

Planning and Development Policy Development Advisory Group
5 JULY 2018

Present: Councillors: Claire Vickers (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Paul Clarke, Liz Kitchen, Paul Marshall, Godfrey Newman, Brian O'Connell, Kate Rowbottom and Michael Willett

Apologies: Councillors: Karen Burgess and Christian Mitchell

Also Present: Councillors: David Coldwell and Nigel Jupp

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of the PDAG held on 8 March were received.

2 **HEATH COMMON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Head of Strategic Planning introduced the Senior Planning Officer who had been working with residents of Heath Common to update the Heath Common Village Design Statement, which was originally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Horsham District Council in 1999. The responses to a four week consultation had been taken into account in the revised document.

The existing document referred to old policies and the updated version would reflect current policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Horsham District Planning Framework, and provide further information and guidance in relation to local and national policies.

The updated design statement, if agreed by Cabinet, would provide planning guidance to inform planning decisions but would not carry the weight of planning policy. In response to concerns raised by Members, the Cabinet Member requested that the design statement, and any similar documents produced within the district, would set out the status of the document and the weight it would have in relation to the determination of planning applications.

The updated guidance was scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on 19 July with a view to its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. Members of the PDAG were supportive of this approach.

3 **PLANNING PRODUCTIVITY REVIEW**

The Head of Development reported that a benchmarking review of the Council's planning functions had been undertaken. The review compared our performance with 20 broadly similar district councils and focused on: income as a percentage of expenditure; number of planning applications; number of Major, Minor and Other decisions; and the proportion of the district classed as rural.

The review found that the Council is within the top 10% of all district councils for applications received and planning decisions made. It performs above average, with high levels of compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and was ranked fourth in this group of 21 councils, taking into consideration combined performance across expenditure, income, volumes, speed and quality. The service cost appeared to be in line with the number of decisions made, and its FTE staffing levels had reduced over the last few years whilst many benchmarking authorities had increased their staffing establishment.

The review made a number of recommendations relating to improving operational efficiency and income generation. The review highlighted a number of approaches adopted by councils to recruit and retain qualified staff. The Head of Development advised that a number of measures had already been put in place to reduce the need for long-term agency staff. The review showed that there was scope to refine the pre-application advice provided and revise charging models for this service. Ways in which to improve operational efficiency were also being investigated.

Members discussed building control enforcement and the extent of powers available to the Council in the context of the expectations of residents. The Cabinet Member would raise concerns that this should be a statutory function with the local MP.

The Head of Development agreed that a guidance note on the notification of planning applications would be sent to all Members. This would clarify the Council's statutory duty to notify residents and businesses with a direct boundary to an application site only, with a site notice required for major applications. The Head of Development would also investigate the removal of site notices after the consultation date has expired.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the review and recognised the positive improvements that the Development Management service had undergone in recent years and congratulated officers from both Strategic Planning and Development Management for delivering an excellent service.

4

UPDATES

Local Plan Review

The Principal Planning Officer briefed Members on responses to the Local Plan Review consultation, which had run from 6 April to 25 May 2018. This stage of the review focused on rural and economic strategies.

There had been 150 responses, comprising 370 separate comments, received from residents, statutory consultees, local groups and developers. Approximately 40% of responses were supportive, 37% raised objections and the remainder were observations.

The group were advised that changes proposed as a result of the consultation responses would be published later in the year, subject to approval by Cabinet in autumn 2018.

The Head of Strategic Planning advised the group that details of current developments within the town centre were largely commercial decisions. She agreed to discuss with the Chief Executive how best to keep the public informed.

Local Development Scheme

The Head of Strategic Planning advised Members that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) needed to be updated and to cover a rolling 3-year period.

The LDS sets out the Council's timetable for publishing planning documents for the district. The LDS informs the public and stakeholders about the documents being prepared and the timescale for producing them.

The group noted details of the timetable and advised the Cabinet Member that the updated LDS should be published on the website.

Review of Parking Standards

West Sussex County Council, in collaboration with the district and borough councils in West Sussex, had commissioned a review of the County Council parking standards for both domestic and commercial parking spaces. This review had looked at a number of different types of development across the county including rural and urban environments.

West Sussex County Council's report was not finalised yet but was expected to be published as guidance this autumn. It was currently anticipated that the study would recommend some increases in parking provision and to consider the need for larger parking spaces for vehicles where rapid charging for electric vehicles is to be provided.

The Cabinet Member considered the review to be a positive step and looked forward to seeing the finalised report.

5 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO**

The item on the Forward Plan for the Planning & Development portfolio was noted.

6 **CONSIDERATION OF BUSINESS CASE FOR SHARED BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE WITH CRAWLEY AND ARUN COUNCILS**

In response to a question raised at the meeting requesting an update on the consideration of a business case for a shared Building Control service, the Building Control Manager supplied members of the PDAG with the following information after the meeting:

‘At the last meeting on 8 March it was noted that further details regarding the business case for joining the building control service with Arun Council would be brought to the next meeting. Since then progress has slowed due to resources and workload pressures and so the project was placed on hold until the autumn. With the changes in senior leadership a review is currently being considered to confirm that this continues to be the right option, or whether alternative ideas should be developed.’

The meeting closed at 11.35 am having commenced at 10.00 am

CHAIRMAN