

At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY 12TH JUNE, 2018 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. MacKnight in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Curran, M. Dixon, Galbraith, E. Gibson, Jackson, Marshall, O'Brien, Taylor and Turner

Also in attendance:-

Councillor Hunt – Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Co-Ordinating Committee
Mr Gary Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader, Sunderland City Council
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation, Sunderland City Council
Ms Judith Miller, Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage Project Officer, Sunderland City Council
Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Team Manager, Sunderland City Council
Mr Mark Taylor, Principal Heritage Protection Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mrs Christine Tilley, Governance Services Team Leader, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Foster.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17th April 2018

A copy of the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17th April, 2018 was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17th April, 2018 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Variation in the Order of Business

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the order of business be changed so that the item on the 'Northern Spire Bridge – Update' was considered at this point on the agenda.

Northern Spire Bridge – Update

The Chief Operating Officer (Place) submitted a report (copy circulated), providing an update to Members on the preparation for the opening of the Northern Spire Bridge.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Mark Jackson, Head of Infrastructure and Transportation advised the Committee that the final stages of the paintwork were currently being undertaken on site at the Northern Spire and this was primarily focussed on completing the works to the 105m high pylon. The work was weather dependant due to the working platforms being used by the contractor which were sensitive to wind and also conditions needed to be correct to apply the paint. The work was expected to be completed imminently, although the exact date was not currently known due to the weather related issues that he had highlighted. Everything else was complete other than the standard snagging issues which were being picked up and would be addressed in due course. The Bridge would be opened as soon as possible after the painting had been completed. It had been hoped that there would have been two weeks' notice of the bridge opening so that a community celebration event could have been arranged in that timeframe but unfortunately this would not now be possible. A community event celebration would be held later in the year which would mean the bridge having to be closed for the event.

In response to Councillor Curran, Mr Jackson advised that getting the paint job finish right for the first time was important and that he would expect it to last a considerable time before it would need to be re-painted.

In response to Councillor M. Dixon, Mr Jackson advised that at that moment the bridge was on time and under budget and he did not anticipate the situation to change. He would be happy to report back to the Scrutiny Committee with the final position later in the year if required.

In response to Councillor Turner who asked whether the public would be able to walk over the bridge before it was open, Mr Jackson advised that if the pylon had been finished things would have been different. There were a number of options they were considering as to what would be best for a celebration but it was likely that it would be a programme with invited guests.

Full consideration having been given to the report and the information provided above, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the information provided during the discussion, as detailed above, be received and noted and a further update on the project be provided in due course.

Reference from Cabinet – 30th May 2018 – Consultation on the Publication Draft of the Core Strategy and Development Plan and the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out for the advice and consideration of the Committee, a report which was considered by Cabinet on 30 May 2018 seeking approval of the Regulation 19 draft of the Core Strategy and Development Plan and associated documents and also the draft Planning Obligation SPD, for the purposes of consultation.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Louise Sloan, Strategic Plans and Housing Team Manager, presented the report to the Committee advising that the Cabinet had noted the outcomes and key messages from the Regulation 18 Draft Plan Consultation Statement and approved the Regulation 19 draft of the Core Strategy and Development Plan and associated documents for public consultation. She advised that this was the final plan, unless substantial changes were needed following the consultation, for submission to the Secretary of State.

Ms Sloan highlighted that the Council had updated the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to ensure that all types of land had been considered to determine its suitability for housing including green spaces, employment land, open countryside and settlement breaks. A decision had been taken not to allocate a permanent site for Gypsy and Travellers as an assessment undertaken had suggested utilising the Council's unauthorised Encampment Policy, which takes an acceptance approach to unauthorised encampments rather than allocating a site in the plan.

Ms Sloan outlined the next steps of the process which was that the Plan would be consulted on for six weeks in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Regulations, following which the representations received would be analysed by Officers. Cabinet and Council would then consider the representations and be asked to authorise submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State.

In response to Councillor Blackburn, Ms Sloan advised that Officers had prepared a summary of representations received which would be posted on the Council website later that week.

Councillor Blackburn enquired whether the Council could encourage Food Takeaways to be open during the day as when these premises were closed the shutters were down.

Mr Gary Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader, advised that this was a licensing issue and that restrictions could be put on but it was quite difficult to enforce.

Councillor M. Dixon enquired about empty properties and whether the Council had any schemes to take forward custom built properties suitable for older people.

In response Ms Sloan advised that the Council had a proactive policy to bring empty properties back into use but she was not aware of any custom built schemes in the pipeline.

Mr Baker added that there was a self and custom built register for people to sign up to but interest was limited at the moment, although the Council did have a policy and planned to promote it.

Councillor Dixon commented that there had not been a big input from Gentoo or other housing associations and that he would like to put on record that he found this disappointing as he felt that they should have been more involved.

Ms Sloan advised that input was welcomed and pointed out that she did have one representation.

In response to Councillor Dixon, Ms Sloan stated that she did not have any evidence to suggest that there was a need for park and ride car parks, although she could raise the issue with transport colleagues.

