

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), John Allen (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter (Substitute for Tom Kelly), Robert Gledhill, Kairen Raper and Lee Watson

Apologies: Councillors Tom Kelly

In attendance: Mark Bradbury, Director of Place
Kevin Munnelly, Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director for Planning, Transportation and Public Protection
Mat Kiely, Transport Development Manager
Navtej Tung Strategic Transport Manager
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

14. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 October 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

15. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

16. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Gledhill declared that had knowledge of the items on the agenda from his time as Leader of the Council, however he felt he could discuss them with an open mind.

Councillor Watson declared an interest in agenda item 5 in that she was a Ward Member for Purfleet on Thames.

17. Purfleet Centre Regeneration Programme

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery presented the report found on pages 9-14 of the agenda.

Councillor Anderson Chair of the Committee thanked Assistant Director for the report and commented didn't feel that a two-and-a-half-page report on this topic was adequate, he then opened up to questions from other Committee Members.

Councillor Watson enquired if the £75.1 million was ring fenced for used by PCRL on the site or whether it could be used for other things. The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery explained the £75million was for the housing infrastructure fund and was allocated from Homes England. He continued by stating the funding was directly for the Purfleet scheme, and in terms of the program itself £25 million of that funding had already been put into an infrastructure program as part of the first phases of the programme.

Councillor Watson commented there where conditions attached to investment however Officers were still to sign the development agreement should there be a need of any changes. Members sought examples of what sort of changes could be required. The Assistant Director stated any changes were still subject to discussions with potential Partners however changes could include amendments to the development agreement around the phasing of programme.

During discussions, Members were informed that in phase 1A 34 units out of 2650 units would be allocated for affordable housing. This would make up 10% of the overall scheme and was approved via Planning in 2019. It was then asked by Councillor Carter as to why the IMC was being presented as a positive milestone when it hadn't been past the discussion stage at present. The Assistant Director advised it was positive in that this was part of a network of IMC the Council was promoting across the borough and it was a requirement for this to be delivered as part of the first phase. He continued by further advising discussions were taking place in a positive manner with NHS colleagues, to enable them to move forward on terms of the ultimate design of the IMCs. He assured Members Officers were working positively to receive such confirmation and to move forward with the project.

Members heard how in terms of the development agreement it would be reviewed when every phase came forward as part of the project and would be tested for viability, this was so schemes which were not viable, were not brought forward. The Assistant Director continued by saying working with PCRL these schemes would be reviewed to make sure they were viable both within the marketplace and also met the wider aspirations of the Council to create and to tie in with the cultural offer currently at High House Production Park and to build upon this.

The Director of Place addressed Members agreeing that the report before them was not good enough in terms of the detail or the content and moving forwards ensured the Committee there would be more detail included. He continued by stating Officers were starting to look at how to work more collaboratively across the different departments Property, Planning and Regeneration to ensure delivery of project.

Councillor Watson requested that the report be brought back to the Committee at a later meeting.

Following discussions around the recommendations Members agreed to reword recommendation 1.1 to read *“Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the progress of the scheme in recent months in particular, the £75.1m HIF of Central Government investment into the Borough and note the development agreement”*

RESOLVED

- 1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the progress of the scheme in recent months in particular, the £75.1m HIF of Central Government investment into the Borough and note the development agreement**
- 2. Note the ongoing process needed to negotiate terms with PCRL, Homes England and Thurrock Council to continue with the procurement of additional funding for the next phases of the Purfleet Programme.**

18. Grays Regeneration Update

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery presented the report found on pages 15-20 of the agenda.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and referred to the table on page 18 of the report outlining the timeline with the construction of the underpasses being in July 2025. He continued by referencing a previous report presented to the Committee in July 2021, which gave a cost estimate based on an assumed start on site in late 2022. From this he enquired what had happened to cause a two-and-a-half-year delay and secondly the report from July 2021 mentioned any delay to the program could increase the overall costs. He sought as to how confident were Officers when it came to the overall cost of the project that it would remain on budget.

