



MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 20 MARCH 2007 2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Dorrien Dexter
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Kenneth Joynson
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown
Councillor John Nicholson (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Mike Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Azar Woods

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer
Corporate Head, Sustainable Communities
Economic Development Officer
Service Manager, Planning Policy

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor John Smith (Economic
Development Portfolio Holder)

David Allen
George Waterhouse

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

With regard to the Bourne Core Project, Councillor John Smith (Economic Development Portfolio Holder) declared a personal interest as he was a member of a club that met in the area.

48. ACTION NOTES

Noted.

49. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Members noted the information contained in the report into the Deeping weekly market. Members expressed surprise that some residents were unaware of the existence of the market.

50. TALLINGTON RAIL CROSSING

Members received information regarding the Tallington rail crossing from David Allen and George Waterhouse DL

- The Tallington rail crossing was closed for over 70% of the time during peak hours. This was projected to rise to potentially 95% during peak hours by 2010 due to considerable increases in rail services.
- Approximately 80% of people living in the Deepings work elsewhere. Approximately 75% travel elsewhere for entertainment. The area required good travel links to remain sustainable.

- The cost per annum of not having a replacement option was estimated at £4.9m by 2010. The proposal is to create a by-pass and bridge to replace this crossing. A tunnel had been considered, but was seen as unfeasible.
- The solution would require multi agency involvement. There was support at County Council level and there was due to be a presentation to Peterborough City Council.
- Members questioned whether the scheme could be tied to a larger scheme, for example the Stamford by-pass. They were informed that while it could potentially form part of any scheme to the west, it was preferred to keep it as a free standing scheme as it was felt there was a better chance of success.
- Members believed it would be possible for the crossing to be paid for in economic terms within 5-6 years. Members also believed that the scheme could be paid for with the savings Network Rail would make through not having to operate the level crossing.
- It was questioned whether there were alternative options. In the short term, a manned crossing may make it possible to keep the barriers open to traffic for longer. It was also queried as to whether the bridge element of the proposal was necessary, with a by-pass potentially diverting traffic to a different bridge.
- Members confirmed that the situation was not exaggerated. Anecdotal evidence suggested that while 10-15 vehicles may get through the barriers at any given time, there could be a further 40 or 50 waiting behind them. This had impact on both air pollution from standing vehicles, but also raised the possibility of accidents being caused as a result of vehicles trying to pass between the barriers.
- The portfolio holder assured members that the executive was aware of the situation and that a new development plan was being worked on, but additional data was always welcome. There was some feeling in Stamford that improving the Tallington crossing would have a detrimental effect on the town through raised traffic levels. It was also the idea that traffic from east Lincolnshire avoid using the A16 route.

CONCLUSION:

The information and members general comments to be passed on to the Cabinet and Chief Executive for consideration with local development plans. The members wished to stress their general support for the project from a planning point of view.

51. BARKER REVIEW

Members were briefed on the Barker Review of the Planning System.

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- Members were informed that the first 13 recommendations would have little effect on local government at this stage, and were largely aimed at central government. Recommendation 10 was seen as potentially meeting strong resistance as it was a radical change from the existing system and took power away from regional government with regard to planning for major

infrastructure. It was felt government would be highly unlikely to accept this proposal.

- Recommendation 15 regarded local authorities exploring the possibility of further efficiency gains. Members felt this was unlikely to be possible.
- Recommendation 18 would see that minor planning applications out of the planning process and allow development in cases where, for example, neighbours agreed it would be acceptable. Members felt there would be considerable opposition to this as the country would all be working to different standards.
- Members welcomed recommendation 19 as a proposal. This provided for charging for the pre-application advice service. This service had to be balanced with the actual decision element. Members also welcomed the early negotiation of s106 agreements. It was important to develop a clear policy on this. Officers would also look to quantify gains to the Council from s106 agreements in order to show what the provided facilities would have cost the Council.
- Members disliked the provision for a chargeable premium service in recommendation 21. It was felt a premium service should not be offered simply on the ability to pay.
- Recommendation 22 suggested that the office of Chief Planner be made statutory. Members were advised that this could have implications given the recent restructuring of the Council.

CONCLUSION:

Members accepted the report and agreed to keep an eye on which of the Barker recommendations were accepted by Government. It was recommended that the report also be taken to the Development and Control Committee.

52. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Members noted that they had previous concerns regarding BVPI's.
- It was noted that BVPI 109b and 109c had significantly improved during the past month and were now within national targets. The cumulative average indicator picked up previous bad performance, whereas recently it had been very good.
- The budget had provided for no additional planning staff. There were 2 positions vacant. If the department could generate more income, it could pay for extra staff.
- BVPI 109a for major applications to be determined within 13 weeks was a very challenging target.
- 94% of minor applications were delegated decisions by officers.
- The proposed pre-application process would save time. Major delays occur with s106 agreements and once set criteria can be established it was hoped developers would meet the criteria before making an application.

CONCLUSION:

Members were pleased to note the recent improvements.

53. BOURNE CORE AREA

Members were briefed on the Bourne Core Area project.

- Members were informed that the project was the long term development of the town centre, which at present was in mixed use with some public land.
- The project fits town centre regeneration and economic development policies of the council.
- The Council was presently working with the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) with regards to the possibility of developing this area.

CONCLUSION:

Members were happy to see progress regarding the development project.

54. GRANTHAM CANAL BASIN

Members were updated on the Grantham Canal Basin project

- Members were informed that this was a long term project for the regeneration of the Grantham Canal Basin. Members queried if there was a plan showing aspirations for the site, but were informed that at present there are various options.
- The first stage of the project was a study of the area. The vision was to regenerate the area and expand the town centre into the canal basin. The next stage would be to create a master plan for the area. In the interim the town had been recognised as a growth area and any plans would have to be thought of as part of the main expansion plan.
- The initial vision was now within the Grantham master plan and will the way forward would be discussed as part of that.

CONCLUSION:

Members agreed to receive regular updates and to keep monitoring the situation.

55. GRANTHAM RAIL LINK

- The working group had previously looked at the potential for a new station and transport interchange in the Gonerby Moor area at Downtown along the new Allington Chord.
- The potential new station had been viewed favourably at the time, but there did not appear to be the necessary finance available for the project.
- Members enquired as to whether this was the right time to resurrect the working group in order to stimulate any potential action from the County Council.

CONCLUSION:

Members decided to hold the issue over until after the election.

56. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Members noted the financial reports.

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CONCLUSION:

- *Members noted that the financial reports should state when they relate to – i.e. the month and whether figures relate to Year To Date. Members request this is made much clearer on the reports.*
- *Members observed that the reports should be accompanied by notes to explain any major items of disparity.*

57. WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the Work Programme.

Members were informed that the Cabinet Forward Plan had recently been updated and published. There were several amendments to the work programme:

- The Local Development Framework had been moved from March to June 2007.
- The Bourne Core Area project was being reported to Cabinet on 2nd April.
- Consideration of Grantham Growth Strategy was now not before May.

As this was very probably the final meeting of the panel as currently constituted, the Chairman thanked members for their contributions to its effectiveness and for their excellent attendance record.