

Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 20 January 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Martin Kerin (Vice-Chair) and Andrew Jefferies

Apologies: Councillors Alex Anderson, Gerard Rice and Luke Spillman

In attendance:
Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead of Strategic Services
Paulette McAllister, Joseph Hardy Representative
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer

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.

17. Minutes

The minutes of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 4 November 2019 was approved as a true and correct record.

18. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

20. Thurrock Local Plan - Design Charrette Process

Paulette McAllister, Joseph Hardy Representative, gave a presentation to accompany the report provided within the agenda. The presentation focused on the Aveley Design Charrette process which the Council had been undertaking in association with the Princes Foundation and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The work looked at piloting the development of a design led process for engaging with local communities in planning for the future development in their local areas. Following on from an evaluation of the outcome of the Aveley pilot, it were proposed that the Design Charrette process be rolled out across the rest of the Borough as key informant to the development of a community-led Local Plan.

The Chair noted that throughout the presentation, several references had been made to Aveley being a village. She commented that Aveley was a village but it was now 'split' into individual parts due to developments in the area and was no longer 'seen' by some residents as a whole village.

The Chair continued on and said that the roads in Aveley were becoming dangerous particularly for children in the school area and it was a good idea to incorporate a walkway but it was important to build in the right places.

Noting the closed session workshop mentioned within the presentation, the Vice-Chair questioned the timeframe that would have been for the consolidation of information to take place if it had not been for the General Election during that period. Paulette McAllister answered that the consolidation process would have taken three weeks.

The Vice-Chair went on to ask what changes residents had asked for during the open session workshops and whether there were any examples. Paulette McAllister explained that with the closed session workshops, discussions had taken place with landlords and agents on how their existing owned sites could be used. With the open session workshops, the focus for most people had been the village in the sense that people wanted a good high street but the village had to incorporate other isolated parts of the area into the village as a whole. However, small steps had to be taken during the process.

Noting the attendance for the consultation sessions, the Vice-Chair suggested arranging other suitable dates and times to enable more people to attend. He suggested avoiding special events and potentially arranging evening consultations to capture people who would be working during the day.

Councillor Jefferies commented that the Enquiry by Design process was a good idea and a good way to engage with the community. He queried if there had been any feedback from residents on the process and thought it would be good to hold meetings soon after a consultation had taken place. He went on to question whether the local elections to be held in May 2020 would affect the design process.

Regarding residents' feedback, Paulette McAllister said that the team had listened to all feedback from residents and that the focus of the consultation was to listen to residents and talk with residents. She went on to mention that an elderly resident had mentioned that they had been in many consultations for Aveley over the years but this consultation was the first time where they had seen their comment posted on the design board. She continued on to say that there had been services from the Council in attendance and on hand to provide support to residents where needed.

Regarding elections, Paulette McAllister said that the pre-election period was a sensitive time but the design process was on community so should be continued but it was the decision of the Council to halt the process for this period due to sensitive matters that could arise.

The Chair commented that developments sometimes did not take place when expected to so could understand why people could be sceptical of the design process. She went on to say that developments needed to be incorporated into the community and not isolated and that infrastructure and characterisation had to be considered with developments.

Paulette McAllister explained that the next step was characterisation of the area which was important for Aveley but this did not mean it would be the same for another area. Residents' views of the character of Aveley had been sought during the consultation.

Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection, said that the comments provided from Members had been insightful. He went on to say that the Aveley Charrette Design was the first pilot scheme run and with the comments provided from Members and during the consultation of the design process, this would help the service to identify improvements where needed. This would prove to be helpful in providing a more efficient process when the design scheme would be rolled out to other towns in the future. Stanford-le-Hope and Corringham were likely to be the next towns. He continued by saying that the Council would continue to work with the Prince's Trust for the next schemes as it was good to use a separate brand as part of the process.

The Chair questioned the role of the Prince's Trust in the design process. Paulette McAllister confirmed that the Prince's Trust was facilitating and leading the engagement process of the consultation which had been a good follow on from December 2018's Your Place, Your Voice consultation by the Council. She went on to explain that there were many branches of the Prince's Trust and that one of the branches had architects there.

The Chair commented that some of developments that had worked with the Prince's Trust were not freehold sites and questioned if these types of developments would work in Thurrock. Paulette McAllister explained that there were discussions and comments on what affordable housing was in Thurrock. During the consultation of the design process, the Council's housing team had been in attendance so had received these comments. The design process was for residents to shape the design and to give their thoughts on it.

Councillor Jefferies was pleased to hear that the Prince's Trust was a part of the design process as it gave the process a bit more authenticity. He questioned the timeframe moving on from the consultation period.

Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead for Strategic Services, replied that a review of the process would take place with the Prince's Trust, Officers and landowners. From that review, it would be identified which services needed to be fed into the process and from then, the process could take two or three years for changes to be implemented.

Councillor Jefferies questioned whether residents would expect to see any of the changes implemented before the process began as he felt two to three years for change to happen was a long time to wait. He felt that small changes would be 'quick wins' and would help to keep the confidence of the public as it would give them reassurance that the process was still going. The Chair agreed and said that people would lose interest over time without the 'quick wins'.

Sean Nethercott answered that the 'quick wins' had to be identified and the process needed to ensure that there was a legacy gained from the public consultation part of the process. Once a bespoke design process was identified, this would then be rolled out, bearing the pre-election period in mind, and it was one that would take over a year to roll out. This would be continuous and had no end date.

The Chair felt that the pre-election period should not bring a halt to the design process as it only affected councillors where they could not be involved. Agreeing, Councillor Jefferies stated that the Prince's Trust were non-political and ignored elections. He felt that a year was a long time for the process to be rolled out particularly as the consultation sessions had taken place in November 2019. He referred to the 'quick wins' again and gave an example of the community group of Flowers Estate in that the small changes had helped the group to continue on.

Paulette McAllister reminded the Committee that feedback of the consultation would be held with residents for the coming Friday (24 January). The Committee further discussed 'quick wins' with examples of installing a bench for people to sit where needed.

Sean Nethercott said that the design process would continue forward but processes would need to be followed to ensure quality development and through working with other services within the Council.

21. Work Programme

The Committee discussed the work programme and the following items were added to the next meeting on 9 March 2020:

- Lakeside Design Frame
- Timeframe for the Delivery of the Local Plan

There was a suggestion made for Sports Facilities within the Local Plan to be added to the work programme as an external body had asked for this to be considered as part of the Local Plan. It was agreed that Officers would look into this before deciding to bring to the Task Force.

The meeting finished at 7.56 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**