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## **ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 18 July 2024

At: 6.00 pm

### PRESENT

Councillor Claire Vibert (Chair) in the chair; Councillor James Frizzell (Vice-Chair); Councillors Jake Austin, Will Dawson, Ian Hunter, Micheala Meikle, David Meller, Ian Powney, Dena Ryness, Anna Charles-Jones and Asa Caton.

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interests were declared:

#### Personal interests

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
David Meller and Anna Charles-Jones	Agenda item 3 'Stockport Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation' as members of the Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) Board. The MDC was referenced within the reports.

### **2. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

### **3. STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN - REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Assistant Director Place Making and Planning (Chief Planning Officer) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated), which set out detail relating to the emerging draft Stockport Local Plan and sought Cabinet agreement that it be subject to a period of public consultation commencing early September 2024 and continuing into October 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) responded to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The report provided background information to the draft Local Plan for Stockport and an explanation as to proposed next steps for the plan. The emerging draft Stockport Local Plan was at appendix 1 and accompanied by the relevant policies.
- As part of the plan-making process, local authorities were required to undertake public consultation on their emerging draft local plans under Regulation 18 of the Town and

Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This was the first of two public consultations local authorities were required to undertake as part of the plan-making process. The draft Stockport Local Plan had now reached this substantive stage of the plan-making process.

- It was queried, given the recent general election and under the current context of what the new government had set out in relation to housing targets, whether proceeding with the consultation would be appropriate at this time. It was reported that reform of the National Planning Policy Framework was likely.
- Members were advised that, given the information before them and as no firm detail had been announced by government, it was sensible to move forward with the consultation on the draft Stockport Local Plan in light of the submission deadline of June 2025. Further, that any situation would be dealt with as it arose. It was noted that officers had been in contact with government on the matter but had not received a clear steer on what information would be coming forward.
- The importance of listening to resident voices on the draft plan was recognised.
- A concern was raised that the council could consult on a draft plan that was no longer fit for purpose, and that a further Regulation 18 consultation might disenfranchise people. Members were also mindful of member and officer time and resource.
- It was reiterated that this was not the only opportunity to receive resident feedback, and that feedback from the Regulation 18 consultation would help to shape the Regulation 19 consultation.
- Members were advised that the plan would help to deliver the homes and infrastructure needed, with Stockport's brilliant town and district centres at the heart of the plan, alongside climate action and nature.
- It was noted that the recommendations to Cabinet included a proposed delegation to the Director of Place Management to pause progression of the plan in consultation with the Leader of the Council in the event of significant changes to the national picture.
- It was clarified that there was no proposal to utilise greenbelt for development in Heald Green.
- It was asked that advice be sought as to the decision-making process for the final draft Stockport Local Plan at Full Council, namely, the position of councillors that took part in e.g., the consultation and/or work of the Development Plan Working Party in the decision-making process.
- It was reported that story maps were an intuitive way for residents to be involved in the consultation process and enabling the consultation to be accessible whilst providing the detail needed. It was noted that not all consultation questions were required to be completed, which would support accessibility of the process. Expertise from accessibility colleagues had also been sought and informed work on the consultation process. A variety of methods would be used to consult which included but was not limited to, online information, drop-in events at libraries and the use of digital champions.
- The council was incredibly proud of the neighbourhood plans in place and recognised some plans were in progress. Meetings were expected to take place with organisations in relation to what the draft plan would mean for their areas.
- Consultation events taking place in advance of upcoming Area Committee meetings would be tailored to the specific area to support local understanding.
- A concern was raised that the terminology 'brownfield first' was misleading, as what had been described in the draft plan appeared to be a 'brownfield only' approach to

development. It was felt that this could confuse residents and clearer language could be used when engaging with residents on this point.

- It was felt that the proposals for retrofitting were well-designed.
- Members were advised that the Stockport Local Plan had the potential to be the single biggest tool in tackling climate change for Stockport. The plan would provide an up-to-date set of policies to enable the council to negotiate with developers, with matters of climate change at the heart of those conversations.
- Work was being undertaken on the challenge around urban areas and climate change and building resilience in local communities with more densely populated areas.
- It was queried how much of the borough's land mass Stockport town centre represented and, given that this was a low percentage, was the proposal for 50% of development allocated for the plan within the town centre appropriate. In response, Members were advised that the draft plan before the Scrutiny Committee set out a deliverable plan for sustainable development. Further, that the town centre had been depopulated over the years, and that repopulating the town centre was the right and sustainable thing to do. It was also noted that most pre-developed sites were located within the town centre and would benefit from regeneration.
- It was recognised that there was a need for houses in multiple occupation (HMO), but it was felt that this type of housing could also present issues. It was asked whether the council could proceed with a HMO Article 4 Direction, which would mandate obtaining planning permission when converting a property into a HMO. It was reported that the council continued to monitor the need for this type of regulation and could be explored further if deemed necessary.
- Concerns were raised as to whether the plan could deliver enough affordable homes, as well as homes for people in need. Members were given reassurance that the plan would deliver a good balance of homes across the borough, and more so than if the council had remained in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- Members were strongly encouraged to feedback via the consultation, and specifically areas where members felt that more development could take place.
- The Cabinet Member would be writing to ministers, along with colleagues in Greater Manchester, in support of a review of the Right to Buy scheme.
- It was suggested that QR codes could be used in prominent places to help encourage residents to engage with the consultation process quickly and easily. Further, that pre-written envelopes could be provided for people responding not using digital means.
- Members were reassured that the policies set out within the plan would ensure the right level of infrastructure, and that the next stage of the plan would give further consideration to the level of contributions and priorities in this area.

Thanks were expressed to officers and members of the Development Plan Working Party for their work to date and ongoing work on the draft Stockport Local Plan.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.58 pm