The Assistant Director advised Members in terms of the July 2021 report it would have set out a timetable at that time. The report in front of Members, was an update by the project team as the realistic timelines and they had been tested in part. He continued to notify Members it was his intention to review the scheme to see whether this was the most effective way of delivering it.

During discussions Members raised their concerns as to not only the changes in cost from 2021 when aspects of the project were agreed but also the pressure cost on top for the project. It was enquired as too what was the contingency, if the recovery and Improvement plan confirmed the project could go ahead with £37.3 million, and what would the differential in the millions of pounds be that would not be covered by funding. It was explained this was why the Gateway review of the project was required and Officers

were currently working at the moment through this process. The Assistant Director confirmed all Capital delivery schemes were going through this review process.

Councillor Gledhill sought as to whether the £11million funding from SELEP was at risk given the time it had taken to move forward with the project. The Assistant Director explained the funding was conditional on delivery of outcomes and those outcomes had to be delivered, otherwise the money could be subject to claw back. He advised that the outcomes in question were the creation of the two public spaces either side of the of the underpass.

RESOLVED

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the proposed approach to updating the existing Masterplan for Grays set out in this report.

19. Thurrock Supported Bus Services

The Strategic Transport Manager presented the report found on pages 21-104 of the agenda.

It was enquired if any other forecasts had been carried out such as instead of having a bus running seven days a week, perhaps having it running four days a week per route.

Officers explained they hadn't looked at the alternatives in terms of how that provision would be provided, as they had been looking at the value of money the service provides, it was commented there was that option for Officers to go away and to look at all various different opportunities. Members heard how in reality if Officers looked at reducing the number of days services were run it would be a proportional cost reduction as the vast majority of the cost in providing the services was the labour cost and the fuel cost rather than the provision of the bus itself.

The Committee were advised the additional cost to provide the service was only £18,000 due to the fact that the Council had been able to receive additional grants, if it wasn't for these grants the additional cost would have been £100,000. If the Council were to continue next year and maintain the service it could be as much as an additional £200,000.

Councillor Gledhill congratulated Officers on the way they carried out the consultation, he commented it was the first time he'd seen a consultation that pretty much ticked every single box when it came to giving people the ability to interact with the Council.

He went on to raise concerns that supplying a bus service was a historic and ongoing issue with a local Councillor saying it was for residents in certain areas to use the bus services or there was a risk of losing them. He

continued by commenting a number of the popular journeys were out of the borough, and he echoed Councillor Watson comments that the outer areas of the borough needed the transport support, however he also felt that residents should also have the understand they may need to use more than one bus to complete a journey as many residents across the Borough were already doing.

The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders at 9.10pm to allow the agenda to be completed

Officers were thanked for the report, with Members observing it was pleasing to see the inclusion of the impact assessment. It was mentioned by the committee that they didn't want to see the services around the Borough lost as they were used not just because of the hospitals but also people taking their children to school. The cost element to providing the service was acknowledged however it was commented that it was also important to think about residents who lived in the villages and had no other mode of transport.

It was suggested that a Hub and Spoke Model be looked into, where if required people could change from one bus service to enable them to cross the Borough, rather than increasing costs and decreasing services. It was further suggested that a new route or routes were needed to cover the outlying areas which required a service such as Purfleet, Fobbing and Corringham.

The Chair echoed the comments made by Members as to receiving additional specific information on what an alternative route to cover all three options would look like, whether it would be possible to develop a Thurrock wide fair scheme and what it would look like.

Councillor Anderson suggested that Councillor Gledhill's suggestion that "*a further report be presented to the Committee to give options for a new possible route or routes which could be included into a hub and spoke system covering the outside Villages and to look at the option of a flat fee across the Borough*" replace recommendation 1.2 within the report.

This was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

- 1. For Members of Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the report and supporting appendices for presentation to Cabinet.**
- 2. A further report be presented to the Committee to give options for a new possible route or routes which could be included into a hub and spoke system covering the outside Villages and to look at the option of a flat fee across the Borough.**

20. Work Programme

Members discussed the Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED

- Members to receive a Briefing Note on East Facing Slip
- Portfolio Holder for Growth report – February 2023

The meeting finished at 9.37pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk