

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 10 March 2022

New Council Chamber, Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 2.30 pm

Meeting Concluded: 3.36 pm

Councillors:

John Crockford-Hawley (Chairman)

Peter Crew (Vice-Chairman)

Mike Bird

John Cato

Sarah Codling

James Tonkin

Apologies: Councillors: Gill Bute, James Clayton, Mark Crosby, Karin Haverson, Patrick Keating and Richard Westwood.

Officers in attendance: Jo Jones, Leo Taylor, Brent Cross.

1 Election of the Vice Chairman

Resolved: that Councillor Peter Crew be elected Vice-Chairman.

2 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes

3 Public Discussion (Standing Order SSO9)

None.

4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

None.

5 Minutes

5.1 Minutes of the last formal Meeting of the Panel held on 10 March 2021

5.2 Notes of the informal panel meetings held on 14 July 2021 and 24 November 2021.

Resolved:

(1) that the minutes of the meeting of 10 March 2021 be approved as a correct record; and

(2) that the notes of the informal meetings of 14 July 2021 and 24 November 2021

be noted.

6 Matters referred by Council, the Executive, other Committees and Panels (if any)

None.

7 Development Programme

As the Head of Development was unable to attend the meeting, Members discussed the report. The following themes emerged from the discussion:

- There was to be a joint informal briefing on this topic with PCOM on Wednesday 23 March.
- Development of North Somerset-owned sites should not only be about providing housing, but about the best community use of the land; housing should be interspersed with other uses, as in a traditional town centre such as Weston-super-Mare.
- The policy surrounding development might need revision – in some recent examples, appropriation of some land had come after the planning of the development, which some Members felt was contrary to national guidance.
- If North Somerset-owned land was removed from sites identified in the Local Plan, it would need to be compensated for by adding land elsewhere.
- There was a query about how employment figures in reports were linked to housing.
- Was there an overarching local style that could be used in development?
- Innovative thinking should go alongside the strategic development (FoodWorks was referenced).
- Existing use of brownfield sites (e.g. car parks) – would these be incorporated into new development?
- Consultation should be wide – the correct groups to communicate with should be identified (an example given was with elder care).
- What was the deadline for Member feedback to the Head of Development on this topic?

Concluded: that the report be noted, and comments sent to officers in the form of minutes.

8 Place finance update

The Finance Business Partner (Place) introduced the Place Finance Update report, which summarised the current forecast against budget for the Place Directorate.

In discussion, the following points were raised: the offset provided by staffing vacancies was not a planned mitigation and was due to difficulties in recruiting, and the amalgamation of Somerset Councils could be an opportunity for recruitment; whether ward Members could be drafted in to help vet cases for planning enforcement; whether there would be a report to the Panel on the possible MTFP savings from the sale of recyclable goods by NSEC.

Concluded: that the report be noted, and comments sent to officers in the form of minutes.

9 Place Panel Work Plan - March 2022

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Panel's Work Plan and asked for Members' input into areas to focus on.

There was to be an all-Member briefing on the Local Plan, but dates had yet to be confirmed. A meeting of the Cladding Working Group would need to be set up to update Members on changes to legislation. It was unlikely that Members would be able to provide input to the 2022/23 Place Directorate Annual Statement at this stage. Members also requested an update on bus services.

Concluded: that the work plan be updated, picking up actions and discussion outcomes from the present meeting.

Chairman
