

Executive – 8 August 2012

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Adkins, Edwards, Hayward, Mrs Herbert, Mrs Stock-Williams and Mrs Warmington

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Tim Burton (Growth and Development Manager), Roger Mitchinson (Strategy Lead), Nick Bryant (Strategy Lead), Ann Rhodes (Strategy Officer), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager and Corporate Support Lead).

Also present: Councillors Bishop, Henley, Horsley, Morrell and A Wedderkopp

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

57. Apology

Councillor Cavill.

58. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 July 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

59. Public Question Time

Councillor Henley referred to the Public Conveniences at Rockwell Green, Wellington which had been closed now for almost two years. The building was becoming an eyesore and he asked what the future plans for the toilets were?

In response, Councillor Hayward reported that he would shortly be meeting with the Deane DLO Manager, Chris Hall, to discuss the future of the building. He would provide an update to Councillor Henley in due course.

60. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hayward reported that he had previously declared prejudicial interests when the proposed development site at Ford Farm, Norton Fitzwarren was on the agenda. In considering the adoption of the Core Strategy he stated that if there was any discussion on this site, he would declare a further interest and leave the room.

61. Adoption of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed adoption of Taunton Deane's Core Strategy as part of the statutory development plan for the district.

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy had been prepared over a number of years and set out a long-term strategic vision and spatial policies to guide planning decisions in Taunton Deane over the period up to 2028.

Over the period February – July 2012 the Inspector appointed by The Planning Inspectorate had considered the issues that had been raised in representations and made verbally at the hearing sessions. This included the need for any ‘Main Modifications’, which he considered necessary in order for the plan to be considered ‘sound’ and recommended for adoption. In addition, a number of further consultations had been held to address the publication of new national planning policies such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy Inspector’s Report was received on 3 July 2012. This report identified a number of main modifications which were outlined below:-

- Clarifications to Policy CP3 to define the geographical extent of town centres and the operation of the 500 m² threshold for impact assessment;
- Additional text following Policy CP4 to set out the process for advancing sites into the five-year housing land supply;
- Removal of a reference in Policy CP7 to an interim policy pending the introduction of a CIL charging schedule;
- Amendment to Policy SP1 relating to housing allocations in minor rural centres to allow greater flexibility;
- Numerical corrections to the housing provision figures in Policies SP4 and SS1;
- Removal of the requirement for the allocation of strategic housing sites within the identified ‘broad locations’ (Policies SS6 and 7) to await a Core Strategy Review in 2016 and substitution of reference to allocation in the Site Allocation and Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) by 2015; and
- Re-wording of Policy SS8 (Broad location for Taunton Strategic Employment) to provide a clear criterion-based context for site identification in a future DPD.

In addition, a new Policy (CP1) had been introduced as a main modification to ensure that the plan properly reflected the presumption in favour of sustainable development introduced in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The incorporation of these changes meant that the Plan could be considered sound and capable of adoption.

Reported that the NPPF had made it clear that existing plans could only be given full weight for one year after publication. As the Core Strategy post dated the NPPF and had been considered by the Inspector as “broadly consistent” with national policy, the ability for objectors to argue that the Plan should have limited weight in decision making beyond March 2013 was therefore limited.

Noted that should Members resolve not to adopt the Plan, they needed to know that there would be no up-to-date development plan to provide the framework for decision-making in Taunton Deane beyond the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan. The Taunton Deane Local Plan which the Core Strategy supersedes was technically time-expired (it ran from 1991 – 2011) although a number of its policies had been saved by Secretary of State Direction.

A Core Strategy document for adoption had now been prepared. This Plan incorporated the Main Modifications listed above as well as a series of more minor amendments that did not affect the soundness of the document.

Following adoption, work would recommence on the next Development Plan Document. This Plan was likely to encompass further site allocations as well as more detailed development management policies which would further help to guide the decision-making process and help to ensure sufficient land was available for development.

There was likely to be significant further work required to support this next Plan and this would include strategic masterplanning of both Comeytrowe/Trull and Staplegrove and identification of a second strategic employment site for Taunton.

