

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 December 2020 at 6.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors David Van Day (Vice-Chair)

In attendance: Justin Thomas, Chair of Grays Towns Fund Board
Peter Ward, Chair of Tilbury Towns Fund Board
Andrew Millard, Director of Place
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects
David Moore, Interim Assistant Director of Place Delivery
Peter Wright, Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure
Matthew Ford, Chief Engineer
Wendy Le, Senior 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.

20. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 October 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

21. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The Chair said that he had read a recent article from Thurrock Nub News, 'Should Council Call Time on Borough's High Rise Flats?', and asked Officers to look into this. He noted that there were discussions on regeneration and demolition of flats and suggested that the Council find a 'build to rent' developer to incur costs, pay the Council for land sale and lease the properties back to the Council so the Council could benefit from the land sale and housing stock without incurring costs. Andy Millard answered that Officers would look into this and that it may be a report for the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it involved housing stock.

22. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/2022

The report on pages 9 – 24 of the Agenda was presented by Andy Millard.

Councillor Anderson questioned how often fees and charges changed throughout the year through Director delegated authority. Andy Millard answered that this was quite infrequent and if fees or charges had to change, it was discussed with the Portfolio Holder beforehand. He went on to say that the last financial year had one fee changed which was Build Control fees as it was necessary to ensure the service remained competitive against neighbouring Local Authorities (LAs). Councillor Gerrish commented that any changes in fees that occurred through Director delegated authority be brought to Committee for checking before implementation to which Andy Millard answered the comments would be fed back to Cabinet.

Councillor Gerrish sought more detail on the bus timetable changes outlined in the report. Councillor Kerin questioned why there was a charge for a third resident parking permit; and what the process of the benchmarking exercise for the resident parking permits was as this was not evidenced within the report. Peter Wright explained that the charge related to the A3 paper bus timetable display which would be removed as there was not enough space for these to be displayed. The A4 paper bus timetable displays would still be in place. Regarding the resident parking permits, Peter Wright would feed back to the relevant Officer to provide the Committee with more information on the benchmarking exercise that had taken place.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised fees, including those no longer applicable, and comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**
- 1.2 That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet to allow Fees & Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to commercial requirements.**

24. Electric Vehicle Charging

The report on pages 25 – 34 of the Agenda was presented by Matthew Ford.

Councillor Potter raised concerns on electrocution and asked whether this could happen with the electric charging units. Matthew Ford explained that the infrastructure of the units had been well tested with safety cut off features. The units had been used for many years and that there had been no incidences of electrocution.

Councillor Kerin questioned what benchmarking exercise had taken place and how the Council compared to other similar LAs and neighbouring LAs. Matthew Ford explained that London authorities had over 7,000 electric charging units which had increased over the years; Southend Council had around 10 – 15 units and in the wider Essex, only a handful of units were installed. He went on to say that a higher number of electric charging units were needed in Thurrock as it was a transport hub particularly around Lakeside shopping centre.

Councillor Gerrish asked what the service expected to be delivered within the contract and what the outcome would be in 15 years' time. Matthew Ford answered that the service looked to achieve steady roll out of electric charging units in all residential, industrial and commercial areas across Thurrock. He referred Members to paragraph 2.8 of the report which showed a breakdown of the contract split over three periods in the 15 years of the contract. He said that the overall cost of the contract would be £9 million and the average cost of the electric charging unit would be about £1,000 to £5,000 depending on where the unit would be installed. He explained that the cost of a unit in one location would be less as it only required the electric cable to be installed and that it was difficult to give a fixed price on one unit as there were other variables involved.

Councillor Gerrish queried if this would be over 600 electric charging units based on £5,000 per unit to which Matthew Ford confirmed it would be around 600 to 700 units and that over the contract life, potentially 1,200 units. Matthew Ford went on to say that as part of the Local Plan process, the service was working with developers to ensure that they were building the necessary infrastructure included with the roads as it would reduce the costs of the electric charging units.

The Chair commented that the electric vehicles and charging units were improving but that the price of the electric vehicles were still expensive and that car manufacturers needed to reduce the costs. Councillor Anderson said that he supported the scheme and that government aimed to phase out combustion engines so it was important for the Council to take a demand led approach. Matthew Ford said that electric vehicle prices were reducing and that there was a government grant for electric vehicles. He said that it was the right time to install more electric charge units as there were not many in Thurrock and the infrastructure was needed.