In response to Councillor Jackson's enquiry about the restriction of hot food takeaways, Mr Baker advised that there was a retail hierarchy in the draft Plan and separate to this, health impact criteria needed to be taken into consideration.

In response to Councillor O'Brien, Ms Sloan advised that the percentage of affordable homes in the Plan was 15% which equated to 1900 homes.

In response to Councillor Turner, Ms Sloan advised that there would be an Education Plan to look at where the educational needs would be met.

In response to the Chairman, Ms Sloan advised that homelessness would be addressed through the Housing Strategy and the greenbelt was to prevent settlements merging together; only through this process could the greenbelt boundary be amended and an Infrastructure Delivery Plan had to take on board all the infrastructure issues required for housing developments.

In response to Councillor Dixon, Ms Sloan stated that the Council had a Housing Strategy with 3 aims which set out how it was going to achieve those aims for its residents. The Council also had a delivery arm in 'Sunderland Homes', an arms-length company, to build new homes for the city.

Councillor O'Brien stated that the first phase of the Chester Rise Development did not have any affordable homes and enquired as to how many phases there were for this development.

In response Ms Sloan advised that she did not know however she would speak to the developer and report back.

Full consideration having been given to the report and the information provided above, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the comments of the Committee detailed above be noted and that the Committee supports the decisions of the Cabinet as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Head of Planning and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated), updating Members on the revised Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (CAMP) which will replace the 2007 Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS) which is currently adopted planning guidance and is due to be considered for re-adoption by Cabinet on 20th June 2018.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Judith Miller, Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage Project Officer provided the Committee with a detailed presentation on the conservation area including the landmark buildings, the funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and how the money would be spent if successful together with the proposed revisions to the CAMP.

The Chairman and Councillor M. Dixon referred to the proposals regarding 'Town Park'. The Chairman made the point that Sunderland was a 'city'. Councillor M. Dixon commented on the need to ensure this space remained a safe walkway for people wanting to access the area around Sunderland Minster and not in an effort to improve it, make the area attractive to groups congregating there and creating the wrong atmosphere.

In response, Ms Miller advised that further consultation was being undertaken on the name for the park area and suggestions such as 'Minster Park', 'Minster Green' had been made to date. Officers were aware that an older demographic used the route to the Minster and had spoken to the Minster and the Empire Theatre about the kind of activities they would like to see taking part in that space. Activities related to crafts and an outdoor performance theatre to tailor to the activities being held in the Minster and Empire Theatre themselves had been suggested. Ms Miller reported that plans for the area included erecting plaques around the park to provide information on the history of the area and detailing information on the paving.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that she was pleased to see that the Electricity Sub-station had been recently redecorated which she felt had made a big improvement to the area.

Ms Miller advised that there were plans to relocate the Electricity Sub-station however it had been improved for the time being.

In response to Councillor O'Brien, Ms Miller advised that a planning application for the site next to the 'Town Park' site had not been received from Next PLC yet and Officers would look at how this would complement the area or what else the site could be used for if it did not progress.

Mr Mark Taylor, Principal Heritage Protection Officer confirmed the route that service deliveries would take if the 'Next' planning application went ahead.

Councillor Marshall stated that it would be important that service deliveries were not accessing the area around the 'Town Park' and disrupting the reflective atmosphere there.

Councillor Curran commented on the importance of the streets around the Crowtree area which were some of the oldest in Sunderland and for the need to retain the buildings there.

Ms Miller confirmed the importance of the area Councillor Curran had referred to with regards to the heritage of Sunderland. She advised that clearance had taken place in the 1960's and 1970's in that area. They would consult, reflect and research what was in the area and storytelling would be undertaken in the autumn.

Councillor Jackson commented that the area around the Empire Theatre was very poorly served by buses. There were bus stops and bus shelters on St Mary's Boulevard which the bus companies did not appear to be using and she asked that this be looked into.

Mr Taylor advised that he would pick the matter up with his colleagues in Transport Services.

Ms Miller advised that new signage would be installed to highlight attractions and heritage landmarks to both visitors and residents in the conservation area.

Councillors O'Brien and Jackson commented on the poor signage for the National Glass Centre.

In response to Councillor M. Dixon, Ms Miller stated that the Townscape Heritage scheme would run from 2018-2023 and would uplift buildings and provide a legacy for Sunderland.

In response to the Chairman, Ms Miller stated that the future of the Magistrates Courts building was still uncertain but that it was on the reserve list. If it did become vacant, she confirmed that the building was one that the Council would want to preserve.

The Chairman having thanked Ms Miller for the presentation, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the comments of the Committee, as detailed above, be taken into consideration.

Annual Work Programme 2018/19

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated), asking the Committee to agree its work programme for the Municipal year 2018/19.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer referred Members to paragraph 3.1 of the report which detailed a table providing the issues for inclusion in the work plan which had been raised at the Scrutiny workshop session held on 31st May 2018.

5. RESOLVED that the draft Annual Scrutiny Work Programme for 2018/19 be approved and that emerging issues be incorporated as and when they arise throughout the forthcoming year.

Notice of Key Decisions

A report providing an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 22nd May, 2018 (copy circulated), was submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to contact him if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

6. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) D. MACKNIGHT,
Chairman.