

Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 2 November 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Alex Anderson and Luke Spillman

Apologies: Councillors Martin Kerin (Vice-Chair) and Andrew Jefferies

In attendance:
Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead of Strategic Services
Rebekeh Pazcek, Consultant
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer

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

The meeting started at 7.16pm due to a technical delay.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 13 July 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 Charette Process - Briefing for Members and Service Leads

A summary of the report was presented by Rebekeh Pazcek.

The Task Force discussed the briefing to be held for all 49 Elected Members of the Council which was yet to be confirmed and likely to be held in a virtual setting due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Task Force highlighted the importance of engaging with local community forums online and the use of social media to involve the wider community into the consultation process such as sharing posts to create a 'knock on effect'. The Task Force also commented that the survey should be accessible and not filled with

excessively long questions. Rebekeh Paczek explained that a Digital Marketing Strategy was being looked at and that it had been suggested that the engagement platform on the Council website remove the steps where users were required to register before accessing a survey. The suggestion of online forums was taken into consideration and surveys would possibly be posted out as well (as libraries would be closed due to lockdown restrictions) to ensure everyone had the opportunity to get involved.

The Task Force queried the timeframe for results of the survey to be fed back and it was anticipated a 4 – 6 week period from when the survey finished. Officers explained that despite the pandemic, private landowners had been briefed over the last six months on the consultation process and once it began, the process should move fairly quickly.

14. White Paper Planning Reforms

The report was presented by Sean Nethercott.

The Task Force discussed the importance of infrastructure and the Chair mentioned the Local Development Corporation site in Blackshots that had lost s106 funds and needed to be developed. Councillor Spillman commented that the Planning system needed reform in terms of the proposal and he questioned what would the advantages and disadvantages be for Thurrock with the proposed reforms. Sean Nethercott answered that Thurrock was a growth authority and would not necessarily see any disadvantages to the proposed reforms. Thurrock was aware of the level of housing demand in Thurrock and had the opportunity to make this work through the reforms and were aware of what the local community wanted. Access to the countryside could be improved and declining areas could be improved to make the living environment more attractive.

The Chair questioned whether mobile homes for over 55's had been considered for Thurrock. She also mentioned the issue of the river with the building works in Tilbury and stated that a route was needed to ensure that water did not build up and was able to flow out to the river. She also sought clarification on the statement, 'more powers to address unauthorised development' on page 22. Sean Nethercott said that discussions had been held with mobile homes providers and that the Borough needed different types of housing such as modular homes to deliver the housing needed in Thurrock. He went on to explain that the statement on page 22 meant Thurrock had more power but referred mostly to enforcement to deploy the powers they had already had in a more efficient and effective way. Leigh Nicholson added that the Enforcement Team was not expanding as a response to the Paper but would have stronger enforcement powers and increased resources as a result of the Paper.

The Chair suggested the idea of a new village and asked if this had been considered. Sean Nethercott answered that there were eight locations as part of the Design Charrettes and that five of those were major urban locations with potential for urban extensions. Three of those would have Design

Charrettes to see if they would be sustainable and how those sites, such as Bulphan, would develop to achieve a different place without losing the character of the village.

The Task Force questioned whether other proposals in the Paper was needed that could help Thurrock in its Local Plan strategy. The Task Force also noted the contradictions in regards to resident engagement and queried whether feedback had been provided to Government on the Paper. Sean Nethercott answered that the Paper could provide more clarity on the Green Belt as it was an important issue and on more guidance on infrastructure particularly in larger developments where a lack of facilities were provided by developers and Local Authorities needed more power to ensure these facilities were provided as promised. He noted that there were some contradictions in the Paper on resident engagement and that to make better places, involvement from people were needed in the Local Plan process and it was important that this first part was undertaken correctly.

The Task Force gave praise to the recent development in Chadwell St Mary and said that the design was different to other estates in Thurrock. Officers answered that Thurrock aimed to set the bar high in terms of design to ensure better places.

The Task Force sought clarification on the Government's plans for open spaces and woodlands and if there was a commitment to return land back to Local Authorities and the funding for this. The Lower Thames Crossing and its impact to the Local Plan process was also mentioned. Sean Nethercott answered that the Local Plan had to be produced in 30 months' time and that the process had started in 2014. A strategy had been in place from the beginning and the process had been delayed due to constant changes because of the Lower Thames Crossing realignments.

15. Sustainable Travel and Movement in Thurrock - Transport Strategy Refresh Update

The report was presented by Leigh Nicholson.

The Task Force discussed the possibility of clearing traffic off the roads in Thurrock and using the river for other modes of transport. Officers explained that the Transport Strategy included the creation of the Transport Infrastructure Group which would include Highways England, Thames Clipper Group and river bus companies to look at other modes of transport besides the use of cars. A report was due to be presented to the Planning, Transport, Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December and would include electric vehicle charging options and increasing the opportunities for people to walk and cycle instead of driving. The Task Force was referred to the diagram on page 29.

(The meeting adjourned at 8.18pm due to technical issues and recommenced at 8.20pm.)

The Task Force discussed the parking strategy which would replace the existing parking strategy. The new parking strategy would work alongside the freight strategy and consider parking standards for new developments, electric vehicle charging points and more walking/cycling routes. Councillor Spillman questioned whether a partnership with an electric car provider was possible to encourage people to use electric vehicles and access these at a cheaper rate. He said that the use of electric vehicles would help with the issues of air quality in Thurrock. Officers explained that the report due for PTR would look at opportunities to procure a provider for electric vehicle charging points but not to provide electric vehicles. Officers would look into this option.

16. Work Programme

Parking Strategy was added to the work programme for 11 January 2021.

The meeting finished at 8.35 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**