

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Peter Heaton-Jones (Chair), Mark Dempsey (Vice-Chair), Wayne Crabbe, Toby Elliott, Emma Faramarzi, Mary Friend, Richard Hurley, Julian Price, James Robbins and Steve Wakefield

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Junab Ali, Mike Bawden and Nicky Sewell.

20. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. Councillor Emma Faramarzi made a non - prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 in her capacity as Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses and as a member of the Influence Board (Formerly Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership).

21. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2012, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Mechanics Report – The Chair advised that Cabinet had accepted this report at their meeting held on 12th December 2012. Cabinet had asked that the report and its recommendations be referred to the Swindon Heritage Board for its consideration and views and that these be considered by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture who be asked to report back to a future meeting of the Cabinet with a detailed response to the Advisory Group's report, findings and recommendations.

Economic Strategy – The Chair advised that the report and recommendations had been agreed by Cabinet at their meeting held on 12th December 2012. In response to a query from Councillor Crabbe regarding electric charging points for cars, Councillor Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, stated that consideration would be given to this, particularly within strategic sites, during the next Municipal Year.

Great Western Works Task Group – The second meeting of this task group would be held prior to the next Economic, Environmental and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7th February 2013 at 5pm.

22. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

23. Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 - Pre-Submission Draft

The Committee received a report on the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 which was the main planning policy document for the development and growth of the Borough over the next fifteen years. Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, explained that the Plan had already been endorsed by Full Council on 8th November 2012 and that it would be subject to a nine week public consultation period commencing on 20th December 2012.

In response to a query from Councillor Steve Wakefield regarding the cost of the Thamesdown Extension, Councillor Heenan stated that this had been considered as part of the 2009 strategy and that it had been priced at a cost of up to £60M at the time. This cost was representative compared with similar works and additional costs relating to inflation, housing and flood defences would also have to be taken into consideration.

Richard Bell, Head of Planning and Philip Smith, Strategic Planning Policy Manager, gave a brief presentation on the Local Plan and explained that, following the public consultation and submission to the Planning Inspector, the Plan would be adopted by the Council in early 2014. Officers and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability responded to the following issues raised by Members of the Committee:-

- The housing target of 1,450 dwellings per annum over the plan period was based on independent figures and trends from the Office for National Statistics. This target was, however, dependent upon economic growth and would be reviewed in line with the economic strategy. For the period 2011 – 2016, the annual average requirement for the Borough would be set at 1,150 dwellings.
- Employment land had been overprovided for by 50%, based upon the number of jobs and the required amount of floor space. Feedback from businesses had resulted in 40 hectare site of new employment land been provided in East Swindon. Consideration had also been given as to how to re-generate existing sites to ensure that they were fit for purpose and all employment land would be flexible dependent upon the type and size of business.
- The importance of finding a balance that suited both housing needs and employment land and to work with developers to ensure that the Council is responsive to their needs as well as the needs of the town.
- The Planning framework would be used as the first port of call for all developments and to ensure that individual entrepreneurs have the same opportunities to develop land. This Plan would also be used to prevent developments where they were not required.
- Swindon was the number one place for start-up of small and medium size businesses, although this was outside the remit of the Local Plan.
- Due to the change in demographics, there were more people choosing to live on their own and that it was important to rise to this challenge, along with an increasing population.
- S106 and community infrastructure levy would allow developers a contribution of an amount per square metre towards projects, for example, the building of a school or a contribution towards every house built. Supplementary planning documents would contain this level of detail and would be considered by the Planning Committee. Work would also be undertaken with developers to ensure that facilities such as broadband and low energy provision were completed in advance of any development.
- All targets within the Local Plan were evidenced based and any additional

requirements would have to be submitted to the inspector along with the evidence to support it.

- The Local Plan allocated strategic sites within the Borough where housing should be located. The Council were committed to certain developments over the next five years, including Wichelstowe, Commonhead and Tadpole Farm.
- There remains an ambition for Swindon to have its own University and Forward Swindon had been commissioned to identify suitable buildings to lease out to other Universities to run courses. There would be an issue over the location of student accommodation.
- Dorcan Interchange was still up for discussion, including local development orders and localisation of business rates.
- There was a strict policy on the protection of playing fields within the Local Plan (CM2 Policy).
- Potential to look at different ways to tackle issues, for example in leasing Council land out to the community.
- The consultation period is for nine weeks and a pro-forma would be available on the Council's web site, along with hard copies in libraries and the one stop shop. Officers confirmed that they would also be attending all the locality meetings. All comments received would be passed on to the inspector in a summary format in April 2013.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability and officers be thanked for attending the meeting.

(2) That the comments from Members of this Committee be submitted as part of the consultation process on the Local Plan, and

(3) That these comments be circulated to Members for feedback prior to being submitted.