

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors John Allen (Chair), David Van Day (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Oliver Gerrish, Martin Kerin and David Potter

In attendance: Andrew Millard, Director of Place
Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Stephen Taylor, Economic Development Manager
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

8. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2020 was approved as a true and correct record.

9. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

10. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest

11. Backing Thurrock: A five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth

The Director of Place addressed Members explaining the two reports presented to the Committee were interrelated. The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on the world economy and Thurrock has seen the affects like everywhere else.

Members heard there was a need to refresh the economy strategy and encourage economic growth and the benefits for Thurrock of this would assist with the period of recovery from the pandemic and then facilitate a return to economic growth. Sitting alongside this report was an update of the Local Plan , this was equally important for the recovery and growth of the economy within Thurrock and therefore both reports were working together with partners and moving Thurrock forward.

The Economic Development Manager presented the report which forms the first part of the Backing Thurrock strategy. The first part of the strategy recognised the underlying strengths in the Thurrock economy and the devastating economic impact that the COVID pandemic has had in Thurrock.

The strategy suggested a pro-active approach where the Council facilitates and uses the levers it has to support a market led recovery.

He continued that the report proposed a number of immediate actions that were currently being delivered or could be implemented within the next six months to support the response.

The Committee were advised that in the medium and longer term the strategy was required to continue to support the recovery period but also take advantage of the opportunities arising from underlying changes in the economy. It was explained that stakeholders in Thurrock had a proud tradition of working together and the strategy proposed a framework within which businesses and other stakeholders would be invited to work with the Council to develop an Implementation Plan for the medium and longer term.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the Economic Development Manager for his report and welcomed the refresh he then went on to seek whether the recovery document could be linked with other local authorities. It was explained there was a link with other local authorities within south Essex and the officers were attending weekly meetings and working together.

Members referred Officers to the report, which highlighted certain areas of concern before COVID-19, for example an increase in claimant count. Officers confirmed that addressing the rise in claimant count was a focus of the strategy. For example the development of the Thurrock opportunity website which would be used to promote local jobs for local people; with the aim that this would help to reduce the claimant count within the borough. Councillor Allen Chair of the Committee agreed with Members comments that local people should have local jobs and therefore the local economy could grow from this.

Councillor Anderson enquired as to whether small businesses would be given support during the consultation and asked for this assurance to be given. The Economic Development Manager explained that small businesses would be consulted on the strategy and given the opportunity to contribute to the strategy and implementation plan. Councillor Anderson asked the Officers remember not all residents were online so any consultations would have to be well thought especially in the current climate.

Councillor Van Day welcomed the report and commented that skills were important, he asked if there was something the Council could do, such as joint with the colleges to offer apprenticeships which would see local people being employed at the end of such schemes. Officers informed Members that unfortunately the Local Authority and local providers like the College have limited flexibility and powers in relation to skills work. Similarly the Local Authority cannot influence who local employers recruit however the Council was working with colleges and other education providers to help support local people for local jobs.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Economic Development Manager for his report saying it was a welcome document and pleasing to see the support being offered. He stated that the consultation should be wide across the borough and all business sectors, so that Officers were aware of the key challenges and support local businesses faced and needed.

RESOLVED:

Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Note and comment on the report and strategy**
- **Note and comment on the proposals to co-design the related Implementation Plan with anchor institutions, key businesses, voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders and to return to Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with a further report seeking approval of that Implementation Plan.**

12. Thurrock Local Plan – Next Steps

The Interim Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection presented the report explaining the first part of the report looked back over the previous few months with regards to COVID-19 and the impact of that on local processes.

He advised the Committee that Officers were currently focussed upon the logistics of future community engagement and the roll out of further Design Charrettes across the Borough. Discussions were well underway with the Princes Foundation and the Council's coms team to work out the best and safest ways to continue engagement with residents, land owners and businesses.

The Committee heard the key success to any local plan was a joint working and a sound evidence base, and how the Council would work with key stakeholders and local businesses with the use of Planning Performance Agreements.

