

MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2017 2.30 PM



GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Duncan Ashwell
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Mike Exton (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Breda Griffin
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Mrs Andrea Webster (Chairman)
Councillor Robert Reid

EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Councillor Teri Bryant
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor Mrs Linda Wootten

OFFICERS

Strategic Director Environment and Property (Tracey Blackwell)
Executive Manager Development and Growth (Paul Thomas)
Business Manager Environment (Ian Yates)
Civic and Democratic Officer (Anita Eckersley)

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barry Dobson, Councillor Brian Sumner and Councillor Ray Wootten.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Bob Adams.

49. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

50. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2017

The action notes from the meeting held on 27 January 2017 were noted.

Your council working for you

51. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

A Member requested that a guidance note on the protocol for noting Members and their comments in minutes and action notes be sent to all Members.

A Member also queried what was going to happen with the Court building that had closed last year. He commented that this had been discussed at a previous PDG and asked if Members could be sent a copy of what had been discussed and agreed following the consultation feedback.

Action Note:

To provide PDG Members outside the meeting with information from a previous PDG that discussed and considered the consultation feedback in respect of the closing of the Court Building in Grantham.

52. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY - ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Business Manager Environment presented report ENV655 on the proposed Engagement Plan for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire. The report outlined the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board Engagement Plan for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire which was due to be published in 2018.

It was noted that the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWB) had a statutory duty to produce a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS). A duty within this Strategy was to develop engagement with people who lived and worked in Lincolnshire in order to provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This would also provide the required evidence to support the prioritisation of health needs.

The following principles for communications with stakeholders were proposed:

- To have a better understanding of local need in order to ensure that services delivered were appropriate and effective;
- To work with other organisations and the public to identify the key issues and needs of the community on an ongoing basis so these could be addressed together;
- To involve people in Lincolnshire so they could help inform the local priorities in order that work could be undertaken to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and reduce health inequalities.

A series of engagement events were being proposed and would be based on the evidence of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). These would enable the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWB) to identify health and wellbeing priorities and form the basis of the next Joint Health and

Wellbeing (JHWP) strategy.

A three stage engagement process was proposed:

The Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWP) had been asked to nominate a lead officer from each representative organisation on the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWP) to undertake this exercise. The nominated lead officers from the organisational members would review the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) evidence and draft priorities to be included in the next Joint Health and Wellbeing (JHWP) strategy.

Public engagement events were to be undertaken across the county where a similar prioritisation exercise would take place. The LCC Health Scrutiny Committee would review the initial work and feedback to the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWP).

Discussion and moderation of the prioritisation would then be undertaken by Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (LHWP) members and the wider stakeholders at an informal LHWP session.

Members would be provided with an update on the nominations and public engagement dates.

Members were informed that only 2 local authorities had fed back to county and SKDC was one of them. The outcomes from the PDG's previous consideration of the graduation status exercise had highlighted a number of areas already identified by county. Although SKDC was not at the table it had been important to feedback areas of concern within the district in order that the appropriate action could be put in place to address these areas. Areas of concern were childhood and adult obesity, diabetes and winter deaths.

In response to a members query regarding targets, it was noted that at this stage, Members were being provided with a flavour of the work being undertaken. Further updates would be provided at future meetings.

Action note:

That the Communities PDG note the update and looked forward to receiving updates on the nominations and engagement dates.

53. THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING WHITE PAPER 2017

The Executive Manager Development and Growth presented report SEG40 which concerned the Government's Housing White Paper (WP) on how to address issues that were seen to be blocking housing supply.

Some of the emerging policies within the White Paper were being addressed by the Council. A range of thoughts and ideas from Members had been identified

following the recent Housing Summits (HS) that had taken place.

There were 40 questions contained within the consultation document on the White Paper. These questions would not be directly asked of the Communities PDG or the forthcoming Growth PDG, but relevant questions for each PDG would be posed. This would help inform the Council's response to the 40 questions.

Councillor Charmaine Morgan arrived at 15:02.

