

# MINUTES

of the

## CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD

held on 3 October 2019 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor G H J Pooley (Chair)

Councillors N Chambers, W Daden, I Fuller, J Galley, M Goldman, S Goldman,  
N Gulliver, G B R Knight, R Moore, R J Poulter, I C Roberts, A Sosin,  
M Springett, N Walsh, R T Whitehead and T N Willis

Also present:

Councillors K Bentley, D Clark, P Clark, C Davidson, J Deakin, M Mackrory

### 1. **Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

It was reported that the Administration Group had appointed Councillor N Walsh to replace former Councillor C Finney on the Board. Her status as either a permanent member or a substitute would be confirmed after the meeting.

### 2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 6 June 2019 were signed as a correct record.

### 3. **Declaration of Interests**

All Members were reminded to disclose any interests in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they should do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. They were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the meeting, if they had not previously notified her about it.

### 4. **Public Question Time**

Questions were asked or statements made on the following matters:

1. Whether, before any further steps were taken to adopt the Local Plan, an ecological survey of sites for the Warren Farm site allocation could be carried out.

The Spatial Planning Manager said that a Chelmsford-wide Local Wildlife Site review had been undertaken as part of the evidence base that supported the Local Plan. As part of their site-specific submissions, the developers had undertaken an initial ecological assessment in respect of the West Chelmsford Site (Warren Farm). This was currently being updated and refined to be submitted as part of any future planning applications for the Warren Farm development.

2. How the estimated 480 long term empty properties in Chelmsford would be brought back into use, especially in the light of the Council's wishes to support sustainable development and reduce homelessness.

The Committee was informed that the Council was committed to bringing long-term empty properties back into use as soon as possible. It was constrained by the fact that many were in private ownership and the complexity of the procedures that needed to be followed, including seeking compulsory purchase orders. A degree of sensitivity was also needed as some owners faced difficult personal circumstances that had led to the properties becoming empty in the first place. It was acknowledged, however, that it was a problem that needed to be tackled.

3. Concern that the Local Plan had not been changed despite the many objections from the public about its general principles and specific proposals, and not having any Local Plan would be preferable.

The Committee was reminded that the Local Plan had been the subject of four stages of statutory public consultation. It provided a firm basis for ensuring the controlled development of Chelmsford to 2036 and the provision of the necessary infrastructure to support it. The Committee was also reminded that having no Local Plan raised significant risk of unplanned and speculative development which was not supported by necessary infrastructure.

## 5. **Livewell Development Accreditation Scheme**

A report was presented on the Livewell Development Accreditation scheme, which aimed to recognise developers who contributed to improving health and wellbeing through the design of their developments. The report outlined the process for achieving accreditation and the principles on which it was based.

During discussion of the report, the Committee was told that:

- the Livewell Development accreditation was a voluntary scheme, but was being encouraged as part of the masterplan process for strategic allocated sites within the new Local Plan and smaller development sites through the Developer Charter;
- it would be possible for a developer to lose their accreditation if they failed to meet the criteria in subsequent developments;
- the Livewell Development accreditation had now been endorsed by the Essex Planning Officers' Association (EPOA) with the expectation that it would be adopted by all Essex local planning authorities;
- the accreditation scheme was site, rather than developer, specific;
- the provision of affordable housing was not part of the criteria for accreditation as it was a separate planning policy requirement;

- the health and well-being initiatives arising from the accreditation of part of a development site would be a material consideration in the consideration of future planning applications for that site but as the Livewell accreditation was voluntary, it would have only limited weight in decision-making; and
- acronyms within the accreditation document were stated in full on their first use.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the report on the Livewell Development Accreditation Scheme be welcomed and its promotion by the City Council be endorsed; and
2. the Director of Sustainable Communities, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford, be authorised to finalise the content of the guidance on the Scheme for developers, planners and designers and the Livewell Developer Charter submitted as appendices to the report to the meeting.

*7.25pm to 7.48pm*

6. **Masterplans Procedure Update**

The Board considered proposed amendments to the procedure for the preparation of masterplans for development allocations in the emerging Local Plan. An update was also given on progress with masterplans currently in production. A Green Sheet of amendments and additions to Appendix 1 to the report was distributed.

