



Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Guildhall, Northampton on Monday 5 December 2022 at 6.55 pm.

Present:

Councillor Dermot Bambridge (Chair)
Councillor Jo Gilford (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb
Councillor William Barter
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Kevin Parker

Also Present: Councillor Daniel Lister, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms

Officers:

Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place and Economy
Jane Carr, Director of Communities and Opportunities
Kevin Langley, Head of Major Projects and Regeneration,
Wendy Thompson, Principal Regeneration Officer.
Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
Marina Watkins, Committee Officer

76. **Declarations of Interest**

None advised

77. **Minutes**

Councillor Jo Gilford proposed an amendment to the minutes at item number 71 as follows:

“It was agreed that a cross-party scrutiny task panel be set up to look at the council’s infrastructure business model & alternate options/strategy for the delivery of the WNC

waste service. The following Members asked to be considered for membership of this Group: Councillors Mohammed Aziz, Bob Purser, Jo Gilford, Louisa Fowler and Dermot Bambridge.

The Cabinet member for waste noted the recommendation and would consult with the cabinet and report back to the committee as he understood the cabinet wished to lead on the project”

Following agreement of the amendment to the minutes, the Chair stated that he would write to Councillor Larratt indicating that Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not content with the proposal for Cabinet to lead on the review. The Committee was content to work in consultation with the Cabinet Member but not to be led by them. The Chair undertook to speak to Councillor Ian McCord regarding the situation, as the review was a joint Scrutiny activity with the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments above, the Minutes of the meeting of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 18th October 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

78. Chairman's Announcements

None advised.

79. Northampton Town Plan - M&S and BHS redevelopment

The Chair welcomed Councillor Daniel Lister, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth

Kevin Langle, Head of Major Projects and Regeneration and Wendy Thompson, Principal Regeneration Officer, who provided the Committee with a presentation outlining the historical changes in retail and detailing the proposed redevelopment of the former Marks and Spencer's (M&S) and British Homes Stores (BHS) sites in Northampton town centre. The proposal would entail the demolition of the current buildings and the provision of a mixed use development with residential, leisure and retail uses.

In response to questions from Councillors:

- The development would be undertaken by one developer. Although a large development for the Council, it was not a particularly large scheme for developers to undertake
- Information could be provided to councillors on similar developments in towns of a similar size and type as Northampton
- The buildings had been purchased with Government funding to enable re-generation to take place. The proposal needed to fit in with development taking place in other areas of the town
- Councillors queried what impact scrutiny could have on the proposals.
- A strategy had been put forward to Government in order to acquire the funding, and it was limited as to how much the strategy could now be challenged

- Parking need was expected to be low, and there was currently spare capacity elsewhere in the town
- The project was generally supported but consideration needed to be given to issues such as risks, financial details, impact assessments, consultation plans and how the development would fit in with the Housing Strategy
- A full business case had been submitted to Cabinet earlier in the year
- The Director of Communities and Opportunities advised that there was a local demand for properties. In the region of 950 people were on the waiting list for one bedroom properties, with over 500 requiring a two bed roomed home. A large number on the list were requiring social housing, but many required private rental properties but no properties were available.
- More information was needed regarding the retail offering, including the type and size of shop
- The intention was for the first residents and businesses to move into the development in 2026
- The Executive Director - Place and Economy suggested that a site visit to similar developments may prove beneficial
- The Vice Chair would draft a Scoping Document and circulate to the Committee

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and members for their contributions.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) The Committee noted the presentation
- ii) The Executive Director - Place and Economy to make arrangements for councillors to visit similar developments in locations of a comparable nature to Northampton
- iii) The Vice Chair of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee drafts a Scoping Document for consideration for Scrutiny input into this important project and circulates to the Committee

80. Opportunities and Communities Directorate update

The Chair introduced Jane Carr, Director of Communities and Opportunities who provided the Committee with a presentation regarding the Opportunities and Communities Directorate and outlined the Directorates activity to date including the completion of major projects such as the Vulcan works.

- There was a lack of housing available in the wider housing market
- Information regarding the Vulcan works project and the number and type of rentals would be provided to members
- There needed to be more joined up thinking between housing needs, housing policy and planning
- One single Local Plan for the whole of Northamptonshire would be developed and would be submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Committees for consideration
- The 12 month priorities were outlined, including the Tourism Strategy, Economic Growth Strategy and Vision and the West Northants Masterplan

- There was a need to change the perception of Northampton as a place to visit and work, with an emphasis on experiences e.g. theatres

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the presentation
- 2) That One single Local Plan for the whole of Northamptonshire would be developed and would be submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Committees for consideration

81. Updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Groups

The Chairs of the Task and Finish and Oversight Groups to provide an update to the Committee

i) Tree Policy Task and Finish Group

The Chair advised that the Task Panel Chair, Councillor Pinder Chauhan would present the final report to the Cabinet for its consideration the following evening (6th December)

ii) Highways Contract Strategic Oversight Group

The first meeting had been held in November and a draft Scope was circulated at the meeting. The 'maturity matrix' detailed top level Performance Indicators and would highlight any issues.

A 'step change' was promised within the first six months of the new contract. It would be useful to challenge the Portfolio Holder on what changes/improvements had taken place. The Committee wished to be reassured that the improvements in the contract had been delivered and Cabinet had been held to account. The Deputy Democratic Services Manager would re-draft the Scope and circulate.

iii) Active Travel Oversight Group

The Chair of the Oversight Group advised that a meeting had been held in October. One of the groups' aims was to enable people to get to travel hubs by foot or bike and reduce car travel to and from schools.

RESOLVED:

That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the updates from the Chairs of the Task and Finish and Oversight Groups

82. Review of Committee Work Plan

The Chair introduced the work programme and asked the Committee for their comments and views.

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager would liaise with the Executive Director - Place and Economy to factor in dates for upcoming items on the work programme.

It was noted that due to a clash with the Cabinet meeting, the 13th February meeting of the Committee would be moved to Tuesday 7th February at the Forum, Towcester.

An additional meeting of the Committee would be scheduled for Tuesday 21st March at the Guildhall, to replace the meeting cancelled during the national period of mourning.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the work programme be noted.
- ii) That the Deputy Democratic Services Manager would liaise with the Executive Director - Place and Economy to factor in dates for upcoming items on the work programme

83. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____