

Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 13 July 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Martin Kerin (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Andrew Jefferies, 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
Lizzey Williams, Arups Representative
Anna Richards, Arups Representative
Ed Waters, Arups 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.

1. Nomination of Chair

Councillor Anderson nominated Councillor Redsell for Chair which was seconded by Councillor Jefferies. There were no further nominations and the Committee went to the vote. The vote was unanimous across the Task Force. Councillor Redsell was named Chair of the Task Force.

2. Nomination of Vice-Chair

Councillor Jefferies nominated Councillor Kerin for Vice-Chair which was seconded by Councillor Anderson. There were no further nominations and the Committee went to the vote. The vote was unanimous across the Task Force. Councillor Kerin was named Vice-Chair of the Task Force.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Local Development Plan Task Force meeting held on 9 March 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

4. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The Vice-Chair noted that there were no Thurrock Independents sitting on the Local Development Plan Task Force and asked that the Thurrock Independent Party be made aware and invited to sit on the Task Force.

5. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

6. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were agreed by the Task Force.

7. Thurrock Local Plan Infrastructure Baseline Report (Presentation from Arups)

A presentation was given by the Arup Representatives.

The Chair sought more detail on river ferry services and if COVID-19 had impacted upon the plans highlighted within the presentation. The Arup Representatives explained that river ferry services had been covered within the report and that Arup had looked at Port of Tilbury and London Gateway to check the provisions available for a ferry service. Regarding the impact of COVID-19, the plans highlighted in the presentation were pre-COVID-19 but would need to be looked at again at a later date particularly for funding needs.

Councillor Spillman noted that the presentation did not give any new information that was not already in the public domain and thought more in-depth information could have been given such as a plan to reduce pollutants in Thurrock. He queried how Arup compared to other similar organisations. Arup Representatives explained that the information given was a high detailed summary of the work undertaken with Council officers so far. The baseline assessment was the first stage and could not ask certain questions such as the implications of a development and the second stage of the assessment would pick up other details as part of the Local Plan process. As an organisation, Arup had completed 15 Local Plan infrastructures across the country on a Local Authority level and strategic level. There was a wide range of skill sets in Arup and would be able to share some of the work that they had recently completed.

Councillor Rice sought detail on whether golf would be included in the plan for sports facilities; a private hospital; plans for the lower part of Grays; a crematoria for Thurrock; and the East Facing Access Slip. Arup Representatives explained that the plans for sports were based on the standards set by Sport England which had moved away from the standards for golf but could be looked at qualitatively and the same could be done for the provision of a private hospital. There had been discussions raised on the potential provision of a crematoria which was covered in the full report and the East Facing Access Slip was also covered in the report. The plans for the lower part of Grays was to be covered by Council officers.

The Vice-Chair sought more detail on how the 30,000 homes to be built would link in to job opportunities; how much of those 30,000 homes would be for social housing; how community driven sports clubs such as Grays Athletic FC could be supported in the Local Plan; the Grays Underpass; plans for schools as there would be more homes; and whether Integrated Medical Centres (IMCs) would reduce the number of GPs available in Thurrock. Arup Representatives answered that sports facilities had been covered within the report and that the Grays Underpass was reflected as a priority in the baseline assessment in the presentation. With the plans for schools, capacity issues had been considered along with any known planned improvements of schools and new schools alongside major new site allotments as part of the Local Plan. Regarding IMCS, discussions had been held with the CCG, as part of the baseline stage, and their strategy was for medical provisions to be placed across the Borough. The next step for Arup was to consider the impact on GP provision and how it would reduce pressure in existing GP surgeries.

Regarding housing, officers explained that Thurrock Council had been working with the other South Essex authorities on a strategic housing market assessment study that covered housing needs going forward to 2020 along with affordable housing needs and how these would be addressed would be considered. The information gathered would help to demonstrate the reason for affordable housing need, the level of that housing need and the mechanisms for that. Officers added that a transport baseline study would also sit alongside the infrastructure study at some stage and would consider issues such as sustainable transport modes. Regarding Councillor Rice's earlier query about golf, officers explained that a report covering the issue of health would be going to Cabinet in autumn.

Councillor Anderson questioned whether there were considerations over the way people would be living post COVID-19. Arup representatives explained that new strategies would be formulated where needed and these would be discussed with the CCG.

The Task Force discussed the flood risk assessment outlined in the presentation and the climate change strategy which looked into flooding mitigation. An updated flood risk assessment would be brought back to the Task Force. There were discussions on whether bus companies should be brought in to give their viewpoints who would be brought into assessments at the next stage. There was a discussion on the green infrastructure network which were linear connections between green spaces with benefits such as flood risk mitigation and better public walking and cycling routes. The s106 contribution set aside for Grays Athletic FC was queried which officers would look into.

8. Thurrock Local Plan - Next Steps Update

The report was presented by Sean Nethercott.

The Task Force discussed when the Local Plan would open the call for sites which would be undertaken in 4 exercises and assessed over a period of 8 –

9 months. The sites would be considered in terms of sustainability and ranked accordingly, amber sites would remain until the end of the process. The Task Force queried the process of the Arena Essex site which currently had a holding objection from Highways. There was a discussion on Chadwell St Mary where infrastructure was needed and officers explained that this would be looked at through the design charrette approach where Ward Councillors would be able to get involved as well. The Task Force sought reassurance that the Council was communicating with general landowners regarding sites and that the general public would be able to get involved in consultations including those with limited technology options. Officers said that webinars would be held with landowners and the wider general public would be involved at later stages with consideration given to those with limited technology options such as going through community groups.

The Task Force went on to discuss when the Local Plan would be presented to Full Council and how COVID-19 would impact upon plans particularly where it had impacted upon the Lower Thames Crossing which also impacted upon the Local Plan. Officers explained that central government required the Local Plan to be ready by 2023 although central government could potentially change this over the next 12 months and the Local Plan was dependent on external forces. The Task Force queried the progress of the East Facing Slip which officers said that the Department for Transport required more modelling work.

9. Work Programme

The following reports were added:

- Design Charrettes – 14 September 2020
- Transport Network (with the involvement of bus operators for transport in the Local Plan) – 9 November 2020
- Update from Arup – 11 January 2021
- Sports Facilities (Grays Athletic FC) – 14 September 2020

The meeting finished at 8.55 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**