The Interim Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection advised Members that the Government had published a white paper in August which set out proposals for the reform of the planning system. Members were advised that Officers were currently working their way through the proposed changes and a verbal update would be provided at the next meeting but first impressions of the reforms were broadly positive; in many ways the approach that the Council has already adopted is aligned to the approach now being promoted by Government. In particular, the Council's work with the Princes Foundation in rolling out Design Charrettes is strongly supported by the reforms; the concept of working with communities, landowners, and developers to create locally distinctive master plans for development on town by town basis forms a core plank of the government's design coding

ambitions. Members were advised that the Council is very much ahead of the curve in that respect.

Members were advised that the next steps included:

- The roll out of Design Charrette events in association with the Princes Foundation,
- Setting up of 'Development Teams' involving landowners scheme promoters, the Council and key delivery partners such as Homes England, Highways England etc.
- The evolution and development of the Your Place, Your Voice community engagement events and on-going informal engagement with local communities.
- The development of a Transport Strategy to serve as an evidence base for large scale strategic infrastructure. Members were informed that Officers are due to present a report to the October meeting on the Transport Strategy.

The Chair of the Committee thanked for the Assistant Director for the report. He commented on the proposed 32,000 homes to be built within the borough over the next 20 years. He then commented on transport links within the borough and how additional uses for the river should be investigated. He further remarked on health and well-being within the borough and stated that the infrastructure that goes with building homes such as doctors and the health hubs, was also important. He suggested the possibility of Thurrock having its own hospital.

Councillor Kerin queried the timeline within the report and asked what types of homes were to be built and when members would see the principal behind such designs. The Interim Assistant Director explained that the approach to place making was an iterative process based upon evidence with input from the community. It is important not to plan by numbers and create places that are responsive to context; the housing types and tenure would be driven by the needs of individual places.

During discussions, it was observed that currently there were still 8000 people on the Councils Housing waiting list. Officers agreed through consultations for the local plan a range of housing would be delivered to meet all resident's needs. The Chair of the Committee sought through the Director of Place as to the proposed percentage of affordable homes to be included within the local plan. The Director of Place explained that the policy requirement for affordable housing is currently 35%, though this requirement would be considered as part of the new Local Plan.

Councillor Gerrish agreed with Members who had previously expressed their concerns over health wellbeing within the borough and council homes, he suggested that it seemed to be an opportunity for the Committee to do more and perhaps agree to two additional recommendations, in that the planning process included planning for an accident and emergency local hospital within

the borough and that of the homes to be developed under the local plan 35% of these were to be of council homes. The Chair of the Committee welcomed the additional recommendations and thanked Councillor Gerrish for his suggestion.

Councillor Van Day commented that not only was housing required but also the infrastructure to go with it along. Councillor Anderson observed it was slightly premature to call for a new local hospital without exploring processes and speaking with key stakeholders such as the NHS.

Officers advised they were happy to approach health providers to discuss options for improved healthcare as part of the new Local Plan. The Director of Place further stated Officers were happy to investigate issues raised by Members, however as previously discussed they would need to contact health providers to seek their expertise. He further stated that if Members were happy; Officers could report back at the December meeting after engaging with health services to seek their views on an additional health service.

Members moved to the vote on the following additional recommendations:

- *Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee request a report back to a future meeting on how health care needs will be addressed as part of the local plan process.*
- *Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee seek a target 35% of housing within the local plan to be council or housing association homes.*

For: Councillors Allen, Kerin, Gerrish and Potter

Against: Councillors Anderson and Van Day

RESOLVED That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Provided comments on the contents of this report and the approach to preparing a new Local Plan.**
- 2. Request a report back to a future meeting on how health care needs will be addressed as part of the local plan process.**
- 3. Seek a target 35% of housing within the local plan to be council or housing association homes.**

13. Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020/2021

The Committee discussed the items listed on the work programme. It was agreed to include the items suggested by the Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the following items be included on the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

- **Full Report on the A13**
- **Report on proposed new Lorry Park**
- **Verbal update on the Government's proposed changes to the Planning system and their Impacts**
- **Build, Build, Build Project**
- **Preston Model**

The meeting finished at 9.10pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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