

ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL

4 JUNE 2020 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Brown (Chair), Councillors Mrs Atkinson, Denholm, Ms Ellis-Williams (as substitute for Councillor Rodgerson), Meller, Mitchelson, Mrs McKerrell and Paton.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor J Mallinson – Leader
Councillor Ellis – Deputy Leader and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder
Councillor Nedved – Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Principal Planning Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

EGSP.20/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Rodgerson.

EGSP.21/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

EGSP.22/20 PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

EGSP.23/20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – 1) It was noted that Council, at its meeting on 3 March 2020, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020. The Chair would sign the minutes at the first practicable opportunity.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2020 be agreed.

EGSP.24/20 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

EGSP.25/20 HOUSING DELIVERY IN ST CUTHBERT'S GARDEN COMMUNITY

The Corporate Director of Economic Development submitted report ED.15/20 which presented options for delivering housing in the St Cuthbert's Garden Village.

The Principal Planning Officer reminded the Panel of background to the St Cuthbert's Garden Village development and set out the proposals for delivering innovation, housing type and mix as detailed in the report. She also set out how land ownership could impact plans for housing development and how a mix of developers and registered providers could be engaged to deliver the housing mix.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The report set out the opportunities for affordable housing within the Garden Village, Members were concerned that any engagement from Registered Providers may take development and investment from existing stock.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development informed the Panel that the masterplanning work for the Garden Village had led to Riverside undertaking a Refurbishment Project of their stock to ensure it fit in with any new stock within the Garden Village.

The Principal Planning Officer reminded the Panel that the Garden Village was a thirty-year project and the build rate would not differ from the current build rate.

- A Member sought assurance that affordable housing would be included in the development and that developers' costs or affordability would not affect the provision.

The Principal Planning Officer highlighted the land value as a key consideration in the masterplanning. There was a commitment that 20% of the housing would be affordable across the whole development, the land value had to be equalised across the development to ensure that the affordability remained achievable to meet the affordable housing commitment.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development added that the debate in the coming six months would focus on how the Garden Village would be delivered and what the options were. This work would take place in the Members Advisory Group and through Overview and Scrutiny. There were big decisions to make regarding the look of the Village, the infrastructure and how the Council's vision would be delivered.

A Member asked if Officers had been notified of land owners who did not want to sell their land and how this would affect the development.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that there had been significant consultation with land owners and it was important that they all worked together. She assured the Panel that there was a lot of land not being used in the development and therefore the shape of the development had been designed to accommodate any areas where landowners were not willing or able to release their land.

- A Member asked for an update on Members Advisory Group.

The Principal Planning Officer informed the Panel that the Members Advisory Group (MAG) had been established to steer the work and provide feedback often through a workshop style discussion. The MAG helped to scope the masterplan and champion the project with wider Members of the Council.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder added that the Group was a cross party group which considered matters objectively and in considerable depth. He felt that the MAG had become a critical role in the masterplan development.

- A Member asked for an update on the Right to Build Task Force and asked if the results of their work could be fed back to Scrutiny in the future.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the interest in the custom build housing register had been low, however, it was now being promoted and updated to reflect the increase in demand in the area. She agreed that the work of the Task Force could be reported back to the Panel in the future.

- What interest had housing associations shown in the Garden Village and was there any option for the City Council to build its own properties for rent in the development?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that there had been a lot of interest and interaction from housing associations for the master plan. She clarified that the City Council was not a housing provider and did not have a housing revenue account for the provision of housing.

- Did the masterplan include serviced plots for self-builds or would those who wished to self-build have to go through a developer?

The Principal Planning Officer responded that there were several options for the provision of self-builds, however, best practice showed that the economies of scale worked best when a serviced area containing a number of plots was made available for a range of custom and self-builders.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development added that Stage 2 of the master plan would give consideration to how the development was laid out and would then look to establishing policies and principles for the site in a Special Local Plan just for the Garden Village. The Local Plan would ensure that the Council's principles for the development was kept for the lifetime of the project.

- A Member was aware of similar projects in other areas of the Country and felt strongly that the project resulted in housing that was affordable for everyone.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development acknowledged that there was a range of different housing developments such as the Garden Village across the Country and suggested that some site visits take place in the future to look at different options. She added that the Council was in the process of preparing a Climate Change Strategy and this would be used as a guide in the master planning for the development.

- Were there any modular housing manufacturers in Cumbria?

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that there was a manufacturer based on the West Coast of Cumbria. Modular Housing was not necessarily a new concept and was an area that was being explored further for the future. Ideally with a large scale development the aim would be to have the modular housing components constructed on site.

- Had bore holes been considered for the development?

The Principal Planning Officer responded that work had been undertaken on drainage and topography of the site, and possibly some early work on where the water table sat on site and she agreed to provide a written response.