RESOLVED:

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the recommendations that will be considered by Cabinet and to:

- 1) Support the procurement of a single contract over a maximum period 15 years. The initial contract period will be 10 years with an option to extend for one further period of 5 years (10+5);**

- 2) **Support the creation of a policy to inform the roll out of the charging infrastructure, based upon a demand led approach for on-street and off-street parking provision and the upgrade/expansion of existing Council assets and in town centre locations and transport hubs;**
- 3) **Note the budget and contract value for the full 15 year period to the value of up to £9m based on the following income areas:**
 - a. **Allocation of budget on the DfT Integrated Transport Block funding of minimum £75,000 per annum (total allocation over 15 year project life is estimated at being a minimum of £1.125m);**
 - b. **Contributions secured pursuant to Section 106 of the T&CPA1990 (based on Local Plan projections for infrastructure improvements), and;**
 - c. **Office for Low Emission Vehicle (OLEV) grant funding of up to 75% of the capital costs for installation of EV facilities.**
- 4) **Note the approach to delegated authority for awarding contract(s) to the Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.**

25. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Report

The report on pages 35 – 38 of the Agenda was presented by Anna Eastgate.

Referring to paragraph 3.5, Councillor Kerin noted that there were no definitive figures given. He said that the Portfolio Holder at Full Council had said the project would not be more than £20 million and sought clarification and detail on this. He also sought clarification on whether discussions were held between Senior Managers and the Portfolio Holder in regards to the project. He felt it was important that discussions were in place to ensure information provided was correct. Anna Eastgate explained that the service aimed to complete the project within the £19.6 million but it could not be confirmed until the project went to tender. It would be disingenuous to say that the project would be delivered within the £19.6 million as the market had not yet been tested. She said that Senior Managers and the Portfolio Holder was updated on the project on a regular basis. She went on to say that contractors in the project were aware that the scheme had to be designed within the £19.6 million budget but if the tender prices were more than this, then the service would look at other ways that the project could be delivered within budget such as potentially looking at other ways to engineer or different materials.

The Chair sought clarification on whether the original project design with the cantilever had been in excess of £26 million and also on the new budget envelope which he believed was £19.4 million and not £19.6 million. Following on from Councillor Kerin's concern that the project would exceed £20 million, he said the service needed to ensure the project would be completed within the budget envelope even though the service had incurred costs from the

Daybreak Windows site which had helped to improve the design of the project. Anna Eastgate explained that the original design had been identified as high risk and expensive as it involved large steel beams to be laid across the site which could potentially interfere with the railway operations and the market cost estimate for that scheme was over £26 million. The original budget for the current scheme was around £16 million and an additional £4 million had been added to the budget. The Daybreak Windows site was acquired for around £3 million and came out of the existing budget for the current scheme and it had enabled costs to be saved as the service was able to change the design to deliver a more improved facility for residents.

The Committee highlighted the importance of bringing the report back at a later date to ensure that it was on track with the completion date.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the information provided relating to the Stanford le Hope Interchange project.

26. A13 Update Report

The report on pages 39 – 44 of the Agenda was presented by Anna Eastgate.

The Chair said that there were concerns on the overspend of the project and that once the overspend amount was confirmed, he asked that this be brought back to Committee. He also stated that the incurred costs of the project should not be reflected in any form of taxation to Thurrock's residents.

Councillor Kerin commented that the overspend figure of £41 million had been released in March 2020 and sought clarification on whether this would increase due the COVID-19 pandemic. He also felt it was concerning that there was no overspend figure stated within the report and that there needed to be clarity of overspend in the report. He said that the project was already over budget before the pandemic had hit and the report did not cover this. Anna Eastgate explained that the £41 million figure had been released by the press and not by Thurrock Council. She said that the revised out term forecast had been published at the time which had given circa figure of £26.7 million overspend. Since then the pandemic had occurred that had impacted the project so costs could be north of that figure and the precise figure was yet to be confirmed. She explained that costs were monitored on a monthly basis with the Finance Team which included the scheme's grant funding and the overspend figure was being forecasted through an exercise but the precise figure could only be given once a project was completed.

The Chair pointed out that the £41 million over spend figure was released by the press in March 2020 and sought clarification on Anna Eastgate's earlier comment on the circa figure of £26.7 million overspend. Anna Eastgate explained that the report brought to Standards and Audit Committee in July 2020 had given a revised out term forecast range between £114 million to

£120 million which had given a breakdown of the cost and the anticipated forecasted overspend of around £26 million. She was uncertain and could not confirm where the £41 million figure had come from.

Following on, the Chair sought clarification on whether this would indicate a maximum of £140 million overall. Anna Eastgate explained that the report brought to Committee in July 2020 (<https://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/s27731/A13%20Widening%20Report.pdf>) had given a cost summary with the total anticipated out turn costs as £114,675,000 and exercises had been undertaken which led to the forecasted figure of £26.9 million. The Chair questioned whether the £26.9 million was on top of the £114,675,000 figure to which Anna Eastgate confirmed that the £26.9 million was included within the £114,675,000. Andy Millard added that the Committee would be provided with the revised overspend figure once it was confirmed.

