

West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group** held on **Monday 8 February 2016** at **10.00 am** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman David Bowman
Vice Chairman Alaric Pugh

Forest Heath District Council

Chris Barker
Ruth Bowman
Rona Burt
Simon Cole

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

John Burns
David Roach
Angela Rushen
Peter Thompson
Jim Thorndyke

In attendance:

Susan Glossop

(St Edmundsbury Borough Council)

9. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Lay (Forest Heath District Council).

10. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

11. **The Planning and Growth Team - Presentation on What We Do (Verbal)**

The Head of Planning and Growth introduced this item and explained that this presentation would provide Members with an overview of the work of the Planning and Growth Team.

The individual Service Managers provided a brief presentation on the four main service areas within the Planning and Growth Team and provided an overview of the following main substantive areas:

(a) **Development Management** (*which included planning applications and appeals, building control and planning enforcement*)

- The structure of the Development Management Team.

- The number of planning applications, building control applications and enforcement cases dealt with in 2014/2015.
- The quarterly performance of both Councils for the determination of planning applications.
- To assist with the working across both Councils, the Team had been split into North/South Area Teams.
- Current Development Management initiatives, including: -
 - Sustainable performance improvement
 - Planning Improvement Plan (PIP)
 - West Suffolk Shared Service National Case Study with the Planning Advisory Service
 - Speeding up the planning processes across Suffolk (Transformation Challenge Award)
 - Local Enforcement Plan which set out how planning enforcement would be undertaken within both Councils
 - Increasing of the market share initiatives for the Building Control service.

(b) **Economic Development and Growth** *(which included business relations, growth, major projects, tourism, events)*

- The structure of the Economic Development and Growth Team
- A summary of the issues relating to the local economy in West Suffolk, including:
 - Low GVA (output)
 - Higher unemployment (but not at exceptional levels)
 - The average earnings were lower than Suffolk, the East and the UK
 - There was a high house price earnings to purchase ratio
 - Comparable qualifications
 - A shortage of available commercial land across West Suffolk
- The Six Point Plan for Jobs and Growth (which included engagement/assistance with businesses and the promotion of the West Suffolk economic region).

(c) **Planning Policy/Strategy** *(which included Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plans, conservation, developer contributions (s106, CIL), ecology and landscape)*

- The structure of the Planning Policy/Strategy Team
- Planning policy context (NPPF; SEBC/FHDC Core Strategies; SEBC Vision 2031; FHDC Single Issue Review and Site Allocations; Joint Development Management Policies)
- Current initiatives, including:
 - Adopting, implementing and reviewing Plans
 - Providing specialist advice to Development Management and the Projects Team
 - Neighbourhood planning (Town/Parish Councils)
 - S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
 - Preparing Supplementary Planning documents (SPDs)
 - Preparing Annual Monitoring reports
 - Five year land supply
 - Preparing and updating evidence on infrastructure requirements
 - Interpreting the NPPF/NPPG

- Proactively adapting to changing circumstances or Central Government changes

(d) **Environmental Health** (*which included licensing, food safety, health and safety, industrial pollution, contaminated land, air quality, drinking water supplies, fuel poverty, energy efficiency, renewable energy*)

- The structure of the Environmental Health Team
- The various wide-ranging responsibilities of the Team
- The numbers of licences, permits, registrations, food interventions, notifications and requests for services/advice and initiatives which had been undertaken in 2015.

The Head of Planning and Growth then provided an overview of the planned growth forecast for West Suffolk and also explained the projects (including major/strategic infrastructure projects), initiatives and opportunities/challenges which could involve input from the Steering Group.

The Steering Group discussed the presentations which had been provided and asked a number of questions of the Officers present, to which responses were provided in relation to:

- The robustness of the planning software used on the website/intranet.
- Better information/advice required for 'start-up'/new business.
- The application of the Food Hygiene Rating System and the frequency of inspections to food premises.
- The importance of Infrastructure provision for towns.
- The need for improved rail provision to Haverhill.
- The need for the development of a transport plan for Haverhill (as well as for Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket).
- Due to the importance/influences of Cambridge, it was important to ensure the continued building of relationships with the Cambridgeshire authorities/sub-region.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be noted.

