

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 2 November 2023 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor C. Adutwim (Chair)

Councillors, H. Clark, R. Hyland, M. O'Brien, G. Pooley, T. Sherlock, A. Sosin, A. Thorpe-Apps, N. Walsh and S. Young

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P Clark, Massey, Sampson and Whitehead. Cllr H Clark substituted for Cllr Sampson and Cllr Hyland substituted for Cllr P Clark.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 28 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

No public questions or statements were asked at the meeting.

5. Publication of Revisions to the Chelmsford Local Development Scheme (LDS)

The Board considered a report detailing the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was to be recommended onto Cabinet for approval and publication. The LDS set out the programme of work for the preparation of statutory and non-statutory development plan documents for the period of 2023-2028. The Board heard that the document was the Council's timetable for preparing and revising local development documents relating to the development and use of land in its area. It was also noted that the document included a scope of the local plan review and an updated timeframe for the remainder of the review process. The Board were also informed that it was a requirement to publish an up-to-date LDS and it would be a 'living' document which did not preclude further changes within the time period if deemed necessary.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- It was important that the opportunity for comments during the Local Plan Review was maximised and a plan had been put in place with the Council's communications team to ensure this.
- They were confident that the timetable would be met as set out in the report.
- It was understood that the Government were continuing to provide funding opportunities to Parish Tier Council's for their Neighbourhood plans.
- A broken link on page 26 of the agenda pack would be resolved before publication.
- With regard to affordable homes, within normal development a provision of 35% affordable homes would be required and the Council's new evidence shows this should be formed of 23% Affordable/Social Rent, 9% First Homes and the remaining 3% shared ownership. Affordable private rent is a separate affordable product and is only delivered on Build-to-Rent schemes .

RESOLVED that the LDS set out in Appendix 1 to the report be recommended to the Cabinet for approval and publication.

(7.01pm to 7.17pm)

6. Travelling Showperson Sites Planning Advice Note

The Board considered a report that sought its approval to publish the draft Travelling Showperson Sites Planning Advice note for a 4-week technical consultation. The Board heard that the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites set out that local planning authorities had a responsibility to identify and address the accommodation needs of different groups of the community, including Travelling Showpeople. The Board heard that the Essex-Wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment established the number of plots required within Chelmsford, and the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan had allocated 24 plots to be provided to meet the need. The Board heard that the draft Planning Advice Note sought to ensure that sites were, delivered to a high-quality standard, were suitable to accommodate the lifestyle associated with the community and able to facilitate easy maintenance and management, protecting the health and wellbeing of residents. The Board were also informed of the relevant design and layout standards and heard that the note took an advisory approach to design and delivery. It was also noted that stakeholders would be invited to provide their views and a summary of the feedback and any proposed amendments would then be taken back to Cabinet for consideration.

A member of the Board thanked officers for their hard work in producing the new Planning Advice note. They stated that it was an important piece of work and were pleased that the City Council were one of the first to be producing such a document.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- Anyone would be able to make comments and notifications would be sent to landowners, developers, registered providers, those who had promoted sites before, existing travelling communities and the Showman's Guild of Great Britain.
- There was a distinction between travelling Showpersons and gypsy/travellers, this advice note was for travelling Showpersons, where as gypsy and travellers were accommodated on different sites due to separate requirements and needs.
- A site had been delivered on Drakes Lane foy Gypsy/Travellers with CHP colleagues which was an exemplar site and there had been lots of experiences worth codifying into a document in the future. This did not have a pressing need however, due to the site just being completed.

- The Planning Advice Note did not define who would own or reside on specific elements of the site.
- There were no set national standards so the Council had developed the advice note to meet the standards that would be expected elsewhere and clarified that the site or sites themselves would not actually be developed by the Council.
- If specific issues arose from neighbourhood plans in certain areas then they would become material planning considerations, however this document was just for setting out principles that could then be developed by third parties.
- The two masterplans that had been agreed by the Policy Board in recent years, referred to these sites but at the masterplan level these would just include basic outlines of where the sites would be. The Planning Advice Note sets out the information (including level of detail) that would be required from these schemes at later stages of the planning process.

RESOLVED that;

1. the draft Travelling Showperson Sites Planning Advice Note, attached at Appendix 1, be approved for a 4-week technical consultation and;
2. authority be delegated to the Director of Public Places, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Growing Chelmsford, to settle any final changes to the Traveller Showperson Planning Advice Note arising from the Policy Board ahead of the technical consultation, which opposition spokespersons would be notified of.

(7.18pm to 7.36pm)

7. Refresh of Our Chelmsford Our Plan

The Board were invited to give feedback on the ambitions, direction and priorities set out in the framework for a refresh of 'Our Chelmsford, Our Plan'. The Board heard that a refresh of the plan initially set out in 2020 had been proposed to build on the ambition for the area to be a 'sustainable and creative community at the heart of Essex, recognised as a leading regional centre and destination in the East of England'. The Board heard that the priorities identified in the plan were geared towards helping to create a 'safer, greener and fairer and more - connected place, a vibrant and appealing place where people want to live, work, study and visit'. The Board heard that once the direction and priorities had been agreed, a more detailed Action Plan would be developed to deliver the ambitions set and expected outcomes. The Board also heard that the plan would be considered and agreed at the next Full Council meeting on 6th December.

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting and provided an overview of how the plan would be refreshed to the Board. They thanked officers for drawing up the initial document and stated that it would not be a major departure from the existing one. They also stated there were now nine priorities in total across three broad themes, but with around 150 objectives sitting behind the main document. They informed the Board that it had been presented to them to give all members an opportunity to contribute ahead of a later version being presented to Full Council.

In response to questions from the Board, the Leader of the Council and officers stated that;

- A high value job was one that was well remunerated, which were often ones residents left the City to work at in London, it was hoped that more of these jobs would be in Chelmsford in the future.
- The River Crouch was included within the more detailed set of objectives behind the plan.

- It was important that the City Council continued to work with other groups and organisations within the City to help enable the aims to be reached.
- The operational objectives behind the plan were much more specific and that is where the results could be judged, as in other years these would be looked at in the future by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was also important that the plan did not just look backwards and give the Council credit, but to look forward and inform residents of the direction of travel being sought.
- The document was just an initial framework to set the ambitions, directions and priorities and there would be lots of action planning to follow. It was also noted that some ambitions had been merged with others to make the plan more succinct and strategic in its language and direction.
- Working groups would be looked at soon to see which ones needed to be reinstated or reformed.

The Leader of the Council agreed to take the comments and questions raised by the Board into consideration.

RESOLVED that the feedback from the Board be noted.

(7.37pm to 7.58pm)

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm

Chair