

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel held on Tuesday, 12th December, 2017 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors P Gidney (Chairman), R Bird (substitute for T Parish), Mrs J Collingham, C J Crofts, M Howland, P Kunes, C Manning, G Middleton, Miss S Sandell (substitute for Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh), A Tyler, Mrs E Watson and Mrs A Wright (Vice Chairman)

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor A Beales, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Assets and Projects
Councillor I Devereux, Portfolio Holder for Environment
Councillor B Long, Leader of the Council
Councillor Mrs E Nockolds, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health.

Officers:

Chris Bamfield, Executive Director Commercial Services
Jemma Curtis, Regeneration Programmes Manager
Lorraine Gore, Executive Director Finance Services
Ray Harding, Chief Executive
Matthew Henry, Property Services Manager
Ostap Paparega, Regeneration, Heritage and Economic Development Manager

RD56: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh and Councillor Parish.

RD57: MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RD58: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was none.

RD59: URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor Howland referred to the recent article in the press regarding the naming of Nelson Quay and asked if the matter should have been brought before the Panel for consideration. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long commented that it was not necessary for the naming of

the Quay to be brought to the Panel and it was not taken to Cabinet for consideration. He explained that a name was required for international marketing purposes. The Leader of the Council advised the Panel to discuss the matter with the relevant Portfolio Holder and this was discussed later on in the meeting under RD66: Waterfront Update.

RD60: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Bambridge – RD66: Waterfront Update.

RD61: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

RD62: **CABINET REPORT - SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW**

The Chief Executive presented the Cabinet report which detailed the conclusions from the Scrutiny Structures Task Group over a year on from the Scrutiny restructure which had taken place in 2016. The report considered the responses from a questionnaire on Scrutiny structures which had been issued to all Councillors. 50% of Members had responded to the questionnaire.

The Chief Executive provided detail of the recommendations which the Task Group would be presenting to Cabinet and the Panel were invited to consider the proposals and make any appropriate recommendations to Cabinet. It was noted that the Report had also been considered by the Environment and Community Panel and would be considered by the Corporate Performance Panel both of which would have the opportunity to make recommendations to Cabinet. The recommendations put forward by the Environment and Community Panel were outlined to the Panel

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Manning referred to recommendation two: the training of Audit Committee Members. He commented that a lot of training was made available to Members, often prior to Audit Committee meetings. He felt that the training was invaluable and it should continue.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Executive explained that recommendation seven proposed a change from the existing arrangements on how Chairman and Vice Chairman of Panels were appointed. Currently they were elected by their own Panel and the recommendation was for the Leader to appoint the Chairman and for the Panel to elect their own Vice Chairman. The Chief Executive informed the Panel that the Environment and Community Panel had

not supported this recommendation and instead recommended that the existing arrangements be retained.

Councillor Crofts, who was a member of the Task Group, commented that he felt that when Panels appointed their own Chairman and Vice Chairman, Members could sometimes be lobbied by other members on who to vote for. He felt that the Leader would know the strengths of Members and therefore be in the best position to nominate them. Councillor Crofts commented that he supported recommendation seven and explained that if the Chairman was nominated by the Leader it would be easier for the Chairman to be removed from position if they were not performing to the standards set out in the terms of reference document.

Councillor Middleton agreed with the comments made by Councillor Crofts. He commented that it was important that the right candidate was selected to ensure efficient scrutiny and hold the Cabinet to account and he felt that the Leader was best placed to do this as he had overall knowledge of the strengths of Members.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Executive explained that there was a section on the questionnaire for 'any other comments' and comments received had been wide ranging. He felt that it was difficult to distil any common themes from the general comments therefore the Task Group had concentrated on the comments made on specific questions.

The Chairman referred to the workload of the Regeneration and Development Panel and if meeting on a four weekly basis would be more beneficial. The Leader of the Council explained that as part of the original Scrutiny review a six weekly cycle of meetings had been agreed. Subsequently less meetings and resources had been factored into the budget resulting in efficiency savings. The Chairman explained that if there was urgent business which needed to be considered the Panel could call a special meeting.

