

Joint Plans Panel

Thursday, 16th July, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor C Gruen in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, B Anderson,
J Bentley, D Blackburn, A Castle,
B Cleasby, R Finnigan, R Grahame,
C Gruen, P Gruen, S Hamilton, A Khan,
G Latty, T Leadley, C Macniven,
S McKenna, E Nash, B Selby, C Towler,
N Walshaw, G Wilkinson and R Wood

1 Election of the Chair

RESOLVED – That Councillor C Gruen be elected as Chair for the meeting.

2 Late Items

The Chair allowed the following late item to be considered:

- Chancellor's Statement to Parliament – 10th July 2015

The Agenda for Joint Plans Panel had been despatched prior to the Chancellor's Statement.

3 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors C Campbell, D Congreve, M Coulson, M Harland, J Heselwood, M Ingham, R Lewis, A McKenna, J McKenna, K Ritchie and A Smart.

5 Minutes - 26 February 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2015 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor G Wilkinson under attendance.

6 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute 20 – Planning Review Update

Compulsory training for Members would include the scope of work done by Building Control.

Minute 23 – Community Infrastructure Levy

An update on the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy was requested for the next meeting of the Joint Plans Panel.

7 End of year performance report for 2014-15

The report of the Chief Planning Officer provided Members with a performance update for 2014-15.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- Planning had operated within a tight budget over the past year and had remained in credit.
- Challenges included the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and National Permitted Development Guidance.
- A large number of major significant applications had been signed off prior to the introduction of CIL which involved substantial numbers of legal agreements .
- Introduction of a new pre-application service at the start of February which had generated additional income and seems to be working well.
- There had been a major pick up in terms of development around the city.
- There had been significant improvements in performance partly due to extension of time with applications where changes had been necessary.
- 86% of applications had been approved.
- Customer Services Excellence award had been reaffirmed for the whole of Planning Services.
- There had been a lower number of complaints and ombudsman referrals.
- There had been a slight increase in the number of officer recommendations overturned by Panels and at appeal there had been a 50/50 split on these decisions which demonstrated the fine balance on some applications. There had been no costs awarded against the Council on these decisions.
- There had been more formal enforcement action taken within Leeds than other core cities.
- There would be a continual challenge for Planning due to reform of planning legislation and guidance.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Enforcement key cases list – not all cases were reported to Ward Members and it would be investigated how we could do this easily without having to spend a lot of time updating a list..
- E-planning and reference to the site allocation process in terms of how representations will be made.
- Request for a breakdown of the percentage of new houses that were either brownfield or greenfield sites in the city as a whole and for Morley.
- Monitoring and enforcement of To Let Boards following the adoption of a code of practice.
- HMO's and related enforcement issues due to associated problems of disturbance and waste – a paper explaining controls was requested..

- Appeals on overturned officer recommendations – it was clarified that these had all been done by written representation and that officers had defended the decisions on behalf of the Council.
- Members expressed congratulation to the Planning service on performance in 2014/15 and the success in both major and minor applications and the progress made despite the challenges

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8 Housing Growth Workshops

The report of the Chief Planning Officer informed Members of a series of recent workshops that had taken place with representatives of house builders.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- A major workshop had been held in January. Discussion included a review of the memorandum of Neighbourhoods for Living guidance and design issues.
- Further workshops had been held on the pre-application process, determination (including Section 106) and what happens when developments get on site.
- Pre-applications had been regarded as useful but there was some debate about the format of position statements.
- Viability – more work was needed with housebuilders regarding viability and there had been discussions regarding this with other West Yorkshire authorities.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The importance of getting design right and the early involvement of Ward Members and paying attention to the local context.
- Employment, skills and local recruitment.
- Issues relating to viability – it was suggested that some kind of training or workshop would be useful.
- Flexibility on deadlines was supported to get the quality of schemes right.
- Consistency on decision making across the different Plans Panels.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9 Permitted development and changes to the Use Classes Order

The report of the Chief Planning Officer updated Members on how the arrangements for the new permitted development rights and Use Class Changes were working and the implications it had in Leeds.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- The impact in Leeds had not been as high as elsewhere.
- There had been few objections to large house extensions.

- There had not been a large uptake on the permission to change office space to residential. This change expires in May 2016 but was expected to be extended.
- There had been eleven applications for change of use from agricultural to residential. Nine of these had been refused.
- Concern regarding the change of use for shop premises to financial and professional services and the effect it could have on town centres e.g. letting agents in Headingley.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Concern regarding the change of premises in town centres including the increased numbers of cafes, restaurants and charity shops and the lack of control to prevent this.
- Issues relating to car parking and highways.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10 Buildings at Risk

The report of the Chief Planning Officer informed Members of Buildings at Risk and the efforts that had been made to address this issue by securing emergency repairs and securing new uses.

Further issues highlighted in relation to the report included the following:

- The survey of buildings at risk was ongoing and carried out between Leeds City Council, Leeds Civic Trust and volunteers. All listed buildings in Leeds (two and a half thousand) would be surveyed. An appendix to the report listed buildings at risk and this list was likely to increase.
- Twenty one buildings at risk fell within the ownership of the Council.
- The following buildings had been removed from the at risk register:
 - West Lodge, Farnley Lane, Otley – converted to a house
 - 1 Church Walk, off Kirkgate, City Centre – converted to a public house
 - Oakwood Clock – refurbished.
- The following buildings had been identified as priorities from the at risk register:
 - First White Cloth Hall, Kirkgate
 - Temple Mill Lodge, Holbeck
 - Stank Hall Ban, Beeston
 - Hunslet Mill
 - Thorpe Hall, Thorpe on the Hill.
- Other buildings highlighted for priority included the former High Royds Hospital and Wharfedale Hospital buildings.
- With regard to the York Road Library building, there had been discussion with the owners and they were currently looking at preparing a scheme of repairs.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The potential for the Council to intervene, carry out works and charge owners for works done.
- Other interventions including compulsory purchase.
- Other properties not listed in the report – it was likely that these had not yet been surveyed.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11 Chancellor's Statement to Parliament - 10th July 2015

The late report of the Chief Planning Officer informed members of the main issues for the planning service in Leeds arising from the Chancellors statement to Parliament on 10th July 2015 and the launch of the document “Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation”.

Issues highlighted in the report included the following:

- The automatic permission in principle for housing on brownfield sites on the statutory register
- The tightening of performance controls in a number of ways including with local plans and minor applications
- The potential implications arising from plans for starter homes and the presumption in favour to be given to them

Members expressed concerns about a number of the proposed measures including poor quality schemes being given an automatic permission and the likely impact of starter homes on affordable housing provision. It was recognised that many of the measures would require legislative change and that the detail was not yet clear.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

12 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 28 January 2016 at 10.00 a.m.