

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held Remotely on **Monday, 14 September 2020 at 10.30am**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Melissa Allen, Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Jocelyn Bond, Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Tony Fryatt, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Debbie McCallum, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Kay Yule

Other Members present:

Councillor TJ Haworth-Culf

Officers present: Liz Beighton (Planning Manager - Development Management), Sarah Carter (Democratic Services Officer), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Desi Reed (Planning Policy and Delivery Manager), Ben Woolnough (Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Deacon and Elliott.

Councillor Byatt attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor Deacon.

Councillor Thompson attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor Elliott.

2 Declarations of Interest

For reasons of openness and transparency, Councillors Ashdown, Ceresa, Fryatt and McCallum declared a Local Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as being members of the Referral Panel by virtue of being Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Planning Committee North/South.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Structure and Process of the Referral Panel

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management introduced report ES/0483 which provided Members with an update on the Referral Process following the last meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) in June 2020. He explained that, as a result of the review, Ward Councillors were now more involved in the process and were now receiving an automatic email if the Panel was considering an application in their Ward.

The Planning Manager reminded Members that, at the SPC meeting, they had endorsed the referral process and agreed that a yearly report on the process would be presented to the Committee. She confirmed that all Ward Members were now notified of items within their wards in advance of the meeting and were invited to attend and listen to the meeting should they wish. A Member Training Session had been held in August and Members were positively encouraged to engage in the consultation process. Some 20-25 Members had attended remotely and the video recording of the training session was being made available for all Councillors to view. Remote training had also been provided to all Town and Parish Councils on how best they could frame their consultation responses. Since then, more Members had been attending the Referral Panel, their comments in advance of the meeting were brief but that would improve.

Members raised questions relating to the timescale between receiving notifications and the time to submit comments within the 21 day consultation period. It was not always possible to track all applications in a particular Ward so any opportunity to streamline the process would be welcome. The Planning Manager explained the application notification via Uniform and how the process worked. Ward Members were notified of items on a Referral Panel at the same time as the reports were sent to the Panel Members, usually 2-3 days before the meeting. Any review of the consultation period given to Ward Members could be debated at the next yearly update. Some members commented that Ward Members should be more involved and be able to speak at a Referral Panel because of the importance of matters in their own Wards. The Chairman explained that the Chairman of the Referral Panel could ask questions of the Ward Members on an application on matters of fact or their local knowledge; they were there as an observer. He reminded Members that they had the opportunity to comment on applications in advance of the Referral Panel meeting.

A Member further commented on the number of applications being considered by Planning Committee North/South; in the South, some meetings had only two or three applications and one meeting had been cancelled due to lack of business. Whilst not doubting the process, the public should be able to observe the consideration of planning applications. The Chairman advised that the applications reviewed at a Referral Panel were usually because of a difference between the officer's recommendation and the views of the relevant Town/Parish Council and the Panel needed to weigh up any significant differences. The Chairman of Planning Committee South (PCS) explained that business was light; there were just less applications coming forward to PCS.

Whilst the Committee were mainly content with the process, some Ward Members believed that, with their local knowledge, they should be in a position to comment or correct something that might be misleading. The Planning Manager advised she would raise Members' concerns at the next Portfolio Holders meeting. She reminded the Committee that the Referral Panel was not making a decision on a report; it just looked at the issues and considered the responses to consultation which should improve the process following the training that had been undertaken.

There being no further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

That the content of the report relating to the Structure and Process of the Referral Panel be noted.

5 Enforcement Performance Report - April to June 2020

The Committee received report ES/0484 which provided information on the performance of the Enforcement Section covering the period April to June 2020.

The Planning Manager explained that the quarterly summary gave details of the cases logged and closed and made specific reference to the enforcement notices served. The statistics were self-explanatory and satisfactory. There had been one notice served in the period and that related to a site in Woodbridge.

Following a proposal, which was duly seconded, to accept the report, it was

RESOLVED

That the report concerning Enforcement Team statistics be received and noted.

6 Development Management Performance Report

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management introduced report ES/0485 which provided an update on the planning performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the timescales for determining planning applications. He confirmed the performance indicated that decisions were being made in a timely manner with all targets being met. The Cabinet Member praised the Team for their work under such difficult circumstances with the Covid19 restrictions in place.

The Planning Manager was pleased the target figures were so high and thanked the Team for their hard work and the good quality decisions that were being made.

RESOLVED

That the content of the Development Management Performance report be noted.

7 Planning Appeals

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management introduced report ES/0486 which provided an update on all appeal decisions from the Planning Inspectorate between 13 May and 24 August 2020. He was pleased to report that the majority of appeals had been dismissed, resulting in the Council achieving a higher than national average. It was a satisfactory situation.

The Planning Manager updated Members to advise that following the Rendlesham public inquiry, the appeal had been dismissed.

Members made particular reference to the Inspector's ambiguous statement with regard to Rosery Cottage in Great Bealings, the case at Pier Avenue in Southwold and the appeal relating to Alderlee in Kelsale Cum Carlton. The Planning Manager explained that the case at Great Bealings was a complicated site which could have gone either way. The case at Southwold related to amenity issues as such a large house could have been used as a party house. In Kelsale, the site was just outside the settlement boundary, therefore had not complied with the relevant policy tests. Whilst the removal of some less attractive dilapidated buildings might be considered to be beneficial, it had not been sufficiently demonstrated that the proposal would not harm the protected species.

Members thanked the Planners for their diligence and there being no further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

That the content of the report relating to Planning Appeals be noted.

