



Planning & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel

MINUTES

Commencing: 5.30pm
14 February 2005
Bourne Hill
Salisbury

Present

Councillor P D Edge (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Green
Councillor Ms S C Mallory
Councillor W R Moss
Councillor A G Peach
Councillor Mrs C A Spencer
Councillor I R Tomes

In Attendance

S Thorne (Head of Development Services)
J Meeker (Forward Planning)
R Hughes (Forward Planning)
S Draper (Democratic Services)

Councillor J Noeken (Portfolio Holder, Planning and Economic Development)

Apologies

Councillor Mrs J Bissington
Councillor A J A Brown-Hovelt
Councillor Mrs Chettleburgh
Councillor L Randall

Public/Observers

0

108 Public Questions/Statements

There were no public questions or statements

109 Councillor Questions/Statements

There were no Councillor questions or statements

110 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2005 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

111 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

112 Development Services Update Report

The Panel considered the previously circulated report of the Head of Development Services. The Head of Development Services brought the following points to the attention of members:

Three out of the four recommendations suggested by the Planning and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel at the meeting on 8th December 2004 have been agreed and would be implemented. The other recommendation was a compromise. The officer explained that the ward member will be informed when a FASTRACK application will be refused and a brief summary of reasons will be included on the orange list that councillors receive. However, he reminded members that only about 10% of FASTRACK applications are refused as they are generally very uncontroversial

and that as per the agreed changes to the scheme of delegation members cannot call-in FASTRACK applications.

During the discussion, the following points/questions were raised/asked:

- Members and officers raised the point that in the past it had been unclear at what point a variation to an existing application became materially different to what had been approved. The Head of Development Services explained that he had considered this issue at length and introduced a new procedure that has been adopted within the unit. Under the new practice when a variation requires further publicity with parish councils or re-consultation with a statutory or non-statutory consultee a new application is required
- Members felt that they had not had as many requests to refer applications to area committees from parishes as they had expected since May 2004. The Head of Development Services felt that this was because there had been an initial worry about what the changes would mean in practice and to a large extent this fear had not been realised.

The Portfolio Holder informed members that he and the Head of Development Services had been holding regular meetings with parishes to talk through any concerns and that these meetings were proving very helpful for both officers and parishes and would continue in the future.

The Head of Development Services also added that there would be a development services member update meeting on 15th March at 6pm at City Hall to allow members to raise any points of concern.

- Members felt that they should be the conduit between the Council and parishes to help improve communication over issues such as planning. Members therefore requested that they be sent a copy of variation notices.

The Portfolio Holder agreed that information sharing was a crucial factor to providing a high quality service and that several steps were being taken to achieve this including the appointment of an officer manager to oversee methods of communication between officers and stakeholders.

RESOLVED – That

1. That under suggestion 4 of the previously circulated report that the recommendation be amended to read “As from the 1st March 2005, variation letters to applicants authorising a change that is not materially different to the original permission, will be copied to the relevant parish council *and ward members.*”
2. That under suggestion 2 of the previously circulated report the Head of Development Services action the recommendation from 1st March 2005.
3. That, subject to the above changes, the report be approved.

113 Request for Funding

The Panel considered the previously circulated report of the Assistant Democratic Services Officer. It was also noted that MED&T would contribute some funds to this project in the region of £1800 – £2000.

RESOLVED – that £3000 from the remaining 2004/5 budget be released to the working group to employ a consultant to support the scrutiny review.

I 14 Update on Scrutiny Reviews

Churchfields Review Group - Cllr Ms Mallory, the lead councillor for the review, informed the Panel that the Review Group had met and had interviewed an officer from Forward Planning to help them decide the future direction of the review. Members were keen to be proactive in their approach so that they could shape the future of the estate rather than simply commenting on someone else's proposals. The outcome of the meeting was that members wished to have further information as to the nature of the problems faced by businesses on the estate before suggesting any possible solutions. Therefore members will be holding a meeting with members of the Business Action Group to discuss issues surrounding the estate in more depth. Once this meeting has taken place the members will decide the level and types of consultation they wish to undertake with other businesses and nearby residents.

Hotel and Conference Centre Working Group - Councillor Peach informed members that the working group had met twice. They had agreed to employ a consultant to undertake an appraisal of the market for such a development as outlined in the report that the panel had considered earlier in the meeting. He informed members that the consultant's report would be published at the end of April and once the working group had written up their findings based on the report they would present it to the Panel and then hopefully to the Cabinet.

I 15 Date of Next Meeting

The Panel agreed that the next meeting be arranged for 14th March at 6pm (note subsequently rescheduled to the 30th March 2005).

I 16 Any Other Business – Draft Circular – Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites

Although this item was not on the previously circulated agenda the Chairman declared that it be taken as a matter of urgency since a recommendation needed to be forwarded to Cabinet before the 2nd March meeting.

The Committee considered the report of the Planning Officer (Forward Planning). The officer also gave members a presentation to highlight the key features of the report.

During the discussion, the following points/questions were raised/asked:

Are there any sites for gypsies and travellers in the District at present? The officer informed members that Wiltshire County Council were responsible for provision for gypsies and travellers and that 3 permanent sites with approximately 60 pitches, and 1 transit site with 12 pitches, were provided at present. However, members were informed that the current housing needs assessment does not cover provision for gypsies and travellers and this was one of the reasons for the circular. It was the initial belief of officers that the demand would be limited.

If the new assessment demonstrated that current provision was adequate SDC would not be required to allocate more land. However, it would be necessary to consider future demand.

Members felt that officers should liaise with Wiltshire County Council closely to ensure that all the impacts and potential impacts of allocating sites for travellers were considered including education provision.

Members also felt that officers should liaise with other local authorities in the region to consider how policies implemented by other councils could affect Salisbury District.

Members asked if it was reasonable to relocate gypsies and travellers from one area of the District where no sites existed to another area where some land was already allocated. The Officers explained that if there was a large demand for a site in one area then it could be argued that SDC should allocate one.

Members felt that by assessing the need and allocating sites for gypsies and travellers it would allow the Council to undertake enforcement action more effectively against people who establish illegal encampments. Without any alternative provision for these people there would be a greater chance of losing appeals against enforcement action as the communities may win the rights to land under human rights legislation.

There was a discussion about how groups of people are identified as gypsies or travellers. Whilst some members felt that a definition needed to be clarified other members felt that anyone who claimed gypsy or traveller status should be adequately provided for whatever their history.

Members noted that in the case of Salisbury District the existing policy was largely sufficient and it would just need broadening to encompass the new demands of the circular.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended to Cabinet that the Planning & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel have noted the draft circular and they wish the following advice to be issued to officers:

1. That officers liaise closely with Wiltshire County Council to ensure that all the impacts and potential impacts of allocating sites for gypsies and travellers are considered including the provision of education.
2. That officers liaise with other Local Authorities in the South West region to ensure that best practice is shared and that as an authority Salisbury is aware of the impact that the policies of other authorities may have on the District.

The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm