications inherent in suggestion 4. However, in relation to suggestion number 2 the officer felt that this would have resource implications in terms of support staff and therefore it would have to be discussed with the Head of Development Services to see if there was a way of more easily providing members with the information.

RESOLVED –

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the officer investigate the suggestions made by members and report back to a later meeting of the scrutiny panel to give an update on the implementation of the ideas.

97. Final Report for the R2 Scrutiny Review

Members considered the draft final report for the R2 Scrutiny Review.

RESOLVED –

1. That the final report for the R2 Scrutiny Review be adopted.

98. Update on Scrutiny Reviews

Churchfields Review - Councillor Mrs Mallory, the lead member for the Churchfields working group, informed members that the group had met and had agreed that the report on Churchfields which was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 24th November 2004 would form the base document for the review. It was further agreed that an officer from Forward Planning would be invited to the next meeting of the working group in January to discuss issues surrounding the potential relocation of elements of the Industrial estate and also future uses for the site.

Potential for a 5* Hotel in Salisbury City – The Scrutiny officer informed members on behalf of the review group that they had held their first meeting and decided that they would start by requesting tourism statistics from the officers at the Council. Once they had this information they would then investigate the potential for a luxury hotel, or other tourist facilities, as well as potential locations.

99. Date of the Next Meeting

The officer agreed to send a letter to all members suggesting a suitable date in January for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 1950hrs