- Given the current situation was the Government capacity funding still available?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that Homes England had confirmed that there would a further round of funding this year.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Housing Delivery in St Cuthbert's Garden Community report (ED.15/20) be noted.

2) That the Principal Planning Officer provide a written response to the Panel regarding the consideration given to bore holes for the development.

EGSP.26/20 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20. (OS.08/20)

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Constitution requires that overview and scrutiny committees report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. The Scrutiny Annual Report was prepared to meet this requirement.

The last meetings of the 2019/20 Scrutiny year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce face to face contact. Remote working practices were being established to allow Scrutiny Panels to operate in Carlisle City Council. Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 set out the guidance that allowed Councils to operate public meetings in virtual, rather than physical locations.

The Chair informed the Panel that the Scrutiny Chairs Group had met on 13 March 2020. Future timings of the Panels had been discussed and it was suggested that the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel trial a 6.00pm start time. The Chair explained that she had suggested a 6pm start time, which had been supported by the Vice Chair, to encourage those who had childcare and employment responsibilities throughout the day to become more involved and active in Scrutiny. She stressed the issues which she would have with childcare should the meetings continue throughout the day due to her husband working and no one being able to come to her house to look after the children due to Covid 19.

The Panel discussed the proposal in some detail, some Members agreed that a later start time would be beneficial however some Members felt that attendance at a 6.00pm meeting would not be achievable due to commitments to Parish Councils, especially in the rural wards. After listening to the debate, the Chair suggested that a 5.00pm start time may suit Members more than 6.00pm. It was proposed and seconded that a 5.00pm start time be introduced for the Panel. Voting took place and the proposal was not agreed.

The Panel felt that a compromise would be a 4.00pm start time, this was proposed and seconded, following voting it was agreed.

The Chair did not vote in support of the 4.00pm start time and was disappointed that the meeting could not be moved to a later time.

The change to the Panel's start time would be included in an amended Civic Calendar which would be considered by Council on 14 July.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Scrutiny Annual Report (OS.08/20) be agreed subject to the inclusion of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report as an important topic of scrutiny moving forward.

2) That, subject to the agreement of Council in July, meetings of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel would begin at 4.00pm.

EGSP.27/20 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.09/20 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that the Carlisle Corporate Peer Challenge, which had taken place at the start of 2020, was positive and highlighted a number of

strengths for the Council. The report also made some comments about the role of scrutiny. The full report had been attached to the report and suggested that decision making processes could be more streamlined with a clearer purpose for Overview and Scrutiny. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer commented that the Panel may wish to consider this matter more closely in the coming year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer drew the Panel's attention to their proposed Work Programme for 2020/21. She explained that the draft Programme had been based on previous Programmes and asked the Panel to consider how the work Programme could be amended to reflect the response to the current situation and virtual meetings.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The Panel asked that a report be added to their Work Programme on the impact of Covid 19 on the Tourism Sector.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development suggested that information on the impact of Covid 19 on the tourism sector be included in a strategic report which detailed the impact of Covid 19 on the economy as a whole along with information on the recovery process.

- The Panel commented that the Peer Challenge Feedback document was extremely important to the future of Scrutiny and should be added to the Work Programme.
- A Member asked what support was being given to businesses to help them stay open following the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development responded that a number of grants had been made available to businesses. The discretionary grant that was now available was much smaller and more prescriptive, as a result the Council was unable to provide support to everyone. She added that it was a very difficult situation, but the Council had a limited role in the support available for businesses.

The Leader of the Council reminded the Panel that the Council had administered £28m in grants, unfortunately the support available could not help everyone that needed it.

- In discussing the Panel's Work Programme it was agreed that:
 - the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-25 would be circulated to the Panel for information only and removed from the Work Programme;
 - Free after Three Car Parking be deferred to 2021/22;
 - an update on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) be included in the Economic Recovery report and removed from the Work Programme for October;
 - the following items be removed from the July meeting
 - Economic Strategy
 - Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal/ Key Projects
 - the following item to be provided to the July meeting
 - Economic Recovery – to include an update on the LEP and detail on the High Street Fund and Town Investment Plan.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.09/20);

2) That the following amendments be made to the 2020/21 Work Programme:

- the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-25 would be circulated to the Panel for information only and removed from the Work Programme;
- Free after Three Car Parking be deferred to 2021/22;

- an update on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) be included in the Economic Recovery report and removed from the Work Programme for October;
- the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback report be added;
- the following items be removed from the July meeting
 - Economic Strategy
 - Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal/ Key Projects
- the following item to be provided to the July meeting
 - Economic Recovery – to include an update on the LEP and detail on the High Street Fund and Town Investment Plan.

(The meeting ended at 11.36am)