8 Planning Policy and Delivery Update

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management presented report ES/0487 which provided an update on the work of the Planning Policy and Delivery Team with regard to the Local Plan for the former Suffolk Coastal area and progress on Neighbourhood Plans. In addition to those Plans, there were a number of key projects that supported the delivery of the East Suffolk Strategic Plan. The North Lowestoft HAZ Design Guide had been adopted by Full Council and the Housing Action Plan had been published. In addition, consultation on the template to be used for preparing Residential Development Briefs had been completed. Paragraph 4.3 of the report detailed some of the key projects and milestones that would be coming forward in the next three months.

The Cabinet Member advised that the final draft Suffolk Coastal Local Plan had originally been submitted to the Secretary of state on 29 March 2019 and, having undergone the normal processes, the Inspector's report had been received on 8 September which found the Local Plan to be sound subject to some modifications. It was expected that the final versions would be presented to Cabinet on 17 September and then considered for adoption by Full Council on 23 September 2020.

The Team had supported a number of Neighbourhood Plans across the district, with the Plans for Kesgrave, Bredfield and Reydon recently progressing successfully through examination.

The Planning Policy and Delivery Manager highlighted specific details relating to the work programme as things moved forward post the adoption of the Local Plan. The forthcoming four to five consultations would be managed effectively to avoid consultation overload for consultees. One joint initial public consultation on development and coastal change, covering the area from North Norfolk to Felixstowe was currently underway, having commenced on 4 September with a closing date of 16 October.

Members were also advised that the Covid19 lockdown had impacted on the delivery of housing. In the first quarter of 2019/20, 210 dwellings were completed compared with a figure for the first quarter of 2020/21 of 91.

In response to a Member's question on bringing the two Local Plans together to form one for the East Suffolk district, the Planning Policy and Delivery Manager advised that both Plans would be kept under review in the usual way. However, the Government White Paper was now proposing fundamental changes to the current plan making process so any review would be subject to a new system coming into place. The proposed new legislation was suggesting that a new Local Plan would need to be produced within 42 months of any new legislation given both current plans would be classed as recently adopted; that was now in the hands of the Government. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management added that whilst the existing Local Plans were separate, they were up to date and entirely suitable for East Suffolk and would run for several years before being replaced.

Members congratulated the Planning Policy and Delivery Manager and her Team on producing such good documents and there being no further discussion, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the content of the Planning Policy and Delivery Update report be noted and endorsed.

9 Strategic Planning Committee's Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Work Programme as circulated and comments were invited.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that two items were to be added to the programme; the Annual Report of the Referral Panel and, at the December meeting, Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee as this would be required following the Annual Meeting of the Council in September.

A Member sought clarification as to the number of planning permissions granted, compared to work starting on site; the Chairman advised that he should contact the Planners direct for such information relating specifically to his Ward.

In response to a question relating to the work of the Planning Committees, the Planning Manager advised that this was currently work in progress and listed on the Work Programme to be reported at a future meeting.

10 Use Classes Order and Permitted Development

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning Manager which gave an update to the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO) and Use Classes Order (UCO) and covered the following:

GPDO

Regulations under the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 come into force between 25 June and 1 August 2020.

Part 3 Class M, N, O, P, PA and Q

- now include the requirement for the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwelling houses.
- allows applications to be refused if natural light is not provided.

Part 3, paragraph W

- for validation purposes, applications are invalid now if a plan with certain requirements is not submitted.

Schedule 2 Part 1

- class AA, enlargement of a dwelling house by construction of additional storeys and subject to conditions

Schedule 2 Part 20

- class ZA, allows for demolition of buildings and construction of dwelling houses, subject to conditions and also prior approval
- class AA, new dwelling houses on detached buildings in commercial or mixed use and subject to prior approval and conditions
- class AB, new dwelling houses on terrace buildings in commercial or mixed use and subject to prior approval and conditions
- class AC, new dwelling houses on terrace buildings in use as dwelling houses subject to prior approval and conditions
- class AD, new dwelling houses on detached buildings in use as dwelling houses subject to certain criteria

Use Classes Order

'Sui generis' - term given to the uses of land or buildings not falling into any of the use classes identified by the UCO. The non-exhaustive list is expanded by the Amendment Regulations to include various classes.

New use classes F1 relating to learning and "non-residential institutions" and F2 relating to "local community" uses.

The Planning Manager drew attention to the chart at the end of the presentation which contained a Guide to Use Classes Order Changes in England from 1 September 2020. There would be ramifications under Class E for the high street and out of town shops. The slides were available on the Council's website via CMIS and in response to a Member's question, she confirmed that a copy of the chart could be provided to Members of the Committee. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management stated there was a great deal to take on board with these changes to permitted development and use classes.

Members further commented on the need for a definitive map of AONB boundaries and the Conservation Areas and it was confirmed the information was on the main policies map in the Local Plan. Concern was expressed that the changes might result in windows and ugly roof changes occurring in a Conservation Area but welcomed the fact that the Government was trying to get houses built. The Planning Manager confirmed the proposals related to development outside of those protected areas and would not apply to Listed Buildings. At the request of Members, the Planning Manager advised that the presentation was published on the website with the Agenda papers and could be circulated to all Members of the Council and to the Town and Parish Councils too.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management explained that the changes had been announced and introduced from 1 September, without prior consultation, and he thanked the Planning Manager for a very informative presentation.

The meeting concluded at 12.07pm.

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Chairman