The Chair noted that based on the figure of £114,675,000 and the original £78 million from the original project in 2016, the estimate of the overspend could be in excess of £36 million. Anna Eastgate said that this potentially could be based on the figures in the report brought to Committee in July 2020 (<https://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/s27731/A13%20Widening%20Report.pdf>).

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the report content.

27. Grays Town Investment Plan

The report on pages 45 – 52 was introduced by Andy Millard and a presentation was given by Justin Thomas to support the report.

The Chair questioned whether there were plans to transform the Grays Town Shopping Centre into a housing venture. He also questioned how many residential units were proposed. Justin Thomas said that New River was currently looking at opportunities in discussion with the Council to identify the most appropriate scheme. He explained that the organisation was looking at the capacity of the location which had the potential for tall buildings that suggested several hundred new homes to support the housing needed. He went on to say that the town centre would support and benefit from a residential led redevelopment and that the town centre would also benefit from a redesign that would create more public open space in the heart of the town with the right volume of retail.

Councillor Kerin noted that there was a lot of focus on Grays Beach Park and Kilverts Field and was concerned on how people would access these sites as the car parks near these were part of the housing list. He said the aim was to promote the area as a tourist spot but if the car parks were removed, visitors would not be able to park there to visit the areas. He also questioned the total

number of residential units that could be developed. David Moore answered that the sites on the Housing Development Options List were still being considered and that no decision had been made about the car park site as to whether they could be turned into housing developments. The service was investigating the car parking sites that Councillor Kerin had mentioned but the Grays towns fund bid proposals (and any resultant demand for car parking) would also be considered and reflected in any decisions made about the sites.

Following on, Councillor Kerin said that the scheme was exciting but felt that it did not factor in how people would be able to access parking to visit Grays Beach Park and the riverfront. He said that the ambitions for the riverfront and the Housing Development Options List seemed to run separately and that there needed to be joined up working on both sides. He also questioned if there was an estimate on the potential number of residential units if the car parks were to be removed. David Moore explained that the Housing Development Options List had been brought to Full Council in January 2020 and since then, the service had been developing the Grays Towns Fund Bid. He went on to say that the Council had not decided how the sites were to be developed but it was part of the work to be undertaken to identify demand for car park spaces as well as for housing development. The scheme was currently a proposal and Members' comments would be taken into consideration. He said that there was no figure earmarked for the number of potential residential units in regards to the car parks mentioned and that the town investment plan also focused on a sustainable transport scheme. The aim was to encourage people to move away from cars and to use sustainable transport and that the Grays Town Fund bid included a proposal for a river bus to dock at a new Grays jetty, to allow passengers to travel into London as well as across the Thames.

Andy Millard drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 3.8 of the report which highlighted the project's areas to focus on to complement the current schemes taking place in Grays. He asked for the Committee's views on these areas.

Councillor Anderson noted that there was not much information on heritage in Grays whereas the next report included more information on heritage in Tilbury and questioned how heritage would be enhanced and conserved in Grays. David Moore answered that the scheme aimed to encourage people to visit the riverfront and this scheme would run in conjunction with other schemes that were currently running to try to improve the area north of the railway line. He explained that each town fund board was able to set up its own area of focus and the Grays board had chosen to focus on the geographic area instead of heritage. Justin Thomas added that the heritage reference in the presentation related to the connectivity between the river and Grays town. He went on to say that historical reviews had shown that the railway line had split the town in two and whilst the underpass was not part of the town fund, it was a significant part of that heritage in regards to connection. The jetty reinforced the commercial use of the wharf but by reintroducing a ferry use there, it would revitalise the wharf which used to be very active.

Andy Millard asked that an additional recommendation (1.4) be added for the Committee to agree on, which the Committee agreed.

RESOLVED:

Members of Planning, Transport, and Regeneration Committee were asked to:-

- 1.1 note the work of the Town Board in progressing the Town Investment Plan.**
- 1.2 note the intention to submit a Town Investment Plan, based on the ongoing stakeholder engagement and indicative projects described in this report.**
- 1.3 note that further reports will be submitted at a later date with details of projects prior to completion of a Town Deal with Government.**
- 1.4 provide a letter of support to the work of the Town Board and that this support will be submitted as evidence for the Town Investment Plan when it is submitted in January 2021.**

28. Tilbury Town Investment Plan

The report on pages 53 – 60 was introduced by David Moore and a presentation was given by Peter Ward to support the report.