12. **Executive Summary - West Suffolk Sports Facilities Assessment (Report No JGG/JT/16/002)**

The Service Manager Operations (Leisure and Culture) presented this report and also provided a presentation on the Executive Summary of the West Suffolk Sports Facilities Assessment. This document and the evidence base behind it would inform the delivery of a more strategic approach to sport and leisure facilities in the future.

The Facilities Assessment was an assessment of:

- the current sports facilities in West Suffolk (this assessment had been undertaken by 4Global (external consultants)).
- whether the current provision met the current need
- future need based on predicted growth

This was a means by which need could be evidenced and was a necessity when applying for Sport England and the National Governing Body (NGB) funding. It would also provide evidence to help justify funding from developers and for the development of a Countywide Strategy.

It was also proposed for the Executive Summary and the supporting documentation to be used for the:

- Preparation of a West Suffolk Strategic Leisure Action Plan.
- Starting point for the evidence which would inform the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, updating and replacing the existing SPDs.

More generally, the documents would enable both Councils to work with partners and stakeholders, to prioritise investment in leisure facilities in a more transparent and needs drive basis to enable place shaping across West Suffolk.

The next steps would be to:

- Develop a West Suffolk Strategic Leisure Action Plan
- Develop a new Leisure Management Agreement with Abbeycroft Leisure
- Update the existing Borough and District Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

Members considered the Executive Summary of the West Suffolk Sports Facilities Assessment and asked questions of Officers, in which responses were provided. The following substantive comments/observations were made:

- An appropriate account needed to be taken of the new/current attention to the health agenda and for this to be built into the document and also into any resulting policies, along with working with health partners (particularly those within mental health).
- The links with the arts and heritage also needed to be referenced.
- There appeared to be no account of the scope for the used of shared facilities, particularly with those facilities shared between different sports.
- Concern was raised that, in some areas, the Assessment did not accurately reflect those facilities that were actually in existence, particularly within the rural areas.

The Officer clarified that the purpose of this document was to provide an assessment of facilities and was not designed to provide linkages to other health delivery. Whilst compiling this data, the Consultants had contacted all Parish Councils, who had been asked to provide information on existing facilities. The Officer did confirm that, prior to this meeting, he had also been made aware of some of inaccuracies within the Assessment made for some of the facilities located within Lakenheath and also stated that if Members considered that there were further accuracies/omissions in terms of the facilities listed, then this would be reviewed.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The Executive Summary of the West Suffolk Sports Facilities Assessment (Appendix A to Report No JGG/JT/16/002), be noted.
2. A project team be established to develop the delivery of the assessment findings, within a wider Action Plan for place shaping sport and recreation provision for West Suffolk, be noted.
3. Receipt of the supporting draft documents prepared as part of this work be noted (subject to minor amendments made in consultation with the Service Manager Operations (Leisure and Culture) and 4Global, to be utilised as part of an initial evidence base for the development of a joint West Suffolk Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities.

Councillor Peter Thompson left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

13. **Section 106 Update (Report No JGG/JT/16/003)**

The Development Implementation and Monitoring Officer presented this report and also provided a presentation on an overview of S106 in West Suffolk, including details of the financial contributions which had been paid to both Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, where these monies had been spent, along with the balance of unspent monies at the end of the financial year.

The Officer also provided an overview on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) whose purpose was to assess the potential for new development within the District/Borough, to pay for the infrastructure required to make the bulk of strategic sites sustainable. The assessment allowed for a developer to provide the local affordable housing policy targets (which was 30% in West Suffolk) and, thereafter, pay a standard charge, known up-front, to meet all other infrastructure requirements for their development.

It was explained that the local planning authorities within Suffolk had been working together to introduce a CIL Charging Schedule. Once produced, this would be published for consultation. Once the consultation process had been completed, the CIL charge would be brought before the Planning Inspectorate for approval. The new CIL charges would then be brought before Members for formal adoption. Thereafter, both S106 and CIL charges would be used, where applicable, to continue to ensure development within West Suffolk, was sustainable and was meeting the national and local planning policies, which helped to create vibrant and sustainable communities.

Members asked questions of Officers, in which responses were provided. Members also referred to the Annual Report 2014/2015 and as this was to be a public document, requested for the various typographical errors within the document to be corrected. Members also referred to pages 12 and 13 of the Annual Report and were of the view that some of the content on those pages were somewhat convoluted and asked if this wording could be reviewed.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the West Suffolk S106 Developers Contributions Annual Report 2014/2015 be noted.

14. Shepherds Grove Industrial Estate - Update (Verbal)

The Service Manager (Economic Development and Growth) provided a brief presentation and update on the Shepherds Grove Industrial Estate, Stanton (as had been previously requested by the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group).

The background to the site was provided, along with the potential way forward for the future development of the site by the current owners.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

15. Enterprise Zones (Verbal)

The Service Manager (Economic Development and Growth) presented this item and provided a presentation on the background to the Enterprise Zones. Two successful bids had designated as Enterprise Zones at Suffolk Business Park, Bury St Edmunds and at Haverhill Research Park. However, the inclusion of these sites was still subject to approval by St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Enterprise Zones were to commence from April 2016 and were designated commercial areas that offered incentives to business, such as business rates relief and simplified planning processes (via a Local Development Order). Therefore, hoping to attract new business and job growth.

The Enterprise Zone designation was for 25 years and the business rates within the Zone were retained locally and returned to the LEP. Local agreement was required as to how these rates were shared/invested, but there was a requirement for this to fund infrastructure.

A report was due to be presented to the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Cabinet on 9 February 2016 (with recommendations to Council on 23 February 2016) which considered the acceptance of the Enterprise Zones, with the details and precise terms of the Enterprise Zones to be further negotiated and agreed.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

16. **Incubation/Innovation Discussion (Verbal)**

The Growth Officer presented this item and provided a presentation on incubation centres (which focused on start-up and early stage companies) and innovation centres (which focused on research, development and innovation companies).

The Officer also provided examples of those businesses who were working within incubation and innovations centres within West Suffolk and its borders (Cambridge Business Lounge; NWES; Menta; St Johns Innovation Centre).

A previous report commissioned by SQW in 2014, had identified gaps in incubation/innovation provision within West Suffolk, particularly within Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket. Therefore, to address the particular issue within Newmarket, it was the intention to launch a Newmarket 'Hot Desk' trial, which would allow local businesses the use of free desk space/workspace/meeting rooms. Members would be kept informed as to how this trial progressed.

Members asked questions of Officers, in which responses were provided.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

17. **A1307 Haverhill to Cambridge: Greater Cambridge City Deal (Verbal)**

With the agreement of the Chairman, this additional item was discussed.

The Principal Growth Officer presented this item and also provided a presentation to inform Members of a report on the A1307 Haverhill to Cambridge: Greater Cambridge City Deal, the detail of which had recently been released into the public domain. The outcome of this report had ruled out for funding to be made available for improvements to the A1307 Haverhill to Cambridge, as part of this Deal.

Also as part of this Deal, it had also discounted from further consideration:

- the re-opening of the railway to Haverhill
- the provision of a Busway all the way to Haverhill
- major road interventions

This report would be presented to the Greater Cambridge City Deal Joint Assembly on Friday 12 February 2016 and to their Executive Board on Thursday 3 March 2016. In addition to these meetings, the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce had also arranged a A1307 Campaign meeting to take place on Friday 19 February 2016.

The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce would also be submitting a letter to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, expressing their disappointment in this decision, particularly as this had been made prior to the commencement of the consultation process.

Members of the Steering Group also expressed their disappointment on this decision and supported the Council in their response. It was also requested for the Council's response to be circulated to the Members of the Group, for their information.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

18. Dates of Future Meetings

The Steering Group discussed items for discussion at future meetings. It was agreed that meetings should be based around 'themes'. Officers confirmed that they would ensure that topics were programmed accordingly.

It was proposed that for the next meeting, Suffolk County Highways be invited to discuss highways infrastructure within West Suffolk.

The Steering Group **AGREED** the date/time/venues of future meetings as follows:

- 1. April/May 2016 (Date/venue to be confirmed)**
Mildenhall Hub Development Brief: Consultation Responses
- 2. Tuesday 28 June 2016**
10.00 am West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk County Highways – Highways infrastructure in West Suffolk (Proposed topic for discussion)
- 3. Tuesday 11 October 2016**
10.00 am District Offices, Mildenhall
- 4. Tuesday 21 February 2017**
10.00 am West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds

It was also noted that additional meetings of the Steering Group could also be arranged, if required.

The Meeting concluded at 1.15 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
