

PLANNING & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Kellaway (Chairman), Maureen Hunt (Vice-Chairman), Malcolm Beer, John Story and Julian Sharpe.

Also in attendance: Cllr D Wilson.

Officers: Russel O'Keefe, Jenifer Jackson and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clark and L Evans. Councillor Story attended as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2018 were approved.

Councillor Hunt mentioned that at the previous meeting she had highlighted that there were no pitches currently at the land south of Halarion but they remained in the report. The Head of Planning reported that the Traveller Local Plan options paper was currently out for consultation so could not currently be amended, however she would check as it appeared that the table had been amended but not some text.

BUDGET 2019/20

The Chairman informed that each overview and scrutiny panel would review the sections of the budget pertinent to their remit.

The Executive Director informed that the highlights for Planning and Housing were that there was to be increased investments in environmental health and residential services with a focus on getting the right types of affordable homes, enforcing housing standards and delivering homes suitable for vulnerable residents. Providing homes for emergency and temporary use for households which the council has a duty to house and delivering private rented opportunities through local landlords.

Appendix E highlighted a summary of saving proposals that included increase planning and pre-application fee income target of £50k (this was below what was currently being achieved but an increase in the target), housing subsidy loss savings of £100k and savings from reduced use of high cost temporary accommodation of £200k. the savings were as a result of less people in temporary accommodation and high cost accommodation.

The Chairman asked if the reduced demand for temporary accommodation was expected to continue and was informed that the improvement plan for the service was working well and was expected to continue to improve. There had also been a new head of service appointed and a preventative approach to homelessness. There was no one currently housed in bed and breakfast accommodation when the previous year there had been 40 placements. There

would always be a level of demand and a change in the economy could impact demand, however the improvements were seeing results.

The Panel were also informed that the report showed capital expenditure with the main highlights supporting the Borough Local Plan.

Cllr Hunt asked what the assisted transfer scheme was and was informed that this was approved slippage from the supported housing project.

Resolved unanimously that the Planning and Housing O&S Panel endorsed the report and approved the recommendations under their remit and that Cabinet should recommend the report to Council.

ARTICLE 4 - REMOVAL OF PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO CHANGE FROM OFFICE TO RESIDENTIAL USE

The Head of Planning introduced the report that sought to prepare and undertake public consultation on an Article 4(1) Direction to remove the permitted development rights to change the use of office premises to residential.

The Panel were informed that since the introduction, in 2013 of permitted development rights to convert offices to residential through a prior approval process, 18,067 sqm of office floor space has been converted to residential in the Borough. A further 9,136 sqm of floor space was likely to be lost as the result of prior approvals that have been granted but not completed. These changes of use have had a significant effect on the Council's capacity to provide sufficient office floor space for future economic growth during the Borough Local Plan (BLPS) period.

If approved the recommendations would allow the council to manage the development rights and help maintain the balance between providing residential properties and commercial space that was essential to support the economic wellbeing of the Royal Borough.

During discussion on this item the following points were raised and questions answered:

- The consultation was for 6 weeks and borough wide, the results would come back to Panel.
- For change of use an application would need to be submitted.
- Concern had been raised about commercial properties being turned into residential properties having an impact on weekday footfall. This was a contributing factor in the proposed changes.
- It would not eliminate change of use as there was still time to change before the regulations were implemented and a change of use application could still be submitted.
- The BLP will identify potential commercial space.
- An example of a growing business leaving the borough was given due to no suitable space available, so this proposal was welcome.
- It would be beneficial for the Panel to review the results and give their opinion prior to the report going to Cabinet.

Resolved unanimously: that the Planning and Housing O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and endorsed the recommendations. The Panel requested that the consultation results go to an appropriate Panel / working group to consider the consultation results to feed into the production of the Cabinet report.

UPDATE ON THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman informed the Panel that the last Task and Finish Group meeting had been cancelled at his request but they were close to the end of their deliberations. Speaking rights had been put to Council and approved and it was expected that there only needed to be one or two more meeting before their review was complete.

The Chairman asked that any further areas for consideration should be sent to himself so final meetings could be proposed. It was noted that inviting housing associations and developers to consider affordable housing would be better suited to a separate review by the new O&S Panel post May 2019 local elections.

TRAVELLER LOCAL PLAN - ISSUES AND OPTIONS: EXTENSION OF CONSULTATION PERIOD

The Head of Planning informed that the report to go to consultation had already been considered by this Panel and approved by Cabinet. During the consultation period officers had been visiting parish councils and they had received a request to extend the consultation period by two more weeks. The Lead Member was in favour of an extension so views could be sought but an approval by Cabinet was required.

Resolved unanimously: that the Planning and Housing O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and endorsed the recommendations.

WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

The meeting, which began at 5.30 pm, finished at 6.20 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....