

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on MONDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2013

Present: Councillor T Gillard (Chairman) (In the Chair)

Councillors N Clarke, P Clayfield, J Cotterill, J Coxon, D Everitt, R Holland, T Neilson, T Saffell and N Smith.

Officers: Mr S Bambrick and Mrs R Wallace.

In attendance: Councillors R D Bayliss, D De Lacy, J Geary, R Johnson, J Legrys and T J Pendleton.

**46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**47. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillors J Cotterill, J Coxon, D Everitt and N Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 3 as members of the Planning Committee.

**48. CALL – IN OF CABINET DECISION OF 15 JANUARY 2013 ENTITLED 'DELIVERING GROWTH AND PROSPERITY IN COALVILLE'**

The Director of Services presented the report to the Committee and referred Members to the report attached at appendix A which was considered by Cabinet on 15 January 2013.

The Chairman explained that Councillors J Legrys and R Johnson had requested to speak and it had been agreed prior to the meeting that they could speak for a maximum of three minutes each.

The Chairman invited Councillor J Legrys to speak. Councillor J Legrys referred Members to paragraph 1.4 of the report which detailed the grounds for calling-in the decision. He added that as the Cabinet report had not included any costs or funding details, the decision had not been taken with openness and transparency. He drew upon an example that if someone applied for a loan they would be expected to provide plans and figures before an agreement was made. In the case of the decision taken by Cabinet, the details provided were estimated and the words 'maybe', 'likely' and 'possibly' were used, yet a loan still agreed. Concerns were also expressed that planning permission had been granted based on estimates only. Councillor J Legrys stated that decisions such as this should not be made while the Core Strategy was still emerging. The Highway Authority had provided a number of funding options based on the estimates provided; Councillor J Legrys asked what the Council was going to do if the estimates did not work out as hoped. Councillor J Legrys concluded that he had expected the Council to adhere to Eric Pickles MP's demands on openness and transparency and expected better from the Portfolio Holder. He stated that there was an uncertainty and lack of understanding regarding treasury management from the current Administration, and further scrutiny was required to make sure the Council was getting value for money.

Chairman's initials

The Chairman invited Councillor R Johnson to speak. Councillor R Johnson explained that his main concerns were the emerging Core Strategy, the recently announced HS2 and the Bardon Grange development. With regards to the Bardon Grange development, the developers did not want to discuss what infrastructures they would put in place. Councillor R Johnson referred to a statement by the Department for Transport regarding effective road management and the use of funding which was available for infrastructure use. He believed that the Council should apply for this funding instead of letting the developers dictate what should be done. He gave Members an example of the Hugglescote cross roads on Grange Road which is currently very busy and would only get worse with the Bardon Grange development. Councillor R Johnson concluded that Coalville needed affordable homes and the Council would be doing the town a disservice if the Cabinet's decision was not reconsidered.

The Chairman invited comments from the Committee.

Councillor N Smith referred to paragraph 4.4 of appendix A which stated 'It is a matter for members to determine which areas of contribution they wish to reduce.' He asked what the reduction in affordable housing would be. The Director of Services explained that each application would be considered on a case by case basis and would be individually assessed and negotiated with the developer to determine the best infrastructure scheme to use. For example, some developers may have a higher contribution but would still be able to provide affordable housing.

Councillor T Neilson expressed his concerns with the Cabinet report at appendix A. He stated that some costs were detailed and some were estimates but as agreed as part of the Core Strategy, Coalville needed more affordable housing. He asked why the change had appeared in the report considered by Cabinet without any explanation when the Core Strategy had had many years of consultation. The Director of Services explained that the improvements detailed within appendix A were already known as they had been developed through the Coalville Transport Project but these were relatively low cost. The main reasons for the changes and the report to Cabinet were that the Bardon Grange development had now been approved with the condition that the link road should be provided; the estimate was detailed within the report. The link road was required due to the current issues at Hugglescote cross roads, this estimate was likely to increase. Also there had been other major applications in Coalville and the Highways Authority had put forward a holding objection until improvements had been made to the M1 and A42 junctions.

Councillor N Clarke asked why the £1.35million required for the A42 junction improvements were coming from Coalville developments when the junctions were in Ashby. The Director of Services explained that the Highways Authority may ask for contributions from any applications in Ashby as they are received but the principle impact on the junctions are from the A511 both in and out of Coalville. Plus, the development in Coalville was significantly higher than Ashby.

Councillor N Smith stated that Coalville needed regeneration and that it was essential to start development before it became unsustainable. He explained that the infrastructure needed to be put into place first and then the development could begin. He was also pleased that there was not a freeze in affordable housing.

Councillor N Smith moved recommendation A of the report and it was seconded by Councillor J Coxon.

Councillor T Neilson made reference to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which was mentioned within the report. As the need for affordable housing was important, he asked for details on the timescale for this policy. The Director of Services explained that there would be an opportunity for the Council to agree a Community Infrastructure Levy but the Core Strategy must be adopted first.

Councillor J Coxon congratulated the Cabinet on acting proactively with the decision as this was what was expected from them. He stated that he had not heard anything at the meeting that made him believe the decision was taken incorrectly.

In response to a question from Councillor T Neilson, the Director of Services explained that the S106 Agreement for the Bardon Grange development had been signed but the requirement was to have a planning permission for the link road in place, not to deliver the road. There was no financial obligation to the developer to deliver the Bardon link road.

Councillor N Clarke asked that if there was no obligation to provide affordable housing, could this be used as a loophole for developers. He also asked where the proposed link road would be situated. Councillor T J Pendleton explained that many years had been spent considering the best way to develop Bardon Grange. The infrastructure that would be put in place would depend on the development of the site; the details of this still had to be decided. He stated that there would be no money hand outs for the link road but the scheme is required to make sure the right development was delivered.

In response to a question from Councillor T Neilson, the Director of Services stated that even though the affordable housing numbers had already been agreed in the current S106 Agreement for the Bardon Grange development, under the scheme agreed by Cabinet there would be scope to make amendments if an applicant sought to amend the permission.

Councillor P Clayfield expressed concerns that the infrastructure was only being discussed in the short term and not how it would affect people's lives in the long term. The report stated that the scheme would be constantly reviewed and brought back to Cabinet if required. Councillor P Clayfield felt that the Policy Development Group should also be involved as well as scrutinising the cases as they are received with regards to the number of affordable housing required. She felt that the current figures for affordable housing was alarming, especially considering the current long housing waiting lists and full hostels, plus the newly introduced bedroom tax – at this point the Chairman asked Councillor P Clayfield to keep to the subject matter of the report and relevant discussion. Councillor P Clayfield concluded that the explanation given by developers as to why there was to be no affordable housing was unacceptable.

Councillor T J Pendleton explained that it was important to get the correct balance in Coalville and as a Council they were trying to control the balance as much as possible. There were 850 homes coming through Planning Committee and if the Council were to insist on high numbers of affordable homes the applications would stop. It was important to have a scheme for Coalville to make the revitalisation a success. Councillor T J Pendleton stressed that doing nothing was not an option and he would rather have a lower number of affordable housing than no housing at all. He understood it was a difficult decision but it was essential to make sure Coalville survived.

Councillor P Clayfield commented that she understood the importance of the revitalisation of Coalville but efforts needed to be made for affordable houses for 18 to 35

year olds, plus the creation of jobs so they could support their families. Councillor T J Pendleton agreed and explained that the Bardon Grange development would create jobs and commercial opportunities. He also added that the developers were keen to use a local workforce, therefore it needed to commence as soon as possible.

RESOLVED THAT:

No further action be taken

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.25pm

Chairman's signature