

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26 October 2010 at Towcester

**PRESENT:** Councillor Chris Millar (Chair); Councillor Mary Clarke (Deputy Chair); Councillors Wendy Amos, Robin Brown, Richard Church, Stephen Clarke, Andrew Grant, Brian Hoare, Brian Markham, Chris Over, Colin Poole, John Townsend and Tony Woods.

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor Andre Gonzalez de Savage.

## 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Planning Committee held on 26 July 2010 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Church, Millar and Woods declared Personal interests in item 7- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, in so far as the discussion referred to WNDC of which they were Board Members.

## 4. MATTERS OF URGENCY

There were none.

## 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IF ANY)

The Chair noted that Messrs Convery, Hawkins and Kingston had registered to speak.

## 6. DRAFT JPU BUDGET 2011/12

The Head of the JPU submitted a report that set out a proposed budget for the JPU for 2011/12 and noted that the word "provisional" should be inserted into the first recommendation before "2011/12". In answer to a question he commented that the proposed Site Allocations DPD and Developer Contributions DPD would be dealt with in different ways that would allow a saving to be made on the Budget. In answer to another question he stated that some generic costs had been calculated on the basis of each partner authority producing it's own Joint Core Strategy. These costs were higher than the current arrangement.

County Councillor Robin Brown queried the situation if South Northamptonshire were to withdraw from the current arrangements and whether the JPU would continue and therefore was consideration of next year's budget, premature. The Head of the JPU commented, and the Chief Executive of South Northamptonshire Council confirmed, that South Northamptonshire had agreed, at a Council meeting, to write to the Secretary of State expressing their wish to withdraw from the Joint Committee but that they wanted the JPU to continue and to continue to work jointly towards the production of a Joint Core Strategy that would have common elements but that in which there would be elements identifiable to each partner Council. Next year's budget had been predicated on this basis.

County Councillor Robin Brown queried whether the County Council would need to continue to be involved if the Joint Committee was dissolved. Councillor Church commented that once the Secretary of State had received the letter from South Northamptonshire Council he

would have to consult the other partner councils and make a decision. If he agreed to dissolve the Joint Committee then the Order that set it up would need to be revoked and that had to be done through a Parliamentary process. None of this was likely to happen quickly. Councillor John Townsend commented that South Northamptonshire envisaged that the Joint Committee would be replaced by a working party of something similar: they just wished to see sovereignty returned to each Council. The Head of the JPU observed that the County Council would continue to need to be involved because of the transportation issues that were fundamental to the Joint Core Strategy.

Councillor Mary Clarke confirmed South Northamptonshire's desire to work co-operatively with the partner Councils and believed that good progress was being made. The abolition of the RSS helped considerably. Her Council would suggest to the Minister a Joint Core Strategy as described earlier but that there should be a single Examination in Public. She referred to a similar situation in Nottingham and was seeking a similar solution. She agreed that it was appropriate for a budget for 2011/12 to be considered.

Comment was made that if South Northamptonshire wished to co-operate then it needed to be part of the Joint Committee. All the partner Councils concurred about the sovereignty issue however the real issue was about timing. The effect on the public and developers also needed to be considered.

County Councillor Brown commented that Northampton had synergies with Kettering and Wellingborough and would benefit from the improvements to the A43: the Secretary of State would welcome Councils working together. The Head of the JPU commented that the proposed Northamptonshire Arc was being taken account of in the JCS.

County Councillor Brown suggested that in the first recommendation the word "ratified" should be substituted by the word "considered".

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the provisional 2011/12 reduced base budget of £921,970 for the JPU be approved to be forwarded on to partner Council's for their consideration.
  2. That the carrying forward of some £140,000 from 2010/11 To the 2011/12 financial year subject to further review at the end of the financial year be approved in principle.

## **7. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT CORE STRATEGY**

Mr Convery commented that the MP for South Northamptonshire had indicated that the existing methodology for calculating housing figures was to be replaced shortly and that the figures should be derived from the bottom up. He asked what methodology the JPU had used.