The Chair thought the proposal was exciting with great projects and said that Tilbury was a forgotten town that needed regeneration. He noted that an earlier version of the plan had included a proposal to build a new youth facility where the police station currently was and that the plan had now changed, to build the youth facility on the Anchor Field. He highlighted concern on the loss of space on the Anchor Field and questioned whether residents had been consulted on this. He asked noted the Bid also contained proposals for King Georges/Daisy Field and asked what facilities would be delivered on the Daisy Field. He also mentioned that the martial arts facility at the old fire station was being terminated and asked whether the facility would be relocated.

Peter Ward explained that the footprint of the police station was not big enough for the youth facility and there was a need for a location in an outside area to encourage young people to do outside activities. The Board was still looking at other options and would be offering a fair amount of mitigation for encroaching on part of the Anchor Field. The project was still being refined but the aim was to make the area better, and encourage more uses onto the Anchor Fields site. The Daisy Field proposal was also still being refined, but the plan is to use more of the open space for sports use with hardstanding areas to build changing rooms. The Towns Fund bid would not be submitted

until the end of January and the Board would be consulting again before then. There have been discussions with the Chair of the Martial Arts Academy regarding how this would be facilitated going forward and the project aimed to enhance community space that would be all-inclusive and accessible for everyone in the community.

(The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders at 8.25pm to enable the rest of the items on the Agenda to be completed).

Councillor Kerin questioned when residents would see the physical aspects of the project. Peter Ward answered that it would take a few years for the projects to come to fruition and the intention was to implement projects as soon as government funding was approved. David Moore explained that the Council had received “accelerated funding” from government for the Towns Fund areas, and this funding had to be spent by 31 March 2021. The funding supports the bigger projects in the Town Fund plans, but also includes smaller projects such as the demolition of the fire station and essential equipment for the youth centre. The timescales for process for the submission of the town investment plan to Government were that the initial plan would be submitted by January 2021, and then more detailed business cases would be worked up, which might take up to a year. Once those were approved, the funding would be agreed by the Government, and projects were expected to be built over a period of three years.

Andy Millard asked that an additional recommendation (1.4) be added for the Committee to agree on to which the Committee agreed.

RESOLVED:

Members of Planning, Transport, and Regeneration Committee are asked to:-

- 1.1 note the work of the Town Board in progressing the Town Investment Plan.**
- 1.2 note the intention to submit a Town Investment Plan, based on the ongoing stakeholder engagement and indicative projects described in this report.**
- 1.3 note that further reports will be submitted at a later date with details of projects prior to completion of a Town Deal with Government.**
- 1.4 provide a letter of support for the work of the Town Board and that this support will be submitted as evidence for the Town Investment Plan when it is submitted in January 2021.**

29. Purfleet Centre Regeneration

The report on pages 61 – 70 of the Agenda was presented by Andy Millard.

The Chair noted that the scheme had been approved and sought clarification on whether the investment was £75 million as mentioned. He also highlighted concerns of traffic congestion on the west of the borough and that with more homes in that area, it would worsen traffic congestion particularly as there was still no east facing access slip in place. Andy Millard confirmed that the investment was £75 million subject to the report's approval. He was aware of the concerns and explained that these had been considered with the planning application when it was heard at Planning Committee.

Councillor Gerrish shared the concerns of traffic congestion raised and said that he remained supportive of the scheme which was needed for the residents of Purfleet-on-Thames. He questioned if the delivery of the scheme was still on track given the current pandemic. Andy Millard said the receipt of the HIF fund would help to accelerate the delivery of the scheme which would bring the scheme back on track.

Councillor Potter agreed with the Chair's concerns on traffic congestion and said that it would increase air pollution. Andy Millard said that the projects discussed earlier that evening would help to build the infrastructure needed as development and growth progressed. He said that it would be ensured that the necessary infrastructure would be there to support the growth of Thurrock and not exacerbate existing problems.

RESOLVED:

1.1. Overview and Scrutiny Members are asked to comment on the following recommendations that will be presented to Cabinet:

- a) Note the progress of the scheme in recent months and, in particular, the positive Best Consideration sign off and the success of the HIF application in securing £75.1m of Central Government investment into the Borough;**
- b) Note the key terms of the HIF Grant Determination Agreement and delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the s.151 Officer and Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning to negotiate final terms and enter into the Grant Determination Agreement with Homes England);**
- c) Approve the proposed variations described in Appendix 2 and delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the s.151 Officer and Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning to agree any final terms and document and enter into a Deed of Variation to formally amend the Development Agreement in line with these proposals.**

30. Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

It was agreed that some of the items would be merged as it fell within the same subject area and some items would be provided as a Briefing Note. The Committee agreed to an earlier start of 6pm for the next meeting due to the number of items on the Agenda.

The meeting finished at 8.51 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**