An overview of the White Paper was provided and covered three areas:

Inaccessibility of home ownership for young people

Increasing rents in private sector housing

Negative economic impacts caused by the lack of affordable housing

The White Paper expressed the view that solutions to the housing problem were linked to three key areas:

40% of local planning authorities (LPAs) did not have a plan that met projected growth in households in their area – (South Kesteven did have a plan)

More than a third of new homes granted planning permission between 2010/11 and 2015/16 had yet to be built. The pace of development was slow – (South Kesteven's position at 25% was slightly better than the national figure).

The structure of the housing market made it difficult to increase supply – (Reference was made to some house building firms having a significant hold on the market).

The deadline for the consultation response was 2 May 2017. What happened after that date could mean a rapid introduction of policies that may well impact on what the Council was trying to do to enable quicker delivery.

Government funding would only be available for those authorities that engaged with the Government's agenda and were seen to be proactive – this was a key message

The Growth PDG would also be considering relevant questions and the response to the 40 questions would be based on the comments made by both PDG's. The Council was already addressing some of the issues raised within the White Paper so a letter would be submitted with the response that would provide more detail than that contained within the 40 question consultation document. Copies of the response to the government's White Paper would also

go to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Reference was made to the lack of skilled workers and how the White Paper did not address this and how this impacted on the housing industry. One of the issues highlighted as requiring more exploration during the Housing Summits was skilled workers and off-site construction.

The first question for the Communities PDG to consider was to do with the Local Plan. It was suggested that if a plan was in place and was progressing well only a light touch review should be undertaken. However, if the authority was not doing so well a more fundamental review should take place. Members were asked if they agreed with this approach.

Making sure every community has an up-to-date sufficiently ambitious plan
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<i>G1 - The White Paper explains the Review from the perspective of updating the evidence-base and making parallel changes to the local plan and development documents. Do Members agree with this approach?</i>
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Yes

Discussion took place around the need for identifying new sites, the lack of land owned by the council, potential ways Government could encourage landowners through policies; whether changes would galvanise Development Control Committee or further complicate things and whether local authorities would resist or encourage growth and provide 5 year land supply.

The next question referred to close working with other public local partnership organisations and looked at land suitable for housing. The Council took a proactive role in housing land acquisition and delivery and worked closely with one public estate in particular as well as other public local partnerships.

Improving local authorities' role in land assembly and disposal
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<i>G2 - This power is presently unavailable to SKDC except in partnership with LCC. Would Members welcome this simplification? Might it make a difference to the Council in being proactive in development public land?</i>

Yes – although it was not a major issue for SKDC.
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Issues discussed were: affordability, the types of housing demanded in different areas throughout the district, a requirement for flexibility, the impact on services, the need for bungalows even though it was recognised they were not economically viable, whether this demand could be met through creative design such as incorporating a flat above a bungalow which would provide additional accommodation but still create provide single-level living accommodation, sheltered housing, appropriate accommodation to meet the demand for people with diverse special needs and how the Section 106 agreements impacted on this and the need to identify the differences between need and demand. A Member queried whether the new LACC could be more involved in this aspect.

Reference was made to the lack of council owned land and the challenge that this presented to the Council's aspiration to build more houses. RTB sales had increased but the Government's White Paper had not addressed this.

Supporting Rural Communities
<i>G3 - Will these policies support rural growth and sustainability in SK?</i>
Rural housing was a challenge. SKDC worked with communities to find solutions

Work was on-going with rural communities and especially those with Neighbourhood Plans (NP). Sustainability in rural areas was a challenge. It was recognised that Neighbourhood Plans could be valuable assets to residents.

Strengthening neighbourhood planning and design
<i>G4 – Do Members support the strengthening of requirements for neighbourhood and local plans to set out clear design expectations?</i>
Yes - Members felt that design was a key aspect. Practical and local knowledge were used when making a decision on planning applications.
<i>G5 – Do Members agree that design should be used as a reason to object to development where it accords with clear design expectations set out in statutory plans</i>
Yes

Design was seen as a key aspect. A design guide giving clear expectations would be part of the Local Plan as a supplementary planning document. This should help speed up the consideration of applications which had adhered to design guide expectations. Pre-application engagement was already offered by the Council's planning team.

