

ECONOMY, HOUSING AND SKILLS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 2012

Present – Councillors Evans (Chairman), J. Byrne (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Donaghy, Irving, Peel, Mrs. Swarbrick (as deputy for Councillor Radlett) and Wild (as deputy for Councillor Critchley).

Officers

Mr. K. Davies	Director of Development and Regeneration.
Mr. P. Green	Head of Economic Strategy.
Mr. S. Godley	Development Manager (Planning Strategy).
Ms. M. Craven	Development Officer.
Mr. I.D Mulholland	Principal Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Critchley, Kell and Radlett.

Councillor Evans in the Chair

1. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report and gave a presentation which set out details of the development of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Bolton.

By way of background information, the report advised Members that the Community Infrastructure Levy came into force in April, 2010. It allowed local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money could be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the council, local community and neighbourhoods wanted.

Authorities had to express CIL rates as pounds per square metre in a document known as the Charging Schedule. Furthermore, local authorities were empowered but not required to introduce CIL. However, due to the changing nature of the operation of Section 106 agreements from April, 2014 the ability to pool monies from Section 106 monies would become very limited.

The report went on to advise that the Council had started working towards developing a CIL in January, 2011 and this had now reached a critical Stage. Selecting the appropriate charging rates by the CIL was primarily informed by evidence but also reflected the council's attitude to risk, balancing aspirations for delivering infrastructure, providing affordable housing and ensuring that development was not stifled by setting the charging rates too high.

The report went on to set out the proposed charging rates for consultation purposes together with their justification. The appendix to the report was the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule Consultation Document which also contained the levy rates and a consultation response form.

In conclusion the report explained that once the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule had been approved a period of public consultation would take place lasting for six weeks. After this, the draft charging schedule would undergo public consultation, prior to independent public examination and adoption at full Council.

Members in their deliberations referred to –

- the possible need to review the charging levy rate in the future and;
- matters concerning an agreed AGMA approach.

It was agreed that the report be noted and that the report be submitted to the Executive Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Skills for approval of the consultation exercise.

2. BOLTON'S DRAFT ALLOCATIONS PLAN – PROPOSED CHANGES

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report and gave a presentation which set out proposed changes to the Draft Allocations Plan.

By way of background information, the report explained that Bolton had adopted its Core Strategy in March, 2011 and the Allocations Plan would help to implement it by expressing the Core Strategy policies on a proposals map and through the addition of a small number of additional policies.

The Council consulted on its Draft Allocations between November 2011 and January, 2012 and 533 responses were received. Since January consideration had been given to how those responses should be taken into account.

Members were advised of other proposed changes to the Draft Plan which included matters concerning Gypsies and Travellers, the effect of the National Planning Policy Framework and with the passage of time this had meant that some potential development sites had been developed and others had come forward as possibilities.

The report concluded by explaining the arrangements that would be made to consult on the proposed changes as now detailed. Once consultation on the proposed changes had concluded the next stage would be for the Council to publish the Allocations Plan. Following this a Planning inspector would consider the soundness of the Plan and then make a report to full Council who would then adopt the Plan.

Members in their discussions referred to the future flexibility of the Plan.

It was agreed that the report be noted and that the report be submitted to the Executive Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Skills for approval of the Allocations Plan for consultation.

3. THE SKILLS STRATEGY UPDATE

Mr. Phil Green, Head of Economic Strategy gave a presentation on matters around the development of a Skills Strategy for Bolton.

In terms of the challenge, Members were apprised of the following information –

- jobs and skills were as important as deficit reduction;
- stimulating the economy was one way to create employment but having an economy that was fit for purpose was the other;
- employment needed to be globally competitive with skills to match;
- the risk that as jobs returned the workforce would not be sufficiently skilled;
- an opportunity to increase social mobility by improving aspiration and skills levels in areas of greater deprivation and in the workless;
- getting people back into work and improving their skills at the same time;
- securing benefit to and contribution from Bolton residents to growth; and
- to maximise the benefit to Bolton and engage partners, providers, employers and the Bolton people particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Members were also advised of Bolton's productivity performance from 2001 to 2010.

Mr. Green advised that skills was a cross-cutting theme in the economic strategy and community strategy. Also that the recent Skills Scrutiny Panel had assisted in the emerging strategy and action plan.

In terms of the development of the Skills Strategy, Members were advised of the various partners that were working together to enable the completion of the detailed delivery plan. Furthermore, the outline strategy included matters concerning –

- leadership and governance;
- raising participation and aspiration;
- improving adult skills;
- Bolton Education Zone; and
- A sector based approach.

The Policy Development Group was further informed of progress over the summer period which included endorsement from business leaders and the public sector and the planned , Find Your Future, 2012 Jobs and Skills event on 20th September.

In terms of the next steps, members were advised of the following –

- establish a new economic partnership;
- build on commitments;
- relaunch Business Bolton;
- progress of the Greater Manchester skills and analysis; and
- development and adoption of the full Skills Strategy.

Members in their discussions referred to –

- the method of employer engagement;
- Strategy delivery;
- networking;
- the role of Bolton at Home;
- Bolton College and the University in re-modelling courses; and
- using services in Bolton.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.30pm. and finished at 6.54 pm.)