

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 March 2015 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Sue Gray (Chair), Tom Kelly (Vice-Chair), Roy Jones and Martin Kerin
- Apologies:** Councillors Gerard Rice and Simon Wootton
- In attendance:** Matthew Essex, Head of Regeneration
Andrew Millard, Head of Planning & Growth
Sean Nethercott, Growth & Strategy Team Leader
Lisa Ricketts, Business Support Officer
Kenna-Victoria Martin, 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.

23. Minutes

The Minutes of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 21 January 2015 were approved as a correct record.

24. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

25. Declaration of Interests

There were no such declarations.

26. Economic Development Strategy Review and Delivery Update

The Head of Regeneration introduced the report to the committee explaining that the Council was at the start of the process to update the Economic Development Strategy. The current strategy was adopted in 2008 and within the last seven years the Council had made significant progress on achieving the aim of the strategy.

It was highlighted to Members that there were three main points within the strategy:

- Employment, creating jobs for local people;
- Enabling factors which assist in maximising the opportunity for employment, while;
- Embedding the factors which generated benefits for the Local Community.

Officers informed Members that since 2008 the Council had been working with Partners and Stakeholders to bring forward growth within six hubs across the borough with good progress made in most. Particular highlights included the relocation of the South Essex College campus into Grays Town Centre and the development of High House Production Park in Purfleet which didn't exist at the time the Strategy was adopted.

Members thanked officers for giving them the opportunity to discuss the future of the strategy and enquired the following:

- Education featured heavily within the strategy, how could officers ensure that schools were teaching the skills that could be transferred into the working environment;
- There was concern that there was an aim within the strategy to build a further 18,500 homes within the borough and that this may have the potential to cause further congestion when accessing the M25 from the A13, what were Officers thoughts on this;
- What the Grays Magistrates Court would be rented out as;

Officers answered the queries put forward by the Committee explaining the following:

- The Thurrock Learning Campus which was originally based at Woodview had been relocated into a new purpose built facility in Grays providing training in some of the potential growth sectors including creative and cultural and environmental technology/energy. It was further explained that there were schemes in place to encourage training and learning in workplace environments including a degree course in costume making being developed by the Royal Opera House (ROH), accredited by University of the Arts London and provided by South Essex College in the ROH's new Costume workshop when it opens on High House Production Park later this year;
- Officers agreed with Members that traffic congestion was a current issue and which was why it was within the Development Strategy, Members were notified that the Council had secured an allocation of funding from the Government to widen the A13 which aims to start work next year. The packages of works already completed or planned at London Gateway, Grays and at Lakeside were also highlighted as examples of additional capacity being provided to support growth;
- The Committee were informed that there was a lack of office space within Grays, the Magistrates Court was to be turned into business space with offices ranging from 100 sqft up to 1,200 sqft . Members were informed that the offices would be available to any business but, recognising Grays' role, would be particularly attractive to existing and new businesses in business services.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Acknowledge progress on the Economic Development programme and projects that are being delivered in Thurrock.**
- 2. Consider and propose areas of focus for Economic Development activity in Thurrock.**

27. Lakeside Growth Hub

The Head of Planning & Growth addressed the committee explaining the purpose of the presentation which was about to be put before them. During the presentation the following was highlighted:

- The Shopping Centre itself was 23years old and has become an ambitious area thanks to its assets;
- Since the Thurrock Core Strategy was introduced in 2011, there had been a lot of commercial interest within the area including retail, homes and jobs. This strategy had now become part of the Thurrock Local Plan 2035;
- Officers notified Members that lakeside was the major shopping centre serving Thurrock and had unique qualities to the borough which were going to be included when turning to a Town Centre rather than being focused on as just an area for shopping;
- It was considered a key challenge to look at changing retail, economic and social trends, this was due to the rise of online shopping which impacted on investment decisions and shopping patterns. The growing competition to Lakeside's established retail and leisure role within the borough and the need to improve visitor experience and attractiveness of Lakeside as a destination, this would include the need to improve access to and within the Lakeside;
- The accessibility to lakeside by car and other means of public transport. This would include keeping road capacity maintained and to improve local connection, with an increase of the choice of routes. There was the possibility of a network of bus and pedestrian routes and new transport interchange to encourage people to walk once inside the centre;
- The Council was working with Partners and Stakeholders, to bring forward growth developments to make Lakeside more people friendly.

Members were notified that once the Local Plan was adopted officers would look to use funding and Section 106 monies for completing projects and completing delivery.

The Committee raised concern as the difficulty of residents getting in and out of Lakeside, however also praised the idea of having a shuttle bus or similar mode of transport operating once people had entered the centre.

Officers explained that the main issue they were facing was that Lakeside was spread out; it was their idea that once inside people could walk from either side of the centre, in a hope to minimize the use of cars.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report and the presentation to Committee

28. Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members were taken through the Work Programme and the reports that had been put before them over the municipal year. Members agreed the items to be allocated to the first meeting of the new municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed and noted.

The meeting finished at 8.15 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