During the discussion of this item, Members thanked all those who had been involved in the preparation of the Core Strategy over the last four years.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to formally adopt the Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028, incorporating the Inspector's recommended modifications.

62. **Report on Gypsy and Traveller Statutory Requirements and work being undertaken to address these**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought to update Members as to recent changes in legislation in relation to Gypsies and Travellers and what the Council was doing to address a variety of issues.

Taunton Deane had a statutory responsibility to:-

- Identify the requirements for Gypsy and Traveller Pitches through the life of its Planning Policy;
- Set out in the Core Strategy a criteria based policy for the location of gypsy and traveller sites;
- Allocate sites in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document;
- Identify a five year supply of land for future Gypsy and Traveller pitches; and
- Provide appropriate accommodation for those presenting as homeless.

Reported that these Statutory Requirements were being addressed as follows:-

- (1) Establishing need: The 2010 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) had established the need for pitches between 2010 and 2020. However, as this had been produced before the new legislation, it did not cover the period up to 2028. An addendum would therefore be required to the GTAA. A meeting was being arranged with the Somerset Planning Policy Officers from the other districts to discuss jointly commissioning this work from De Montfort University who had produced the original GTAA;
- (2) Addressing Need: Plan Making – The Core Strategy set out the need identified through the GTAA in Core Policy 4 : Housing and Development. A key change in policy direction was for sites to be sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally. Allocations would be made in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document;
- (3) Addressing Need: Site Allocations Development Plan Document – This document could allocate sites in any of the sustainable locations identified in the Core Strategy. Although the Government had recommended identifying locations for small family run sites, this was a contentious and complex process;
- (4) Addressing Need: Establishing a five year supply – This was a new requirement for the Council. The current five year requirement was 21 pitches. Pitch requirements were very specific. There was no established building industry promoting sites and landowners did not routinely offer land for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The process to establish a five year supply would therefore be both lengthy and complicated;
- (5) Addressing Need: The first call for sites. This was undertaken in September 2011 and nine potential sites were promoted. However, none of the sites were suitable due to either availability or policy constraints. Currently a second call for sites was underway with a widened scope to include stakeholders such as Somerset NHS and Wessex Water;
- (6) Addressing Need: Transit Provision – It was important for Taunton Deane to provide accommodation to members of the Gypsy and Traveller community who were homeless or at risk of being homeless and also to provide alternative accommodation to those occupying unauthorised sites. Although transit provision should be met through the planning process, details of other options to provide temporary accommodation were submitted. To implement the GTAA recommendations relating to this need, a significant amount of work would be required involving landowners, local authorities and other organisations.
- (7) Addressing Need: Affordable Accommodation – There was a need to provide affordable accommodation. However, the Council’s affordable housing partners did not possess the specialist knowledge or resources to deliver Gypsy and Traveller sites. Further work to identify sources of such knowledge were continuing.
- (8) Addressing Need: Capital Fund for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Pitches – The Council had previously applied jointly with the Gypsy and Traveller Community for funding from the Government and a capital fund of

£150,000 had been created to be used for the purchase of land and installation of infrastructure. Again though the implementation of the GTAA would be very difficult due to problems with identifying suitable sites.

- (9) Identifying and Resolving Issues: Gypsy and Traveller Forums – The forums were a vital, two-way communication tool. The Somerset Equalities Officers Group had funded the charity 'People Can' to facilitate the forums in four of the Somerset Districts, however attendance had waned. Action was currently being taken to revitalise the forums to re-establish communication with this minority group.
- (10) Identifying and Resolving Issues: Gypsy and Traveller Working Group – This Group had been established to bring a number of teams in Taunton Deane together to jointly tackle issues, following the sale of the County Council owned Gypsy and Traveller sites to a private company.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The report on Gypsy and Traveller Statutory Requirements be noted; and
- (2) The actions proposed in the report in relation to identifying need, addressing need and engaging with the Gypsy and Travelling Community, for implementation by the Council be endorsed.

63. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.17 pm.)