Other issues discussed were the changing tactics of some developers over the months during development, how feasible it was for changes to be made to a development as it progressed, whether there was a budget for undertaking adaptations, providing houses that were appropriate for the individuals needs and the understandable impact and dynamics created when one person in a family required adaptations.

In addition, discussion took place on the enhancement of communications between the council, builders and colleges to encourage more use of local people and apprentices, using people with multi skills, the number of regulations and how these impacted on the progress of building, homes with the potential to expand that would enable people to remain in an area.

Questions G6 and G7 dealt with high density building and the reduction of the current space standard. It was felt that small spaces could be used in innovative ways but the impact and wellbeing of residents where high density

proposals were being proposed would need to be noted. The Council would need to look at the design, quality, and general appropriateness of any proposals. The application had to be appropriate for its context. Technical housing standards would need to be taken into consideration.

Using land more efficiently for development
<i>G6 – Might higher density development be appropriate/desirable in certain areas of the district</i>
<i>Application would need to be appropriate and be in context</i>
<i>G7 – what are Members’ views on the potential reduction of the current space standard?</i>
<i>Recognised standard should be applied</i>

It was noted that Government had listened to the development industry and had realised that fees were an issue. It was looking to ensure money was ring-fenced to areas that supported the Governments agenda of expediting greater housing delivery.

Increasing Planning fees
<i>G8 – Whilst this new approach may be welcomed, do Members share some commentators’ view that councils should have the ability to set fees to recover costs so that council taxpayers no longer have to subsidise planning?</i>
<i>Yes, but on a sliding scale</i>

Question G9 referred to the creation of a universal housing database that all developers/builders and local authorities should contribute to. There were various reporting mechanisms currently being used but no main information collecting point. The responsibility was for the house builders to inform the Council when a house was completed but that information often was not passed on in a timely manner. Information was gathered from other services but it was time consuming. It was felt that this should be the responsibility of developers.

Housing Developers and local authorities to account
<i>G9 – Would Members support the creation of a universal housing database that all developers/builders/local authorities are required to contribute to?</i>
<i>It was felt that it should be the responsibility of the developers.</i>

Question G10 dealt with the fairness of the Housing Delivery Test. Concerns were expressed on the frequent change to the “goal posts” and how this affected delivery. The delivery test for authorities was a challenge especially if they had done everything they could to enable delivery but the developer also had a responsibility. The issue of delivery had to be fair to both sides currently this appeared to be favoured towards developers.

The Housing Delivery Test

G10 – Do Members think that such a test is reasonable and fair? Should more focus be put on establishing reasons for projected under delivery well in advance of potential under-achievement?

Not unless the Council had the ability to enforce powers in return

Members also discussed widening the definition of affordable housing, the number of housing associations in the area working with the council, the differences regarding rental rates between private and social rented housing, affordability in different areas of the District; the lack of input the Council had on how a Section 106 was made up, impacts of increased developments on schools and other services; how and when starter homes would be developed; the number of houses to be developed on a site and whether the targets would be distributed throughout the district, tenant behaviour, poor housing, letting fees and how these could be addressed.

The Executive Manager Development and Growth thanked Members for their input and noted he would respond with the comments made from both the Communities PDG and Growth PDG. A separate detailed letter would accompany the response on the consultation. Members asked to have sight of the response once it had been sent.

Action note:

That the Members of the Communities PDG are provided with a copy of the response to the consultation together with the accompanying letter.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the following items would be included on the Work Programme:

Homelessness Bill

Hare Coursing

Town and City Centres – East Midlands in Bloom

It was expected that Wyndham Park would be on the agenda for the first meeting in the new Municipal Year.

The review of the HRA Business Plan would be aligned to the completion of the Review of the Housing Strategy.

Members suggest the following areas be included on the Work Plan

Improving the gateway into market towns

Whether a site visit to Wyndham Park would be appropriate

Community Cohesion and the power of Volunteers

55. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 16:40.