

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors N Clarke, J Cotterill, T Eynon, J Geary, D Harrison, G Houtt and A C Saffell

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys

Officers: Mr A Hunkin, Mr G Jones, Mr J Richardson and Mrs R Wallace

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

9. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

10. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

11. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting on 1 June 2016.

Regarding the work plan item 'Gas Supply in Rural Areas', the Chairman informed the Committee that contact had been made and a representative would be in attendance at a future meeting.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. PARKING STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of Community Services informed Members that it was the District Council's first Parking Strategy and it related to the whole of the District. He explained that White Green Young Consultants had successfully bid for the contract to deliver the strategy and any comments from Members would be valuable as part of their consultation. Any comments received would be passed on to Cabinet when a report was considered in November. He introduced Steve Boden from White Green Young Consultants, who gave a presentation to summarise the draft Parking Strategy.

Councillor J Geary expressed his concern that Members had only had a short amount of time to scrutinise the full and comprehensive draft strategy document as it was not available when the agenda was circulated. He also referred to a mistake at paragraph 4.7 as it referred to Ashby when it should be Whitwick, he expressed his disappointment as it made him question the accuracy of the document as a whole. He went on to make the following comments:

Chairman's initials

Paragraph 1.1.3 – This paragraph referred to the use of funds raised by parking charges for other Council schemes. Councillor J Geary strongly disagreed with the statement as when the decision was made to introduce parking charges, when he was a Member of the Cabinet; it was to raise funds to maintain the parking facilities and was never meant to provide added income towards schemes and services.

Paragraph 1.2.1 – This paragraph referred to potential changes to parking to support the efforts to regenerate Coalville town centre. Councillor J Geary agreed and was in favour of anything that could be done to help local businesses flourish.

Paragraph 2.2.1 – This paragraph referred to the National Planning Policy Framework which stated that parking charges should be set appropriately to not undermine the vitality of town centres. Councillor J Geary agreed with the statement.

Paragraph 2.4.7 – This paragraph referred to car ownership levels. Councillor J Geary agreed that there was a lower level of public transport available which was constantly diminishing; he believed this would be a problem for the future.

Paragraph 2.5.1 – This paragraph referred to the regeneration plan that included the potential development of London Road car park. Councillor J Geary reported that from his experience the public were not in support due to the loss of parking spaces, shops and the public house. He also felt that any development would detract from Stenson House.

Paragraph 3.1.2 – This paragraph referred to the parking charges currently being at the lower end of the range of parking tariffs amongst comparator neighbouring authorities. Councillor J Geary did not agree as according to his calculations, North West Leicestershire was towards the middle of the range. He did agree that coach parking spaces were needed.

Paragraph 4.9.3 – This paragraph consisted of a table setting out the characteristics of council run car parks in Coalville town centre. Councillor J Geary noted that the car parking at the council offices was not included and questioned if the decision had already been made to develop it.

Councillor N Smith questioned if it was an advantage to have a parking strategy and whether it was required by planning law or a council decision to have one. He did not agree with the proposal to change long stay car parks to short stay in Ashby town centre as he believed it would cause a problem for the people who work in the town. He questioned whether the Money Hill development would provide a car park as originally agreed. He also commented that in his opinion the parking charges were very reasonable, especially compared to other areas.

The Chairman felt that the current parking charges were low in comparison to other authorities. He also compared the charges to hospital parking which cost more to park for a few hours than it was to park all day in Coalville. He felt that this showed that hospitals used the funds generated by parking for more than maintaining the car parks and therefore it was not an unreasonable proposal.

Councillor D Harrison expressed his disappointment as he was expecting to see solutions to improve parking at Ashby town centre. He shared Councillor N Smith's concerns regarding changing the long stay car parks to short stay in Ashby town centre as businesses relied on them. He believed that the parking charges were fair but more spaces were required in specific areas. The Chairman commented that he was aware of plans to increase the parking capacity in Ashby town centre and added that the co-operative store's car park was available to park for an hour for free.

Councillor T Eynon commented that the survey was undertaken during one day only and therefore would not necessarily reflect actual daily use; however she felt that it produced some useful data. She felt it did show that the market hall parking needed to be more realistic and she agreed that there should be more free spaces for short stay parking. Councillor T Eynon believed that the data that had been collected on Bridge Street car park was very low and she felt that something needed to be done to bring people into Coalville town centre. She suggested that car parks further out of town such as the one on James Street could be used as a cheaper long stay car park.

Councillor A C Saffell agreed that changes should not be made to long stay car parks as they supported businesses and staff. He informed the Committee that Castle Donington Parish Council had its own parking strategy and the plan was to provide an additional 60 spaces in the town centre. These spaces were necessary as all business units were full on the high street and a further 900 houses were being built. He added that Castle Donington Parish Council would be looking closely at the District Council's parking strategy and if they were not in agreement, the Parish Council would consider taking on the management of the car parks in the area.

Councillor N Clarke agreed that any income generated from parking charges should be ring fenced for enforcement and maintenance only. He added that other authorities provided free short stay parking so he believed Councillor J Geary's comments were fair. He suggested that officers look at other ways of managing the car parks, for example paying on exit as it would also help with enforcement. The Head of Community Services commented that he had looked into the option but that it had its limitations.

The Chairman asked if installing CCTV would help with enforcement as it would take images of vehicles entering and exiting. Steve Boden reported that there was national concerns regarding automatic number plate recognition and therefore that option was not being encouraged at the moment. The Head of Community Services informed Members that he had looked into the technology to pay for parking by using a mobile telephone, this would mean that customers could extend their parking tickets without going back to the vehicle; this would be the preferred option.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Comments made by the Committee be reported to Cabinet when they consider the Parking Strategy in November.

13. IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGH SPEED 2 FOR THE DISTRICT

The Head of Planning and Regeneration presented the report to Members. He reported that expert consultants, SLC Rail, had been engaged to provide advice and assistance in narrowing down the council's options. He highlighted the proposed strategy which included both proactive and reactive elements, as well as the council's role regarding business focus and public protection.

The Chairman referred to a particular housing development on Burton Road which had been permitted with conditions to reinstate a section of the canal as part of the ongoing canal project. He asked that if the development was affected by the proposed HS2 route and the improvements were not made to the canal, could compensation be sought. The Head of Planning and Regeneration agreed to investigate and confirm with the Chairman after the meeting.

Chairman's initials

Regarding the visual impact as detailed within the report, Councillor N Smith did not believe that everyone would object as a large number of people enjoyed seeing trains. He also commented that when he attended a meeting with HS2 Ltd he had asked about the impact on the canal in Measham if the A42 was moved and they had replied that the cost of providing a tunnel over the canal was insignificant and therefore would automatically provide it. He had also heard rumours that HS2 Ltd was avoiding Measham entirely because of the disruption to the plastics factory. He concluded by asking if it was still possible to request a station at East Midlands Airport as he felt it was a logical place and a great advantage for the District.

Councillor T Eynon felt that the impact of HS2 would mean a lot of pain for not much gain. She commented that there was very poor interconnectivity within the midlands and she felt that the Council should be pushing for more compensation that could be used towards connecting with other areas of the midlands.

The Chairman did not feel that the comparative journey times to London as detailed in appendix 1 of the report were realistic.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained East Midlands Airport was owned by the Manchester Airport Group and it was their opinion that the airport's primary use was for freight business. Therefore they were not in support of having a station at East Midlands Airport and were unlikely to put a bid forward to HS2 Ltd.

Councillor N Smith concurred with Councillor T Eynon in that the Council should try and gain as much as possible as the District would be massively inconvenienced by HS2. Therefore he felt very strongly that a station at East Midlands Airport be pursued. The Chairman asked Councillor N Smith if he felt strongly enough to continue even if the airport owners were not interested and he confirmed that he did.

Councillor D Harrison felt that HS2 was good for the future and a station in the District was crucial, it was an important opportunity for future generations that should not be missed. He believed the possibility of a station should be pursued.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that a station at East Midlands Airport was unlikely as it was too close to the already approved station at Toton. He referred to a meeting he had attended with HS2 Ltd where a discussion was had regarding putting money aside to build a tunnel to avoid the Hilton hotel which would end near to Toton station.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration stated that there was a lot of speculation about the possible route and there would be no details available until the route had been finalised.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be endorsed for consideration by Cabinet on 15 November 2016.

14. UPDATE ON NEW BUILD COUNCIL HOMES PROGRAMME

The Director of Housing presented the report to Members which provided an update on the progress with the Council's new build programme in respect of the potential schemes at various sites across the District. Further to the report he stated that the precise mix of dwellings for the site at Willesley, Ashby was four two bedroom bungalows, three two bedroom houses and a single one bedroom apartment.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Director of Housing stated that the first stage of the scheme would be a traditional build but other methods such as a modular design could be looked at in the future stages.

Councillor D Harrison thanked the Director of Housing for the comprehensive report. He added that it was important to get the design of the homes right so that tenants would have an attractive home they could be proud of. The Chairman responded that he had been out on a number of Planning Committee site visits and seen the attractive designs of affordable homes currently being built. He was confident that the officers were capable of making the right choices with regards to design.

Councillor T Eynon was pleased to see that council homes were being built and hoped for many more in the future, particularly bungalows which were sought after. She expressed the importance of accessible parking for the proposed bungalows as it could make occupiers lives very difficult if their vehicles were parked too far away from their front doors. Councillor A C Saffell concurred. The Director of Housing took the comment on board.

Councillor N Smith raised concerns that the modern technology available regarding heating was not being considered for the bungalows, especially since Councillor J Bridges was a leading expert in the field. The Director of Housing stated that it was something he would look into.

Councillor J Geary thanked the Housing Portfolio Holder for attending to listen to the Committee's comments. He was very pleased that council houses were being built and that the residents who would be using the community centre at Linford Crescent and Verdon Crescent were being consulted. He felt strongly that the Right to Buy Scheme had contributed to the lower number of council houses now available and asked if the new builds would be protected against it. The Director of Housing explained that there were cost floor mechanisms in place to provide some protection which would mean that the cost of the build would always be recovered and therefore any discount available would be much reduced. This mechanism would be applied against any purchase for up to 10 years. In response to a further question, the Director of Housing stated that the cost did not include the value of the land because the land was the Council's to begin with, and therefore free. Councillor J Geary expressed concerns that by allowing the sale of land, then there would be no where to build new homes in the future.

It was moved by Councillor A C Saffell, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments from the Committee be considered by the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing.

15. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor T Eynon suggested that the Committee look at small grants and commissions made by the Council. She had noticed that some organisations/groups were not spending the grants as expected and would like to look at introducing a process where organisations/groups could come in and discuss what work had been undertaken. In particular, Councillor T Eynon was referring to community gardens and allotments.

RESOLVED THAT:

An item looking at the process of small grants once the money has been allocated, to review what has been undertaken, be placed on the work plan.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25 pm