

LOCAL PLANS WORKING GROUP

10 NOVEMBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bateson (Chairman), Derek Wilson (Vice-Chairman), George Bathurst, Geoff Hill, David Hilton and Leo Walters.

Also Present: Councillor Marion Mills.

Officers: Sarah Ball, Chris Hilton, Tanya Leftwich and Robert Paddison.

PART I

29/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phillip Bicknell, MJ Saunders and Claire Stretton.

The Chairman informed everyone present that the meeting was being recorded.

30/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31/15 MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meetings held on 1 October 2015 be approved.

32/15 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman explained that Items 4 and 5 would be spilt as they contained both public and private information. It was proposed that Item 6 be addressed first followed by the Part I sections of Items 4 and 5.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of business as detailed in the agenda be varied.

33/15 UPDATE FROM SHMA MEMBER REFERENCE GROUP

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Derek Wilson, provided Members with a verbal update. He explained that a meeting of the Member Reference Group had taken place on 25 October 2015 at Hampstead House. It was noted that at the meeting the objectively assessed need (OAN) figures had been announced on the 20 October 2015 and were noted as follows:

- Royal Borough figure was 712.
- West Berkshire figure was 665.
- Reading figure was 699.
- Slough figure was 927.
- South Bucks figure was 376.

- Wokingham figure was 856.
- Bracknell Forest figure was 635.

It was noted that Slough was felt to have the same sort of pressures as the Royal Borough so they may well want to have discussions with the Council if they felt they were unable to meet their need and see whether the borough could take on some of the pressure.

34/15 BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

The Chairman welcomed the Borough Local Plan Team Leader, Robert Paddison, to the Royal Borough. It was noted that Robert was a permanent member of staff.

Councillor Beer arrived.

The Director of Development and Regeneration, Chris Hilton, referred Members to the timetable / process map in front of them and explained that the Council was progressing with Option A.

Members noted two key points which were:

- Giving ourselves until the end of November to produce the sites list which will give a likely indication of what the numbers will be.
- Then December and January will be used to provide the evidence base with the view of getting the plan submitted to the LPWG on the 15 February for the meeting scheduled on the 22 February, then onto the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panels and onto Cabinet on the 30 September 2016.

The Director of Development and Regeneration went onto mention the subject of resourcing and explained that in order to reach the target had taken on some additional staff. It was noted that as a result of the restructure in April / May it had been decided that two more Team Leaders were needed in order to drive multiple projects forward. It was noted that Robert Paddison had been appointed to lead on the Borough Local Plan and that the second member of staff would be recruited to the Neighbourhood Planning role. Members were informed that the two new appointments would enable the Team Manager - Strategy and Plans, Sarah Ball, to concentrate on planning policy implementation, including major sites, planning briefs and SPDs..

It was noted that the Leader had then advised that if more resources were needed to hit the timescale then the Director of Development and Regeneration should ask, which he did. It was noted that some funds had been allocated from the Development Fund which would be spent on two extra planning policy officers for three to four months. Including a part-time Project Manager to help with project planning and risk registers for approximately three months.

Councillor Bathurst arrived.

Members were informed that it had been proposed that Local Plans Working Groups would take place every three weeks but that given the tight timescales and heavy workloads detailed policy documents would not be available at each meeting but would be circulated as and when necessary.

It was noted that whilst the Conservation Officer was due to leave the Council but that the position would not be left vacant.

35/15 DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

The Borough Local Plan Team Leader explained that he would give a general outline of what the requirement was for the Local Authority. It was noted that the duty to co-operate replaced regional planning and that it was up to individual local authorities to work out key statutory cross boundary issues e.g. housing numbers and locations. Members were informed that if Local Authorities could not meet their OAN figures they had to work with other Local Authorities to try to meet that need and come to some sort of agreement. The Borough Local Plan Team Leader went on to explain that the process needed to be clearly evidenced and a positive approach was needed to seek as much agreement as possible. It was noted that whilst agreement was not necessarily needed amongst officers it could be escalated to Members – the key was appropriate engagement rather than agreement.

Members were informed that currently the Council was working across Berkshire and part of South Bucks on a retail study.

The Chairman explained that when the Council was doing its housing needs numbers it worked with other Berkshire Local Authorities but they had wanted to do it faster than we had. It was noted that consequently the Royal Borough had wanted more time. The Chairman questioned what would happen if the Council asked other Local Authorities to be a bit quicker when it came to the duty to co-operate and they refused. The Borough Local Plan Team Leader explained that there was a significant element of risk at examination if that happened which could potentially slow the Councils submission down. The Borough Local Plan Team Leader stated that the Council and other Local Authorities would need to look at it as a mutual benefit and work in co-operation as they all had a 2017 target to meet.

The Director of Development and Regeneration stated that he hoped to have a detailed plan with regard to the duty to co-operate in the next seven to ten days and would circulate it to Members ASAP.

The Borough Local Plan Team Leader explained that it was recommended practice (duty to co-operate) to involve Members from the very start which the Royal Borough had done. It was noted that as a result of the list of tasks that had been circulated to Members a number of responses had been received. Members were informed that the responses needed to be filtered and prioritised. The Borough Local Plan Team Leader went on to explain that a time limit, as requested by the Chairman, could be requested.

ACTION: The Director of Development and Regeneration to circulate to Members a detailed plan with regard to the duty to co-operate once available.

36/15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on following items 8-10 on the grounds

that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.