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ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 5 September 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 and Dena Ryness.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meetings held on 13 June 2024 and 18 July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. 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 was declared:

Personal interest

Officer

Interest

Paul Richards	Agenda item 11 'Stockport Exchange – In Principle Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers in Respect of 72/74 Wellington Road' as a director of two Stockport Exchange companies.
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3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda items 10 'Marple Active Communities Hub' and 11 'Stockport Exchange – In Principle Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers in Respect of 72/74 Wellington Road South, Stockport', by virtue of Schedule 12a, category 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority), if required.

4. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

5. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive and Assistant Director for Place Making and Planning (Chief Planning Officer) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on the current position in respect of the draft Stockport Local Plan following recent events, including the publication of a draft revised National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF) and the subsequent decision to halt the proposed consultation on the plan.

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- An updated timeline for the next stages for the plan was expected to be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- The council's focus at present was to respond to the consultation of the draft revised NPPF, and all groups were strongly encouraged to respond.
- It was advised that an instruction for local authorities to review greenbelt land had been received by government. It was noted that the concept of 'greybelt' was set to be introduced, and that the definition of greybelt was expected to be clearly set out by government in the NPPF, noting that the consultation on changes to the NPPF specifically asks for responses to the proposed definition.
- Members were advised that the borough did not have sufficient brownfield land to deliver the sheer volume of housing now expected to be delivered within the borough as per the proposed changes to the NPPF.
- It was noted that the draft NPPF includes a 'sequential test to guide release' which applies where authorities are required to consider use of Green Belt Land. Whilst this would mean that the council should consider brownfield land first (and then other 'grey belt' before looking at greenfield land) when deciding which sites to allocate, it would not mean that allocated brownfield sites would have to be developed before other allocated sites. Members requested further clarity on this matter.
- It was noted that there was an increased emphasis on duty-to-cooperate in the draft NPPF.
- It was requested that a timeline of contributions from the Scrutiny Committee and Development Plan Working Party to align with the stages of the plan be established and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee for their information.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING NEED

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on homelessness and housing need in the borough. Members were also asked to consider the proposal for fulfilling the council's homeless duties by making a final offer of suitable accommodation outside of Stockport where necessary and appropriate.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was noted that approval would be sought to pilot the 'Out of Borough Placement' scheme at appendix 1 from the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing.

- It was advised that the findings of the report were reflective of the national picture and although Stockport had above-average homelessness prevention rates across Greater Manchester (GM), work continued to support families in need within the borough.
- The pilot sought to provide a better solution to families being placed in temporary accommodation e.g., a hotel, where the lack of stability led to the family's life chances being undermined. It was expected that the pilot would help a smaller number of people with looser links to Stockport to move into a sustainable out of borough placement. The placement would be a permanent solution in a sustainable tenancy, providing families with security and stability.
- It was noted that a person was classified as homeless until the local authority duty had been discharged reasonably.
- It was reported that some larger properties may have a single person or couple residing there, and that building good quality one or two bed properties could help to free up larger homes.
- The option to move out of borough for families would be on a voluntary basis and the pilot would be managed with a huge degree of sensitivity and empathy. Members were reassured that offers to families were bespoke and that the team worked hard to understand personal family circumstances and needs before making an offer.
- It was reported that there was a net movement to cheaper areas within GM, and concerns were raised about the polarisation of communities.
- Members were keen to receive an update on the pilot as it progressed.

Thanks were expressed to the team for their work on the pilot to date.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. STOCKPORT HOMES DELIVERY PLAN OUTCOMES 2023/24 & MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE 2021-26 DELIVERY PLAN

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which aimed to provide assurance to the council that Stockport Homes Group (SHG) was delivering against agreed objectives. The report provided a range of information to demonstrate outcomes from the wide range of services delivered. The purpose of the Mid-Term Review of the 2021-26 Delivery Plan was to ensure that the objectives within the Delivery Plan were up-to-date and fit for purpose.

Carmel Chambers (Deputy Chief Executive, Stockport Homes Group) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was noted that the team were working through the Grenfell report recently published to review lessons learnt. Members were reassured that SHG properties met all fire safety regulations following the first review and none of the unsafe cladding that affected the Grenfell Tower disaster was in use.
- The figures for the number of complaints within the report was queried, as they reportedly differed to a recent report considered by the Member Committee. It was noted that the information would be cross-checked for clarity.

- It was noted that the figures for anti-social behaviour (ASB) levels were higher in Stockport than in other GM boroughs, and it was felt that this was a testament to the reporting mechanisms in place and promotion of the ASB service.
- It was confirmed that the demographic of the client base did impact the way services worked e.g., SHG were supporting the younger demographic with work and skills.
- It was noted that the independent review of SHG was expected to be completed by Christmas and the results of which would help to inform whether finance reports should be considered by the Member Committee or the Economy, Regeneration & Climate Change Scrutiny Committee. In relation to the review, it was felt that it was important to have external validation that the existing model worked well and opportunities for learning were sought.
- The visibility of the webchat function on the SHG website was queried; the team would take away an action to ensure that the webchat icon was more visible.
- In response to a question raised regarding the age of the building and infrastructure at Lancashire Hill, members were advised that a high-rise review was ongoing and resident feedback would be an important part of that process.
- It was noted that Housing Revenue Account stipulated that tenant rent monies should be spent on services to tenants.

RESOLVED – That the Stockport Homes Delivery Plan Outcomes Report 2023/24 and the Mid-Term Review of the 2021-26 Delivery Plan be noted.

8. STOCKPORT UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND COMMUNITIES AND PLACE GRANTS UPDATE

The Director of Development & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided information on the progress made with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Communities and Place funding allocation for Stockport and next steps for the scheme.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Projects from the first round of funding were underway.
- The council had now completed the process for a second round of bids for the available funding.
- It was felt important that organisations not linked to the council were able to tap into the fund, although the good work of the monies allocated was recognised. Members were advised that the council sought to ensure that the funds were used for additional benefits to the wider community as opposed to supporting existing council commitments.
- It was noted that any future UKSPF funding would form part of a devolution deal and it was expected that an investment plan would underpin any deal.
- In response to a question as to whether the approach for the use of the fund would continue in the same way for future funding, it was noted that the council would reflect on the situation at the time and react accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which set out the work programme of the Scrutiny Committee and detailed forward plan items that fell within the remit of the committee for information.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was noted that the standing agenda item for the Local Plan was to be moved to the first substantive item on future meeting agendas.
- An update report for the Out of Borough Placement pilot was to be added to the work programme.
- A Scrutiny Review Panel update was to be added as a standing agenda item for future meeting agendas.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Governance be requested to make arrangements for the abovementioned items to be programmed onto future meeting agendas/the work programme accordingly.

Items including information 'Not for Publication'

10. MARPLE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES HUB

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on the progress made on the delivery of the new Marple Active Communities Hub.

(NOTE: An appendix to the report contained information 'not for publication' that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was reported that communications with stakeholders had been good and it was hoped that this would continue throughout the next stage.
- The ambition for the hub to be net zero was praised and members were reassured that learning from the hub would be applied to developments across the borough.

RESOLVED – That the report and progress on the delivery of the Marple Active Communities Hub be noted.

11. STOCKPORT EXCHANGE - IN PRINCIPLE USE OF COMPULSORY PURCHASE POWERS IN RESPECT OF 72/74 WELLINGTON ROAD SOUTH, STOCKPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) requesting the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land and buildings comprising 72/74 Wellington Road South to enable the delivery of Phases 6 and 7 of the Stockport Exchange regeneration scheme.

(NOTE: An appendix to the report contained information 'not for publication' that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm