

# Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 8.14pm

Present: Councillors David Harper (Chairman), Tim Ashton, Stephen Cooksey, Simon Edge, David Hawksworth, Mary Huggins, Duncan Irvine, Malcolm Ladell, Jatin Patel and Clayton Wellman

Also present: Councillors Howard Jones and Vivienne Michael

## 6. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 May 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 7. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Draper, with Councillor Clayton Wellman attending as his substitute.

## 8. Disclosure of Interests

Councillors David Harper and David Hawksworth declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 4, as current ward members for Ashtead and having served as members on the Ashtead Neighbourhood Forum.

## 9. Draft Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Committee received an Executive report setting out the details of the Draft Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report and took the opportunity to remind Members that the main job the District Council at this stage was to ensure that the Ashtead Neighbourhood Forum had followed the proper legal process and had met the legal requirements for consultation and publicity. It was explained that the plan would ultimately be passed to an independent examiner for assessment. This led some Members of the Committee to question why it had been brought to the Scrutiny Committee, if suggestions from Members of the Committee could not be used to amend or enhance the plan. The Executive Member advised that the item had been brought to Committee as a result of the Council's usual decision-making process, which determines that the Scrutiny Committee is given the opportunity to see and respond to all Executive reports.

Members praised the detail and comprehensiveness of the draft report, and suggested that it provided a useful blueprint for other urban parts of the District to follow in terms of developing their own neighbourhood plans. In particular, Members supported the commitment within the plan to ensure the protection of recreational facilities, and suggested that this commitment could be further strengthened by undertaking the process to secure any such facilities as assets of community value.

Members also asked how the timetable for eventual adoption of the Ashtead NDP sat alongside the timetable for adoption of the District Council's Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the draft NDP dovetails with the Council's existing local plan which was approved in 2009. A new benchmark would be set when the Council adopts its new Local Plan, scheduled for submission in March 2018, but given the number of procedural steps to be taken following submission, it was not anticipated that a new Local Plan would be adopted until well into 2019, by which time the Ashtead NDP could be have been in place for two years. When the Local Plan is eventually adopted, it would then be a matter for the Ashtead Neighbourhood Forum to decide if it wished to review its NDP in light of the District Council's Plan.

**Resolved:** That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

## 10. Infrastructure Needs Assessment

The Committee received an Executive report setting out the results and action points arising from a recent Infrastructure Needs Assessment that had been carried out by the Council.

Introducing the report, the Executive Member for Planning suggested that the data collected during the Infrastructure Needs Assessment would serve a number of useful purposes in respect of a range of different Council initiatives, including the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans and Transform Leatherhead.

Some Members expressed the view that the consultation had failed to identify anything particularly new or revealing in terms of the themes and issues presented in the report. Whilst others Members expressed surprise that particular issues they were aware of in their own respective Wards had not featured strongly in responses. All Members however welcomed the positive response rate to the consultation from residents, suggesting that this demonstrated a high level of local engagement because the Council had again shown its willingness to listen to community views.

Members questioned the paragraph headed 'Action Plan' on page 17 of the report because there were no quantifiable actions in terms of what would be done or any timeframes. Officers explained that the purpose of the report in front of the Committee was to summarise the key themes identified in the analysis, and at present there was no timeframe for action. The Scrutiny Committee requested confirmation of a date by when an action plan would be available. The Leader of the Council, who was present at the meeting, assured Members that an action plan would be developed, in conjunction with the early stages of development for the Council's new Local Plan.

It was highlighted by the Committee that although the consultation had been successful in aggregating issues of concern, the public's engagement would only be maintained over the long term by the Council responding with realistic actions. In particular, it was important that actions should be developed in those areas within the Council's remit, such as parking, leisure services and street cleaning. Also, that the key spending priorities and targets of the Council (well-being/affordable house etc), should be connected with those areas to illustrate how progress will be made.

Members noted that the range of responses to the consultation had been varied and whilst some themes would be directly addressed by the District Council, many of the issues were the responsibility of other authorities to address. As such the Committee agreed that it would be important for the Council to raise awareness and encourage action from these bodies.

**Resolved:** That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

## 11. Support for Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign

The Committee received an Executive report setting out the details of a proposal to give £5,000 to the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC).

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report and advised the Committee that the sum of money being sought by the GACC was not only intended to support its ongoing opposition to a second runway at Gatwick, but also to deal with recent flight path changes which had adversely affected residents in the District through increased accuracy and concentration of landing approach paths resulting from more accurate positioning of aircraft from the use of GPS.

Members asked whether Crawley Borough Council and other local authorities in the areas surrounding Gatwick had offered similar funding support to the GACC. Officers did not have this information available at the meeting but undertook to obtain this information prior to the Executive meeting on 21 June.

While the cause of resisting a second runway was taken at face value, and the fact that the amount requested was very small in terms of the overall MVDC spend, the process by which the funds were applied for and released were very much a concern for some Members. For instance some members of the Committee were concerned that there had been no transparent tender process for the grant, it was a 100% grant, matched funding had not been considered and no other strings were

attached to the grant. The Committee asked whether it was possible to ensure the funds were spent tackling concentrated flights paths that affected MVDC residents

It was also a concern that as reports in the media seemed to indicate that it had been decided that Heathrow would be the preferred option, why was further money needed? The Leader of the Council advised that at present the Government had not ruled out either option, and, it remained important that the MVDC continued to show its opposition to a second runway at Gatwick, which has long had cross-party support within the Council. One such way of demonstrating this opposition was through continuing to support the work of the GACC, which had strong established links with key aviation decision-makers and would ensure residents' views were well represented.

**Resolved:** That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

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Chairman

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