Councillor Mrs Watson explained that sometimes Regeneration and Development meetings were too long. She felt that if a meeting lasted over two hours, Members could start to lose focus. She commented that she would prefer more regular meetings so that items could be discussed in depth.

Councillor Middleton commented that the Panel needed to prioritise their workload and focus on scrutinising policy efficiently. He felt that the six weekly cycle did work and reminded the Panel that it was within their remit to be able to set up Task Groups or Informal Working Groups. He explained that if there was an area of work which needed to be explored in depth, a small group of Councillors could be tasked to investigate and report their findings back to the Panel.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Devereux explained that he had participated in the Task Group and was disappointed that only 50% of Members had completed the questionnaire. He hoped that the recommendations from the Task Group would encourage all Members to engage in scrutiny, work to influence policy and hold Cabinet members to account.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration and Development Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

- 1) That all the current arrangements continue with the exception of those items listed below.
- 2) That the attendance of Audit Members for Audit training should be obligatory as it is for Planning and Licensing initial training.
- 3) That Panels be encouraged to use the powers available to them and therefore make clear recommendations on items coming before them so they can be incorporated into reports in the process of being prepared, or taken into account at the Cabinet meeting.
- 4) That Panels should consider their own performance indicators and they be encouraged to monitor the progress in line with the Corporate Objectives through that route.
- 5) That the number of post implementation reviews undertaken be monitored by the Joint Chairs meetings.
- 6) That in working on policy development and reviews and project programme work, Panels be encouraged to have discussions with portfolio holders:
 - For example – Cabinet Members could attend a Panel meeting at the beginning of the year to discuss their plans for the year in order to incorporate potential items into work plans in accordance with the Business Plan.
- 7) That the Leader nominate the Panel/Committee Chairs for agreement at Council with the Vice-Chairs to be appointed by the Panels/Committee.
- 8) That terms of reference be approved for Chairs of Scrutiny bodies (set out as an appendix). (NB they include the points raised in question 15 set out in the report).
- 9) That the appraisal of Chairs be investigated.
- 10) That the amended arrangements be reviewed after a further 12 months of operation.

RD63: **BUDGET**

The Executive Director for Finance Services presented the Panel with information on the Council's Budget. She explained that the presentation (as attached) had also been presented to the Environment and Community Panel and would be presented to the Corporate Performance Panel and any comments made by the Panels would be included in the report to Cabinet in February 2018.

The Executive Director explained that the Council should know their Government settlement just before Christmas and then a report would be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for her presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Collingham, the Executive Director clarified that with regards to the Capital Outturn expenditure, Major Housing referred to the housing development sites such as Lynnsport and Marsh Lane and Private Sector Housing referred to assistance such as disabled facilities grants.

Councillor Bird asked for an example on how Capital investment could result in an income stream. The Leader of the Council provided the example that the Council could build houses and then receive a revenue stream through renting out the properties.

The Chief Executive provided information on the level of uncertainty that the Council would face in the future, changes to Government legislation and reduction in Government Grant. He highlighted that the Government was considering an alternative approach in relation to New Homes Bonuses which would look at the quality of decision making by planning authorities. This approach would link the New Homes Bonus allocations to the ratio of successful appeals to residential planning decisions over an annual period and if this was introduced it could have a significant impact on the Councils income stream.

The Panel discussed the implications that the potential changes to the New Homes Bonus could have on the Planning Committee when determining applications and it was suggested that the relevant officers and Members be invited to a future meeting of the Panel to discuss potential implications.

Councillor Tyler referred to European Grant funding and if Brexit would have an impact on the Council. It was explained that the impact of Brexit on the economy was currently unknown. The Leader, Councillor Long reminded those present that in the past the Council had benefitted from European funding to deliver specific projects. The Chief Executive commented that the Government had announced that a national regeneration fund was likely to be made available to replicate European Funding opportunities which would be lost post Brexit.

