

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 29 November 2021 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Martin Kerin (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Gary Collins, James Thandi and Lee Watson

**In attendance:** Irina Davies, Principal Planning Officer  
Ryan Farmer, Strategic Lead – Housing Strategy  
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection  
Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead  
Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead of Strategic Services  
Richard Latham, Guest  
Lizzey Williams, Arup Representative  
Ben Smith, Arup Representative  
Grace Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

The Vice-Chair stated that there was a time limit for the use of the Beehive venue which was until 9.30pm.

As the Local Development Plan Task Force meeting on 27 September 2021 had been postponed to the 29 November 2021 meeting, the Vice-Chair opened the agenda for 27 September 2021. He stated that the items on the agenda had been rearranged for the 29 November 2021 meeting. He closed the agenda for the 27 September 2021 meeting and went on to open the agenda for the 29 November 2021 meeting.

### **10. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

### **11. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **12. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**13. Thurrock Interim Transport Strategy Presentation (deferred from the postponed meeting on 27 September 2021)**

The report was presented by Mat Kiely and Richard Latham.

*The Chair arrived at 7.12pm.*

The Chair commented that it was good to see the vision for river transport as there were too many cars on the road and not enough buses. She stated that the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) was not beneficial for Thurrock and would add to the road issues. She pointed out that not enough people cycled in Thurrock and that it was not an ideal transport method to use for shopping purposes. She added that there needed to be more shops particularly in new developments. Mat Kiely explained that the Thurrock Transport Strategy (TTS) looked at a package of options to explore to help identify what could help Thurrock's transport. He said that the cycling and walking pathways would be improved and enhanced and safe as these were important features in the vision. This would be considered and encouraged in new developments.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the importance of rail connectivity and understood that this would help with the economic growth of Thurrock. In regards to London Road, he pointed out that the vision of better walking and cycling routes would take around 30 years due to the current infrastructure. He said that the vision needed to include better travel links within Thurrock and not just going in and out of Thurrock. Mat Kiely explained that travel within Thurrock was within the longer term vision which would enable people to travel differently. He said that there was the opportunity to enhance and better integrate services.

The Task Force brought up issues of school catchment areas which was not mentioned in the vision as it would help to take cars off the road; moving the LTC route over to Canvey Island to take traffic pressures off the M25; building reservoirs to contain the water issues around the borough; the flexibility of the TTS if people's behaviours in regards to walking and cycling did not change; and the importance of building new developments with the right infrastructure. The Task Force also questioned why the vision was set out until 2050. Officers explained that the presentation highlighted the vision of the TTS and that the strategy would be over the next 15 – 20 years. There were some areas which did not have the capacity to add in a cycling or walking route so the approach was not to take away existing pathways but to add to it. The focus was to add infrastructure in new places.

The Task Force highlighted the importance of using the river for transport quickly as more people moved into Thurrock so the infrastructure had to be ready. Councillor Thandi highlighted the issue of the affordability of electric cars but pointed out that cars would still be needed. He said that the younger generation needed to go to different areas and that it was not safe for people to walk to certain areas and there was not enough places in Thurrock to go to. The Vice-Chair asked that an update on the TTS be brought back to the Task

Force in 6 months' time. Members asked to see a report on the use of the river for transport and it was agreed that this item should fall within the parent committee of Planning, Transport, Regeneration O&S Committee.

#### **14. Designating Local Green Space Guidance**

The report was presented by Irina Davis.

Councillor Collins sought clarification on what a sustainable development was and the purpose of local green spaces in comparison to the Green Belt. Irina Davis answered that this was a development that used natural resources and did not compromise the needs of the future generations. She said that local green spaces were allocated for certain reasons such as for the use of the local community. Sean Nethercott added that the allocation of local green spaces were targeted in urban areas where green spaces were scarce. These were outside of the Green Belt.

Referring to Parker Road, the Vice-Chair asked what the next steps were for designating green spaces and what support would be expected from the service. Irina Davis explained that the guidance on designating green spaces had recently been produced to outline the process for suitable green space sites. This involved looking at the components of the site and assessing the evidence of the site as a green space against the criteria. There would also be an engagement process and an assessment report as part of the Local Plan. Sean Nethercott added that the service aimed to start consultation in January to encourage the community to submit sites. He said that the service would meet with local representatives and support them through the process. This would move into the summer months and would be considered as part of the Local Plan in designating green spaces and involve consultation processes. He said that this process would be consistent across all sites brought forward and that the service would liaise with Members directly who had already brought forward a potential green space site.

The Chair asked for an update on the motion on Woodview that had been submitted at Full Council. Leigh Nicholson answered that the service was working on this and will work with Ward Councillors on the green space designation.

