

DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hunter (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnett, Clayton, Penny Cole, P. Darrington, Fothergill, McGregor, Reay, and Roy

Cllrs. Perry Cole and Dickens were also present.

13. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee held on 9 July 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

15. Actions from previous meeting

The actions were noted.

16. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder reported that there were various opportunities for Members to complete training on planning, prior to the Development Control Committee Meetings. There was also a tour planned for Members of Development Control Committee on Monday 21 October 2019. The Portfolio Holder advised that there would be a training session on planning specifically for Parish Councillors on Wednesday 20 November 2019.

The Portfolio Holder updated Members on recent planning appeals and large scale planning applications. Members were reminded of the date of the CIL Spending Board happening on 9 December 2019.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the District Council was the first local planning authority to send text message updates to applicants on the progress of their applications. With only two applicants, since April, opting out of receiving text messages, the method of contact had been well received so far. Another improvement was that people were able to self-serve by accessing the planning history of various properties available online. Further plans to improve services included the introduction of an online booking system for application meetings and the tracking of letters sent to applicants.

17. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

18. Budget 2020/21: Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Chief Officer Finance & Trading presented a report which explained that this was the second stage of the budget process and ensured that all Members of the Advisory Committees had a role to play in the governance of the Council and the budget decision making process. He explained that since the current financial strategy was introduced in 2011/12, over £7 million of savings had been agreed.

To continue to have a balanced budget position and remain financially self-sufficient, a net savings requirement of £93,000 for 2020/21 was included in the budget. The Chief Officer Finance & Trading also advised Members that other pressures may come out later in the budget process such as when the Local Government Finance Settlement was announced in December. These may result in additional savings being required.

No growth item and one savings proposal was included in the report for this Committee and Members were asked for their suggestions, in order to achieve the £93,000 net saving required for the next year, which would be considered by Cabinet, before finalising the budget for 2020/21.

Members gave their individual ideas for growth and savings items and considered whether there was anything they wanted taken forward as potential growth or savings suggestions. A number of growth and savings items were suggested and discussed, including exploring marketing opportunities on the website to promote the District Council's Building Control services.

It was noted that the performance of the services had improved since the publishing of the report. The performance indicators were currently 7 green and 1 amber, as opposed to 4 green, 2 amber and 2 red as recorded in Appendix A.

Before discussing potential growth and savings items, the Senior Planning Enforcement Officer removed himself from the room since there was a suggestion of making his role permanent.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The savings proposal (SCIA03) identified in Appendix D to the report be considered; and
- b) the following options be put forward to Cabinet

Growth (increased expenditure or reduced income)

- Urban Design Officer - extend contract
- Review Enforcement resources to maintain recent improvements to the service

19. Planning Enforcement Update

The Planning Services Manager presented a report updating Members on the work and function, as well as the role and structure of the Planning Enforcement team. The report also identified the team's successes, achievements, current challenges and plans for improvement.

It was highlighted by the Planning Services Manager that enforcement should be a last resort as advised by the government and that enforcement action should only be taken when harm was caused by a planning control breach.

A frequent challenge for planning enforcement was too much officer time being taken up by complaints which were not a planning breach or were not clear. To prevent this, a triage officer was proposed to be introduced, using funding from the Government to review each case and gain the correct information and also assess if there had been an actual breach of planning control. The Planning Services Manager advised that there were plans to improve communication through the use of technology and provision of training.

The Planning Services Manager invited Members to contact her by the end of the November with any further queries on the report.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Services Manager and Senior Planning Enforcement Manager for the improvements made in planning enforcement.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

20. Local Plan Update

The Chief Planning and Regulatory Services Officer briefed Members on the progress of the Local Plan Examination Process. There was currently an adjournment, reconvening on 5 November. They had been asked for further information around the housing trajectory. He had received positive feedback on officers' performance who were under relentless pressure from legal professionals. If, at the end of the process, the Inspector was satisfied there would be still likely be modifications which would have to go out to public consultation. He advised that this was the first local plan being considered under the revised framework and any decision would set a precedent.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

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21. Work plan

That the work plan was noted with the addition of a Local Plan Update and a Presentation from the Urban Planning Officer at the next meeting, along with Performance Indicators at the summer meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.10 PM

CHAIRMAN