Peter Hawkins, Chair of Great Houghton Action Group, broadly welcomed the revised housing figures, however he requested that the policy of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) be abandoned. He was disappointed that this request previously presented to the Joint Committee in a petition had not been responded to. The housing figures in the report now seemed more realistic which he believed made the idea of SUEs more absurd.

The Head of the JPU commented that the Joint Committee was not being asked to make any policy decisions at this meeting; that would take place on 31 January 2011. He submitted a report that set out recent changes to the planning system, their implications for the preparation and content of the JCS and set out the next stages of the process. He referred to the letter from the Secretary of State dated 6 July 2010 and appended to the report and confirmed that local authorities should continue to produce a JCS, that existing

tests of soundness still applied, how housing numbers were to be determined following abolition of the RSS and the need to be able to justify those figures. Further information may become available when the Localism Bill was published in November. He also noted that the Joint Committee had agreed in July that a revised JCS should be presented to its meeting on 31 January 2011 and that the evidence base needed to be revised as a consequence of reduced housing numbers.

The Head of the JPU commented that their advice was that there should not be a root and branch review of housing numbers as to do so would mean that the process would have to start from the beginning again and such a delay was unacceptable to everyone. It was clear that the former RSS housing figures were neither achievable or deliverable. The revised figures were based on natural growth, and in turn based on 2008 demographic data that was now available, and in turn based on what could be delivered. From population forecasting and labour market testing a figure of 47,000 had been arrived at. Discussions with Daventry District Council had led to the figure being revised upwards to 50,000 to meet their aspiration to grow Daventry Town and regeneration of Daventry Town Centre. He noted that the predictions were that although the number of households would grow, the proportion of those who were economically active would actually reduce. It was expected that a report on the A45 link road would be published in January 2011. Consideration of alternatives for Daventry would be included in the same report.

The Head of the JPU referred to Appendix 3 of the report and noted that the figures set out therein were indicative at this stage and in particular drew attention to the residual figures set out in line F as being those that sites would be needed for, the remainder having either been already built or received permission for.

Councillor Woods commented that there were only two options to deal with an increasing population to either increase densities or grow around the edge of urban areas. It would be inappropriate to limit options at this stage by abandoning SUEs. Northampton was likely to grow naturally from 210,000 now to 245,000 by 2026. Consideration should not be constrained by "achievable and deliverable". Need also should be considered. If the area became economically and socially successful then it was likely to draw people to it.

The publication of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan for consultation was welcomed as a major adjunct to the JCS.

County Councillor Brown welcomed the consideration given to the A45 link road and commented that the Isham By pass and the Corby Link Road had been delayed as evidence needed to be reworked.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the recent and emerging changes to the planning system as a result of the new Government being elected in May 2010 be noted.
  2. That the resultant approach taken to the preparation, scope and content of the Joint Core Strategy principally set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report be agreed and that it be noted that the annualised housing target would be substantially revised downwards and that the headline RSS housing figure of 62,125 would be replaced with a much reduced figure of around 50,000.

## **8. COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION STRATEGY FOR THE PRE**

## **SUBMISSION JOINT CORE STRATEGY**

Roger Kinston stated that the MP for South Northamptonshire had commented that the Joint Planning Committee should stop what it was doing as the process was to be ended. To continue would be a waste of money. The public had objected last year. It was vital that all the necessary infrastructure was put in first before any development of homes took place. The public might be convinced by this. He commented that Northamptonshire had a low need for housing and that much affordable housing had not yet been bought. If development was not properly thought out then the deprivation that had occurred in Northampton East was likely to result.

The Head of the JPU commented that an infrastructure development plan formed part of the JSC and would be reported in January 2011. He submitted a report that set out the communication and consultation strategy to support the pre submission version of the JCS. He noted that Appendix 1 set out the detail of the strategy.

In answer to questions the Head of JPU commented that at no stage had the JPU been advised that work on the JCS should be abandoned and referred to the Secretary of State's letter dated 6 July 2010 and appended to the previous agenda item that work should continue.

It was noted that the general public would be able to input into the consultation and that the language in the consultation documents should be as simple as possible.

**RESOLVED:** That the Communication and Consultation Strategy set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

The meeting concluded at 20.03 hours.