

## DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020 commencing at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hunter (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice Chairman)

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

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Reay

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Perry Cole and Esler were also present.

### 40. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee held on 10 March 2020, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 41. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

### 42. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

### 43. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder reported that much of what she had to report was available in her report to the [Scrutiny Committee](#), and the Community Infrastructure Levy Spending Board and Local Plan were later on the agenda.

Development Management and Building Control targets continued to be met and market share remained healthy with more planning applications determined than this time last year despite more staff remotely working, which was a noteworthy achievement.

The additional investment in Planning Enforcement had been well received and reductions in the number of historic cases continued, with more proactive action being taken across the District. Recently this had included the rapid serving of two Article 4 Directions which removed permitted development rights on sites in West Kingsdown and Edenbridge, for which the local communities were most appreciative.

## Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 7 July 2020

She also reported on some of the many ways the services had adapted to the challenges of working in the current environment, including working virtually using MS teams, Zoom and Skype for Business for both internal and external meetings, including pre-application advice. She advised that the end to end process of most applications was now fully electronic, and Site notices were being issued to most applicants to display.

Recruitment had continued with interviews taking place via Zoom. Two Planning Officer posts had been filled and feedback had been really positive from all involved. The recruitment video released on social media and LinkedIn had been well received. She also reported on some other staffing changes.

She further advised that the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) had been amended to temporarily reflect social-distancing measures, and Officers had been redeployed to assist pressures in other services areas, for example to help with the delivery of grants to businesses. There had also been an extra focus on staff wellbeing.

The Portfolio Holder asked the Chief Officer Planning & Regulatory Services to update the meeting on some of the recent planning function headlines from central government.

The Chief Officer Planning & Regulatory Services reported that a wider range of commercial buildings would be allowed to change to residential use without the need for a planning application. He assumed on some kind of prior approval process. Builders would no longer need a normal planning application to demolish and rebuild vacant and redundant residential and commercial buildings if they were rebuilt as homes. There would also be much more flexibility introduced on change of use classes but pubs, libraries, village shops and other facilities judged to be essential to communities would not be covered by the flexibilities.

Property owners would also be able to build additional space above their properties via a fast-track approval process, subject to consultation with neighbours. The new regulations were expected to come into effect by September, and as more information came available he would circulate it to the Portfolio Holder and share with the Committee.

#### 44. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

#### 45. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board - Review of Governance

The Planning Policy Team Leader (Infrastructure) presented a report on the annual review of governance arrangements of allocating Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to local and strategic infrastructure projects across Sevenoaks District. The current governance arrangements had been agreed by Members of the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee in July 2019. The report set out some suggested changes following feedback received from Officers and the

## Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 7 July 2020

Chairman and Vice Chairman of the CIL Spending Board. The Planning Policy Team Leader (Infrastructure) advised that within the report Appendix G should be entitled "Process to 'Request a Review' rather than 'Appeal Process'. At the Chairman's discretion the Chairman of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board addressed the Committee on the points raised within the report and the value of the yearly governance review. Members noted that there would hopefully be Parish & Town Council training offered in the Autumn.

The Committee took the opportunity to welcome Carlyn Kan to the meeting as the new Infrastructure Delivery Officer.

In response to questions the Planning Policy Team Leader (Infrastructure) agreed that the reference to 'company' in Appendix A did need amending to 'organisation' for consistency.

In response to various questions she gave some examples of recent applications in order to illustrate how the current system had been working. Members were keen that no personal gain could be made at any time as a direct result of CIL funding. Officers were investigating how the council may be able to introduce a similar scheme they understood the NHS had, where they were able to claw back investment rather than there be any future personal financial gain e.g. from improving a privately owned building with a community use.

### 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 amendments to Appendix X1 of the Constitution, as set out in Appendices G and H of the report be agreed; and
- b) the report be noted.

### 46. Local Plan Update

The Strategic Planning Manager presented the report which updated Members on the progress to date.

It was noted that the Green Belt was still afforded protections under current Local Plan and under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In response to questions concerning pursuing costs should the judicial review be successful, the Senior Solicitor advised that if successful the Council would pursue as much as it could but warned it would be subject to strict criteria of what could be claimed.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

## Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 7 July 2020

### 47. Work plan

It was noted that the Arboriculture report would be amalgamated with the Innovation Update, and that the Budget 2020/21: Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) should be on the work plan for October 2020.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6.19 PM

CHAIRMAN