Councillor Anderson sought detail on the assessment of green spaces on its uses for recreational value and how this was measured. Sean Nethercott answered that this was taken in quantitative and qualitative assessments such as the site being an open space which would score highly in the desire to retain that space. Or looking at the open space against community needs. Ward Councillors and local communities would be consulted as well.

Sean Nethercott said that an update would be brought back to Members after the consultation ended.

#### **15. Model of Housing**

The report was presented by Ryan Farmer.

In regards to affordability, the Vice-Chair asked whether the Council worked with an agency to set a criteria for affordability. Ryan Farmer referred to paragraph 3.3 and highlighted that this was what the affordable rate was benchmarked at for Thurrock. He said that the Council had its own agency but it needed to be financially viable to ensure that homes could be maintained and not just provided. He explained that affordability was a broader piece of work that the service was working on with other departments.

The Vice-Chair asked what work had been undertaken in terms of the type of housing needed in Thurrock based on the demographics of Thurrock. Sean Nethercott answered that the service had been waiting on the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and a draft of this had just been received. The service aimed to publish this in the new year but the service was also awaiting on guidance from the government on the standard method for affordable housing. The Vice-Chair asked if an update could be brought back to the Task Force before the end of the municipal year.

The Chair asked if residents were involved or informed about the SHMA process. She referred to 95% mortgages on page 103 and pointed out that most people were still unable to afford this deposit. Sean Nethercott said that the consultants for the scheme could be invited to the next meeting to provide more information.

Councillor Watson commented that the housing strategy needed to consider the homes needed within a development and said that the planning applications she had seen proposed mostly 4 bedroom homes. She queried the number of 1 and 2 bedroom homes needed over the next 5 years. She also asked what type of homes were needed and how this could be highlighted for planning and development. Ryan Farmer explained that everyone had a housing need and that each need was not the same. He said that the housing waiting list showed the biggest need for 2 bed homes but there were also families that needed 4 or 5 bed homes and that the service worked with social housing providers on housing need. In regards to the type of homes needed, he said that an increase in social affordable housing was needed and to attract other social housing providers to Thurrock or encourage the ones currently in Thurrock increase their stocks.

The Task Force further discussed the need for 1 and 2 bedroom homes and also the need for 4 bedroom homes for larger families. The Task Force highlighted the issue of high density flats and the need for gardens and green spaces in these builds. Ryan Farmer explained that the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan set out the plans for the types and number of homes needed which looked to cater for small families too. The Housing Strategy also looked at affordability which was needed but he added that there were reasons other than affordability for why people were on the housing waiting list. He said that the Housing Strategy had seen the importance of green spaces and that the

current consultation on the Housing Strategy would identify other factors that were important to residents.

Councillor Watson mentioned that she had seen low rise developments in London with communal spaces that had developed well which was difficult to plan for in Thurrock due to the number of homes needed. She said that the Housing Strategy needed to cater for all age groups. She also raised concerns over decanting properties as to where residents would be placed. Ryan Farmer answered that there had been recent flatted developments that had set a standard for this such as Beaconsfield Way in Chadwell St Mary and Claudian Way which recognised the value of space. In regards to decanting, he said that an appropriate plan was in place for this which would be undertaken in a sensitive manner.

Councillor Watson asked if 35% affordable housing could be allocated to the Council to manage the nomination rights. Ryan Farmer explained that this was dependent on whether the 35% could be achieved and what type of affordable housing was being provided such as shared ownership or affordable rent. If it was affordable rent, the Council would have nomination rights and could allocate to people on the housing list but the property would not be managed by the Council. If it was a shared ownership, there was a regional register for this.

## **16. Climate Change Presentation**

The presentation was presented by Arup representatives.

Councillor Collins asked if the infrastructure for electric vehicle charging was included in the strategy. Ben Smith answered that this was included in the Energy Strategy which was considered alongside this strategy.

The Vice-Chair asked what changes Thurrock could make to contribute to the strategy and if Thurrock had a target in regards to carbon emissions. Ben Smith answered that there were some industries in Thurrock that needed to do more to reduce their carbon emissions. He said that the carbon emissions target was linked to the UK's target as a whole and that the pathway for Thurrock was plotted against this. The consultation process would identify the plan for this.

Councillor Watson queried the number of district heat networks in Thurrock. Sean Nethercott answered that there were currently none but would have people coming forward for these. Ben Smith added that this could still be promoted as well.

Councillor Anderson stated that he was not in favour of taking choice away from people and queried whether the strategy required people to undertake certain actions. Ben Smith answered that the strategy did not require people to take actions but suggested these.

Due to the time constraints of the venue, the Task Force agreed to continue this report at the next Task Force meeting.

## **17. Work Programme**

The following items were added:

- Update on Designating Local Green Spaces – 21 March 2022
- Update on Strategic Housing Market Assessment – 21 March 2022

**The meeting finished at 9.28 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**