

Joint Plans Panel

Thursday, 28th January, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor N Walshaw in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, B Anderson,
D Blackburn, A Castle, B Cleasby,
R Finnigan, C Gruen, P Gruen, M Harland,
J Heselwood, A Khan, G Latty, T Leadley,
R Lewis, C Macniven, A McKenna,
J McKenna, S McKenna, K Ritchie,
B Selby, E Taylor, C Towler, P Wadsworth
and R Wood

13 Election of the Chair

RESOLVED – That Councillor N Walshaw be elected as Chair of the meeting.

14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Bentley, C Campbell, D Congreve, M Coulson, R Grahame, S Hamilton, M Ingham, E Nash, J Procter, R Procter, A Smart, C Towler and G Wilkinson.

15 Minutes of Meeting held on 16 July 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor E Taylor's apologies for absence.

16 Matters arising from the Minutes

Members were given a verbal update following the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It was reported that there had been a slow start in receiving CIL payments and that many current developments were still under Section 106 agreements. Monies would be distributed through Community Committees, Town and Parish Council and Neighbourhood forums.

With regard to viability and the impact on schemes, updates would be included in committee reports when sums were known. There had been discussions with the other West Yorkshire Authorities and the Planning Advisory Service regarding methodology for viability appraisals. Reference was also made to optional standards and how they could be linked to viability. A Development Planning Document was to be produced which would give further guidance on these issues.

17 Planning Services Performance Report

Minutes to be approved at the next meeting of the Joint Plans Panel

The report of the Chief Planning Officer presented performance information in relation to Quarters 1 to 3, 2015/16 where it was available.

The following issues were highlighted from the report:

- It was reported that there had been a slight increase in the number of applications than the previous year; however there had been a significant improvement in performance in terms of determination of applications in time.
- Planning Services was currently operating within budget.
- Pre-applications were working very well.
- There were currently over 750 live applications including 106 major applications. Leeds had a higher proportion of majors compared to other core cities.
- Decision making at Plans Panels. Members were informed of the number of decisions made by Panels and of officer recommendations that had been overturned. It was felt that the number of officer recommendations overturned was appropriate. With regard to the increase in regularity of City Plans Panel meetings, Members indicated that they would prefer to see current arrangements remain and cancel meetings should there not be any business to consider.
- Enforcement – Members were informed of formal enforcement action which had been taken which is higher than many other authorities..
- Staffing – Members were informed about a number of staff who were leaving the service shortly. These include Steve Speak, Deputy Chief Planning Officer; Martin Sellens, Head of Planning Services and Margaret Horton, Head of Customer Services who are all retiring at the end of March. Members were informed of the development of public engagement in the planning process during Margaret's employment and expressed their thanks with a round of applause. Thanks were also expressed to Martin and Steve for their contributions to Planning in Leeds.

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

- Tribute was paid to all staff across Planning Services for the continued improvement in performance.
- The success of pre-applications in the planning process.
- Charges and income – Members were informed of the charges made for pre application advice..
- Members welcomed decisive enforcement action and use of enforcement powers but expressed some concern regarding retrospective enforcement action.
- Planning applications over 6 months that had not had a decision made – it was reported that most of these had agreed extensions of time and some were awaiting decisions because of a number of other reasons eg the New Generation Transport scheme.
- To Let Boards – it was reported that proactive monitoring and enforcement in relation to To Let Boards was due to recommence in Hyde Park and Headingley. Members expressed a view that they would like this to be considered in other areas.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a further performance report be received in six months time.

18 Travel Plans in the Planning Process in Leeds

The report of the Transport Development Services Manager presented the following:

- The current position regarding travel plan policy, purpose and approach in Leeds.
- Information on the Metrocard Developer scheme operated by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- Proposals for an alternative approach to the promotion of travel plan measures in Leeds, especially in residential schemes which would need to be agreed with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- How travel plans were contributing to changing travel behaviour and sustainable development.

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

- What kind of scheme would be the most appropriate? – Suggestions included travel cards, car clubs and supporting electric powered vehicles.
- Trying to ensure employment for local people – whilst this could not be made a requirement under the planning process, local employment along with other factors such as home working and work travel outside peak hour were considerations.
- Metrocards – there were ongoing discussions to amend the scheme so that cards could be used by more than one member of a household. Concern that the Metrocard scheme was not giving value for money in areas where there was little public transport provision was expressed.
- Concern regarding the viability of the under use of the bus service provided following development of the Clariant site. It was recognised that this was currently under used but the service would require continued funding to ascertain whether the service would be viable and sustainable when the development was more built up.
- Development of a travel plan for Aireborough – it was felt that this was required due to the increase in housebuilding in an area that was not high in employment opportunities.
- Members were informed that should the revised approach to travel planning be endorsed, further thought would need to be given to how the changes would be implemented, how it would fit within the Community Infrastructure Levy and how to ensure off site contributions could be used effectively.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the revised approach to Travel Plan promotion in Leeds regarding a pot approach to travel pan promotions be endorsed.

19 Public Speaking Protocol

The report of the Chief Planning Officer referred to the provision made for public speaking on planning applications at Plans Panels. Following a meeting of the Joint Member Officer Working Group in December 2015 a number of changes to the protocol had been recommended.

Main proposed changes to the protocol included the following:

- Increasing the time allowed for speakers on planning applications from 3 minutes to 4 minutes.
- Reducing the time for speakers on pre-applications to 10 minutes.
- Allowing public speaking on position statements.
- Allowing public speaking on all items where members were being asked to make a decision (eg enforcement actions) but excluding appeals against non determination.

Further discussion included the following:

- Community Committee representations – these could be made by Elected Members as part of the public speaking arrangements or could be made in writing to be included in reports to Plans Panels
- Members welcomed the proposal to allow members of the public to speak on position statements.
- The role of the Chair in exercising discretion to allow speaking in a fair and reasonable manner.
- It was proposed that the revisions to the policy take effect from March 2016.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the revisions to the Protocol for Public Speaking be endorsed.

20 Housing and Planning Bill Update

The report of the Chief Planning Officer informed Members of the progress of and the main measures outlined in the Housing and Planning Bill.

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- The Bill was currently progressing through the House of Lords and was due a further reading before it progressed to the Royal Assent stage..
- New Homes in England – Starter Homes and Self Build/Custom Housebuilding
- Planning in England and various measures being introduced
- Additional measures for the Secretary of State to intervene in the planning process.

- An amendment to the bill which could allow planning applications to be processed by other authorities and potentially the private sector. It was suggested that these designated people may be enabled to charge higher fees for a fast track service and there was a concern that this would reduce the democratic approach to planning.
- The use of a mediator in settling Section 106 agreements and the potential for exemption from affordable housing provision.

Members expressed concern regarding some of the proposals outlined in the Planning Bill particularly the potential for developers to be exempt from affordable housing and the impact it would have on the provision of social housing.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.