Councillor Mrs Collingham felt that the Government was pushing Local Authorities to become more 'business like' and look at ways to generate income irrespective of the impact. She acknowledged that the Council would have to look at ways to meet any shortfall, but she warned against moving from a political entity to a commercial business.

The Panel discussed the importance of generating income and looking at different ways of working in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Projects and Assets, Councillor Beales commented he did not feel discouraged by the budget position. He commented that the Council had a plan, had identified the problems and were taking a positive approach. He reminded those present of the commercial work carried out by the Council and the importance to balance this with the wider public good. Councillor Beales commented that the Panels would have an important role in the future to assist with the development of policy.

Councillor Middleton commented that this was a new era for Local Authorities and he felt that the Council was in a fairly good position, in that they had the funds available to invest. He explained that it would be important to look at long term initiatives beyond the current financial plan and asked if the Council was planning for the long term. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long explained that work was ongoing to look beyond the current plan period and investment opportunities would be investigated.

The Chief Executive commented that the focus of the Capital Programme was to look at the rate of return and things that would generate income in the future. He explained that the Council were also active in seeking grant support funding, for example the Heritage Lottery Fund and this would continue.

RESOLVED: (i) The Regeneration and Development Panel noted the presentation.
(ii) The potential changes to New Homes Bonus be added to the Work Programme.

RD64: **ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE**

The Regeneration Programmes Manager provided an update on the Enterprise Zone (as attached). The presentation provided detail on the Design Team appointed to develop the more detailed plans, the gas pipeline diversion, building concepts and marketing plan.

The Chairman thanked the Regeneration Programmes Manager for her presentation and invited questions and comments from the Chairman, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Kunes, it was confirmed that the relocation of the IDB site was not dependent on the gas main diversion and should not have an impact on their proposed new site.

In response to a question from the Chairman, it was confirmed that landscaping had been incorporated into the scheme as well as a surface water pond.

Councillor Middleton commended the designs and the hard work of officers in bringing the scheme forward. He commented that there was a lot of office space already available in and around King's Lynn and asked what would be done to attract businesses into Nar Ouse Business Park. The Regeneration Programmes Manager explained that an investment prospectus had been circulated to contacts and local businesses which were likely to expand. It was explained that at the moment the project was a concept and once an offer was available the Business Park would be heavily marketed.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Assets and Projects explained that the Council did receive enquiries for units such as this, but currently did not have any available. He explained that there was an element of risk in developing the site, but he felt that there would be interest in the site and unless the Council developed the site it was unlikely to be developed by a third party developer. He assured Members that lots of work would be carried out to market and promote the availability of the units.

In response to a question from the Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Wright, the Property Services Manager explained that the site would be linked by pedestrian access to South Lynn and would be close to London Road. He reminded those present that the Panel had previously conducted a workshop session on the Southgates area.

In response to a question from Councillor Howland, it was explained that the design of the units would allow for solar panels to be installed at a later date if required.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update and requested to be kept up to date on progress.

RD65: **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

RD66: **EXEMPT - WATERFRONT UPDATE**

The Regeneration, Heritage and Economic Development Manager and the Regeneration Programmes Manager provided an update on the Waterfront site. It was explained that the Council would soon be going out to tender for the next stage of the detailed design, surveys and assessments, including the transport assessment.

The Chairman thanked the officers for the update and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Tyler asked about investment and funding opportunities and it was explained that there was competition with other areas.

Councillor Bambridge addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 and the Regeneration, Heritage and Economic Development Manager and the Portfolio Holder provided information and responded to questions regarding specific sites.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Assets and Projects referred to the comments made in the press regarding the naming of Nelson Quay. The Portfolio Holder explained that a name was required for international marketing purposes and branding.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

RD67: **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

An update on the implications on any changes to the New Homes Bonus and the effect that this would have when planning decisions were overturned on appeal would be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

RD68: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel would be held on Wednesday 10th January 2018 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm