

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 9th September 2024

Present: Councillor S.Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Belli, Harris (sub), Harrison, S.Smith

In attendance: Angela Richmond, Service Assurance Officer
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

Also Present: 1 member of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received for Councillors McMahon (Councillor Harris subbing), Councillor Neal and Co-opted Member, James Heaton.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting on 24th June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

5. Question Time

There were no public questions.

6. Chair's Update

6.1 Following review at the last meeting, the Annual Valley Plan Update was reported to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme had been approved by full Council on 17th July.

6.2 Also, at the last meeting a question was asked regarding monitoring economically inactive individuals. The Rossendale Works Project Lead confirmed that the Council had a portal called Moving Forward that tracks all our evidence and journeys. It collects the evidence for economically inactive sign ups through external referrals, self-referrals and self-declarations. In relation to outcomes, there is employers' evidence for jobs, full registers with activity engagement or training outcomes, and there is also an approval system for outcomes.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Local Housing Allowance Safeguarding Policy

7.1 Members considered the Local Housing Allowance Safeguarding Policy, which would be going to Cabinet for approval in October.

Resolved:

The committee consider the draft Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Safeguarding Policy and recommended Cabinet approval.

8. Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

- 8.1 The Director of Economic Development informed members of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which would be going out to consultation prior to going to Cabinet for adoption in November. The SPD articulated what was in the Local Plan and aimed to give advice to developers and public in relation to affordable housing and how this was calculated.
- 8.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was also out for consultation and had a higher housing target proposed, this would have a knock-on effect. As we required more affordable houses, the higher target would facilitate that.
 - The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) would have to be updated and there would be a need to produce a new Local Plan in 2025-27.
 - In relation to the price cap, each development was considered and judged on its own merits, and there would be an annual review of the price cap.
 - Developers would be able to participate in the consultation and it would be interesting to see what responses we got.
 - The price cap had a fairly standard methodology.
 - There were instances where some sites were not suitable, and where for example 3.5 affordable houses were required, the 0.5 could equate to cash in order to achieve this figure.
 - The figure could also be rounded up or down depending on the specific circumstances.
 - There would be a need to do a housing needs assessment in the next 12 months.

Resolved:

1. To approve the Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for a 4-week public consultation.
2. Minor amendments, including formatting changes, to the Draft Affordable Housing SPD to be delegated to the Head of Planning and Lead Member prior to consultation.
3. To recommend the final version of the Affordable Housing SPD to be considered by Cabinet for adoption following the public consultation exercise.

9. Open Space and Outdoor Sports Supplementary Planning Document

- 9.1 The Director of Economic Development introduced the report which would be going out to consultation prior to going to Cabinet for adoption in November. The two documents needed to be looked at side by side to identify areas of need from the base information that developers could contribute to. The SPD reflected the Local Plan to help developers. In the past it was about valley wide provision, but there was a tighter focus on what the local provision was. An additional pitches study was also being done to keep it all refreshed.
- 9.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- The number of sports clubs was fairly consistent, but there was some fluctuation in terms of the number of members.
 - There was a time lag between the study and the SPD being produced and there would be a need to consider anything that had changed in relation to the figures.
 - Demand had now increased for pitches as their methodology had changed, but this would be picked up as demand increased.
 - The SPD was not an implementation plan, it was to seek support from developers by sharing information on our focus.

- The key focus was on identifying gaps and what the requirements were. It was not saying the Council would do everything, it was about looking at what we could develop in collaboration with our partners in light of the resources available.
- It was a tool that could be used to seek funding, in addition to providing information to assist others in supporting our priorities.
- It would be found out if the calculation by Sport England took account of regional diversity.
- There would still be a commitment to safe and secure for all to use, and it would be included in the design guidance.
- The Programme Officer - Physical Activity was working with clubs and looking at football pitch requirements.
- In relation to the pitch at the Adrenaline Centre, it would be found out if any improvements would be happening prior to the 3G pitch being started.
- It was clarified that the Playing Pitch Study was adopted and published in 2022, but the indoor built sport facilities study had not been published, as it was agreed to delay publication until the SPD was drafted.
- The level of S106 contributions was set out in the legal agreements, but they must be spent within a given timescale and must be proportionate to the development. This was a difficult balancing act and required a schedule to be in place.
- Nationally it stated how long we were allowed to hold the money for before it must be spent.
- The past was a good predictor of the future as it informed of likely demand. Working with sports government bodies also informed of changes in demand. Where new gaps appeared in provision and demand changed, these would be identified for inclusion in the future.
- In relation to accessibility in new facilities, it would be looked at with the team on how this could be built in and reinforced.
- The wider Local Plan would be the more appropriate focus in relation to health improvements, for example, looking at healthier towns.
- A better reflection on the nature of the swimming pools would be looked into and fed back.
- There was a published approach on the consultation, who we consult with, and the method for that.

It was agreed to feed back the committees comments to the team and seek responses on the various questions asked.

Resolved:

1. To approve the Draft Open Space, Playing Pitch and Indoor Sport Facilities Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for a 4-week public consultation.
2. Minor amendments, including formatting changes, to the Draft SPD to be delegated to the Head of Planning and Lead Member prior to consultation.
3. To recommend the final version of the SPD to be considered by Cabinet for adoption following the public consultation exercise.
4. To note the contents of the Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy for publication.

10. Quarter 4 Performance Management Report (January, February & March) 2023/24

10.1 Members considered the Quarter 4 performance report.

10.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- It would be difficult to achieve an annual target of 361 houses per year given the lack of suitable, available and deliverable sites. This was mainly due to the

topography of the land, specific environmental concerns such as high risk flood areas. Wider economic concerns also played a significant role in housing delivery and ultimately decisions regarding whether development commences was largely out of the Local Authority's control.

- The authority planned to feed this back as part of the consultation. The guidance at present only gave certain options and limited scope to reduce this figure.
- One of the key things that had shifted our figures upwards was that they had gone by the percentage of increases against the number of properties, whereas in the past it was worked out according to population.
- As we have a lot of terrace houses with small household sizes, we have been greatly impacted by the standard methodology, e.g. 0.8% of the housing stock is a much greater increase than 0.8% of the population.
- In relation to Risk 1, additional savings, the Council had agreed a specific set of projects where officers considered there to be income or savings opportunities. A working group of officers from the relevant departments had been set up and met regularly to report on progress.
- Details on the additional savings would be fed back.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out what the gap was which was about £³/₄ million of savings and the group were looking at how to offset that. This included looking at cost savings, operational costs, leases, utility savings etc. The group would also look at longer term income streams.
- Historically there had been savings from staff reductions, but staff couldn't be reduced further so other options were being considered.
- In relation to empty shops, it was about how we reacquaint people with towns, and changing the nature of the towns to increase footfall.
- There was a need to look at the size of some of the town centres and look at the peripheral areas. We needed to give people a reason to come into towns and for it to be easy and to feel safe.
- Some savings had already been achieved in year and some would be achieved in the next financial year.
- Short briefings would be considered where complex documents were coming to scrutiny to assist members in understanding specific subject areas.

The Head of People and Policy offered new members a one to one meeting to go through the performance report if required.

Resolved:

The committee noted the Council's performance as detailed in the report and it was agreed to seek responses on the additional saving question and briefing question.

11. Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries

- 11.1 The Head of People and Policy, Clare Law, introduced the Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries report and highlighted the work to improve responses to the various types of feedback received.

Resolved:

The committee noted the different types of feedback received by the Council, in addition to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries and complaints for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

12. Annual Equality Workforce Profile 2023/2024

12.1 The Head of People and Policy, Clare Law, introduced the Annual Equality Workforce Profile 2023/2024 report. Last week the Council had signed up to the North West Employers Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Charter, which would include a self-assessment for improvement. The Equality Strategy was also due for review and this work would commence in the Autumn. There was unlikely to be any significant changes to the strategy but the action plan attached to the strategy would be kept up to date.

12.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- The Member Champion for Equalities would be kept up to date on the Equality Strategy review.

Resolved:

1. The committee noted the content of the Council's Annual Equality Workforce Profile for 2023/24.
2. The committee would continue to monitor the Council's progress on equality and sufficient publication of equality information in line with current legislative and best practice requirements to ensure that the Council was operating fairly and equitably.

13. Forward Plan

13.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Members were encouraged to submit their questions in advance in relation to items on the next agenda and suggest services to attend future meetings in relation to the performance report which would be distributed when it had been published for Cabinet.

Resolved:

The Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme items were noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.53pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date