Members were told that the changes to the procedure addressed good practice that was already informally being followed and that the amendments proposed simply formalised the associated documentation. The Committee's attention was drawn to the intention to follow slightly different procedures for the sites in north-East Chelmsford and Chelmer Waterside owing to their particular circumstances and/or complexity.

In response to questions from the Board:

- all members in wards affected by a proposed development would be consulted as part of the masterplan process for that site;
- the process for the site to the north of South Woodham Ferrers had yet to reach Stage 1. At that stage, the Town Council and ward councillors would be consulted on the development principles put forward. Adjacent parish councils and Maldon District Council would also be consulted;
- new healthcare facilities as part of the Local Plan site north of Broomfield, whilst potentially desirable as part of the masterplan for the development site in that ward, was dependent on the NHS agreeing to its provision and funding. The Council was working with the NHS on the specific nature and delivery of health facilities associated with all developments within the Local Plan;
- the aim of public consultation on masterplans was to establish what local residents wanted as part of future development;
- Masterplanning Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) had been agreed with developers/promoters on all strategic Local Plan sites which helped meet the cost of officer time assisting with the preparation of masterplans; and
- the masterplanning procedure note would ensure that statutory bodies would be consulted/engaged rather than simply likely to be.

**RESOLVED** that the updated masterplan process detailed in Appendix 1 of the report to the meeting, as amended by the Green Sheet, be noted, its importance recognised and welcomed, and it be recommended to the Cabinet for approval.

*(7.48pm to 8.20pm)*

## 7. **Working Group Updates**

The Board received the following updates from the Chairs of its Working Groups.

### **Affordable and Social Housing**

The Working Group had identified the need for information on what qualified as affordable housing, its supply and demand, the mix of supply, how the Council could influence supply, key worker housing and housing benefits. The Working Group had identified a number of work streams for future meetings and was keen to ensure that its activities were co-ordinated with those of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Working Group.

### **Chelmsford's Waterways**

The Chair of this Working Group said that it had agreed at its first meeting the work streams it would pursue. It had subsequently looked at possible improvements to the navigation of the City's waterways and the prospects for their better use.

The Board suggested that the Working Group might also consider the feasibility of the weirs being used to generate electricity and the part the rivers and canals could play in reducing the risk of flooding.

### **Connectivity and Local Democracy**

This Working Group had considered initial proposals for the review of polling districts and polling places; received information on the options for a Community Governance Review of the unparished areas; considered a paper on improving turnout at elections; taken an initial look at increasing engagement; and discussed the possibility of a volunteering scheme for Council employees.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

The Working Group was now finalising an updated Health and Wellbeing Strategy for submission to the Cabinet in November. The emphasis had been on making it a living document that took into account the contributions that could be made by a number of organisations to the overall aims of the Strategy.

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

This Working Group had submitted an updated Strategy on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping to the Cabinet on 10 September 2019 on which consultation was now taking place. The Working Group would continue to work with other organisations to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy and adapt and develop it as necessary; this too would be a living document. It had been recognised that one of the challenges was streamlining the work of the many organisations involved in supporting the homeless and rough sleepers

**RESOLVED** that the updates from the Board's Working Groups be noted

*(8.20pm to 9.16pm)*

8. **Future Work Programme**

Members discussed possible topics for future consideration by the Board.

The Director of Sustainable Communities planned to submit the following to future meetings:

In January 2020 – Supplementary Planning Documents on Planning Obligations and Making Places

In March 2020 – a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy and consideration of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

The Chair said that he intended to discuss with officers existing policies and strategies of the Council to identify those that would benefit from consideration by the Board.

The Board went on to discuss whether a working group should be established on traffic congestion in the City. It was decided that draft terms of reference should be brought to its next meeting, when a decision on whether to set up such a group would be made.

**RESOLVED** that the planned items for future meetings be noted and that the Board consider at its next meeting draft terms of reference for a possible working group on congestion.

*(9.16pm to 9.42pm)*

9. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business.

10. **Reports to Cabinet/Council**

The report on the Masterplan procedure (minute number 6) would be forwarded to the Cabinet on 15 October 2019.

The meeting closed at 9.42pm

Chairman