

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION & REGENERATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 April 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Woods (Chair); Councillors Boss, Caswell, Glynane, Malpas, McCutcheon (substituting for Councillor Mason)

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor C Lill	– Planning, Regeneration and Transportation Portfolio Holder
Councillor B Markham-	For item 10
M Hunter	- Head of Overview and Scrutiny
D Alderson	- Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transportation
R Fox	- Assistant Head of Planning (Dev Control)
A Kotnis	- Assistant Head of Planning (Planning & Conservation)
J McCaul	- Meeting Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Mason, Councillor Eldred and Councillor Hollis.

2. MINUTES

Councillor Malpas referred to a comment made by Councillor Woods at the previous meeting which he felt was insulting to the Conservative Party and therefore him personally. He requested an apology and retraction of the statement. Councillor Woods did not recall making the comment but agreed to retract any such statement and apologised for any offence caused.

Subject to the recording of the above, the minutes of the meeting were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were none.

4. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. PLANNING & ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE WORKING PARTY - UPDATE

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that a final meeting of the Working Group was arranged for 7 April 2004.

CONCLUSION: That an update be provided at the next meeting.

6. PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE

The Committee were advised that the statistics circulated in relation to the four most important Performance Indicators, were just a few of the many statistics that Planning were

required to report. The statistics were particularly important as they were intrinsically linked with the level of Planning Delivery Grant that was received. An analysis of the figures was presented to the Committee.

The Committee discussed the Best Value Performance Indicators and made the following comments:-

- There was a need to balance the efficiency in processing planning applications with the need to deliver a good quality service. It was particularly important that enough time was allowed to negotiate Section 106 Agreements.
- In cases where applicants deferred consideration of the application for their own reasons, it was felt that this should not be included in the figures as it was beyond the control of Planning Officers.
- Members queried whether a charge could be levied on applicants who chose to defer consideration of their application but were advised there was a one off fee to make an application regardless of the length of time it took to process it.
- In relation to “% of New Homes Built on Previously Developed Land” it was suggested that there was a need for the Government to review the target, to reflect the decreasing amount of brownfield land available. It was likely that the UDC would look to also developing greenfield sites.

The Committee were advised that effort was being made to deal with very old applications and to get them withdrawn if possible, as they had a detrimental effect on the Performance Indicators. It was noted that the charges for the processing of planning applications were set by the Government and there was enough brownfield land to meet housing need for the next 7/8 years.

The Committee were then updated in relation to the establishment and role of the UDC.

7. CAR PARKING/TRANSPORT STRATEGY

A draft report containing the recommendations of the joint call-in meeting held on 10 March 2004 in relation to the Car Park Strategy was circulated. The Chairs of Strategic Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee and this Committee were yet to comment on the report, which would then go on to the next meeting of the Executive.

Members reiterated their concerns that this Committee had been denied the opportunity to comment on the Car Park Strategy before it was submitted to the Executive and they discussed that attitude generally to the Scrutiny process. It was anticipated that this would be addressed as part of the Recovery Plan.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny stressed that the Executive did respect the role of Scrutiny Committees but that specific protocols were needed to clarify the process for both Members and Officers.

Members discussed the need for a Car Park Strategy and the Chair emphasized the need to consider whether the work they could contribute would be bring “added value” to any existing process.

CONCLUSIONS: (1) That, once agreed by the Chairs of Financial Strategy and Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committees,

the report including the recommendations, be submitted to the Executive for consideration.

- (2) That the report of the joint meeting, including the recommendations be placed on the agenda for the next meeting, by which time, a response by the Executive should have been received. If necessary the Committee will then consider the scope for any work they wished to undertake in relation to the development of a Car Parks Strategy and what they could usefully achieve.

8. MULTI MODAL STUDY - UPDATE

The Committee were advised that the Multi Modal Study report had been considered by the Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet and would be submitted to the Executive at the meeting on 10 May 2004. It was suggested that the Committee should consider the recommendations so their comments could be taken into account when the Executive considered the report.

- CONCLUSIONS:
- (1) That the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transportation send a copy of the NCC Cabinet report and the Northampton MMS Final Report to Members of the Committee as soon as possible.
 - (2) That a special meeting be held, on a date agreed by the Chair and Head of Overview and Scrutiny but before 10 May 2004, to consider the report and recommendations.
 - (3) That any recommendations as a result of the special meeting be submitted to the Executive with the Multi Modal Study report.

9. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE - PLANNING GUIDANCE & EDUCATION FACILITIES

The Committee discussed the report circulated setting out the Local Education Authority's intention to impose a roof tax on new dwellings to fund increased Education provision within the Borough as part of the future expansion of the town. The report had been considered by the Executive on 29 March 2004. They had noted the report as a document which sought to clarify the circumstances under which planning obligations would be sought for education facilities, but that the report needed to be re-written in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The Scrutiny Committee opposed the proposals and commented on the lack of consideration of alternative uses of the land. They felt that the revenue from any such tax should not automatically be spent on education facilities but any part of the infrastructure (ie Health, Transport) that was affected by the expansion of the town. Also that planning gain should not be regarded as some form of taxation.

The Committee then discussed the possibility of working with the NCC Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future if necessary. Officers stressed that they were willing to work with the County Council to develop the document and resolve the issues raised.

- CONCLUSIONS:
- (1) That the Committee await the response from NCC to the comments made by the Executive and that

they continue to monitor the situation.

- (2) That Councillor McCutcheon pursue the possibility of including this as an item on the agenda of the NCC Education Scrutiny Committee meeting being held on 28 April 2004.
- (3) That Councillor C Lill, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Transportation ensure the Executive continue pursuing this issue.
- (4) That the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Transportation send a copy of the letter sent by Northampton Borough Council to all Borough and District Councils in the County.

10. FUTURE WORK PLAN

(A) HARLESTONE ROAD ALLOTMENTS

Councillor Markham advised that Health and Environment Overview and Scrutiny were proposing to set up a joint inquiry with this Committee in relation to Harlestone Road Allotments. He then explained the history of the site and the work it was intended the Working Group would undertake including agreeing terms of reference, preparing a scope, determining the level of investment that was required and considering all possible future uses of the site.

He requested that the Committee identify three Members to participate, along with the three volunteers from his Committee. He would attend the first meeting and would assist in developing the scope. Councillor Hollis had volunteered to participate on behalf of Planning, Regeneration and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee and requested that this be noted in her absence.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the allotment site and welcomed the approach being suggested. It was stressed that it was important not to raise the expectations of the community particularly when considering possible future use of the site.

- CONCLUSION**
- (1) That Councillors Hollis and Casswell represent this Committee on the Working Group.
 - (2) That the third place be left unfilled but that a future nomination be made from this Committee in due course if appropriate.

(B) RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEMES

Councillor Boss referred to discussions at previous meetings of the Highways and Traffic Partnership Board in relation to three residents parking schemes in the proximity of Leisure Facilities. The schemes were proposed for the areas close to The Saints Rugby Club, Sol Central and the Cricket Ground in Abington. He questioned, that if the schemes had not progressed, who had decided that they would not go ahead and whether there had been any change in policy as to how resources generated from parking charges could be spent.

- CONCLUSION:**
- That the Head of Overview and Scrutiny Committee obtain a report for the next meeting advising of the position in relation to the three schemes to enable the Committee to determine whether there was an value to be gained from taking up the issue.

(C) FLOOD ASSESSMENT REPORT

Councillor Glynane referred to the above consultant's report and suggested that the Scrutiny Committee might consider the report before it is submitted to the Executive. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Environment Agency were now satisfied with the report and it was anticipated that it would be available by the end of April 2004.

CONCLUSION: That Councillor Glynane be sent a copy of the report as soon as possible and that any concerns he may have be raised with the Scrutiny Committee who could then consider putting an item on the future Work Plan.

(D) RECYCLING SCHEME

Councillor Malpas referred to the Wheelie Bins and plastic boxes which were provided as part of the Recycling Scheme and asked whether their storage was taken into account when planning new developments.

The Committee were assured that there were policies in place to ensure there was adequate bin storage provided in new developments.

(E) URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Committee were advised, that as part of the consultation for the establishment of the UDC, the County Council had responded that they thought the UDC should determine all planning applications and not just those relating to major developments. Therefore there was a need to negotiate the Borough Council's role as the Planning Authority and to work together with the County Council in agreeing the arrangements. It was suggested that when a formal response was received from the Government the proposals would need careful consideration.

CONCLUSION: That Members be sent a copy of the formal response and proposals as soon as possible and that the Chair and Deputy Chair consider how it should be dealt with as part of future Work Plan.

CONCLUSION: That the following items be placed on the agenda for the next meeting:-

- Planning and Access for Disabled People Working Party – Update
- Car Parking/Transport Strategy
- Harlestone Road Allotments – Update from members of the Working Group
- Residents Parking Schemes - Report on the position of the three schemes for consideration.

The meeting concluded at 7:50 pm