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Working Plymouth

Wednesday 5 March 2014

PRESENT:

Councillor Murphy, in the Chair.

Councillor Darcy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Martin Leaves, Michael Leaves, Morris, Mrs Nelder, Mrs Nicholson, Dr. Salter, John Smith and Wheeler.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Nicholson.

Also in attendance: Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Stephen Bashford (Economic Research and Monitoring Officer), Linda Crane (Economic Development Officer), David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development), Councillor Evans (the Leader), Adam Hickman (Economic Strategy and Partnership Officer) Patrick Knight (Economy and Employment Manager), Gill Peele (Lead Officer), Annie Singer (Senior Leadership Advisor) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 5.30 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

62. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the code of conduct, the following declarations of interest were made –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Martin Leaves	Agenda item numbers 11 and 12	Hackney Carriage Taxi Driver	Personal
Councillor John Smith	Agenda item numbers 11 and 12	Taxi Proprietor	Personal

63. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of 6 November 2013 were approved as an accurate record.

64. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

65. **LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Stephen Bashford (Economic Research and Monitoring Officer) provided the Committee with an update on the Local Economic Strategy. David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development) and Councillor Evans (the Leader) were also in attendance to answer the Committee's questions.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the Local Economic Strategy (LES) Review was prompted because of the Plymouth Plan; so far evidence based reviews had taken place as well as stakeholder workshops and consultations;
- (b) the Council was working with a number of partners to refresh the strategy; the report would be submitted to Cabinet at the end of March 2014;
- (c) there were six areas of focus for the LES including enterprise and entrepreneurship, indigenous and inward investment, innovation and the knowledge of the economy, employment and skills, economic rebalancing and connectivity;
- (d) the business start-up rate in the city was very low in comparison to others with a similar density of business stock; officers were working hard to encourage more inward investment;
- (e) the LES flagships included Ocean City Infrastructure, Digital Economy, Business Growth and Investment, Learning and Talent Development, People, Communities and Institutions and Visitor Economy and Culture;
- (f) Plymouth currently had an issues with graduate retention and under employment in the city;
- (g) Mayflower 2020 was a big opportunity for the city's economy; it was a means of 'selling' the city to the global market;
- (h) the Council had the following 'big ticket' opportunities:
 - Strategic infrastructure – City Deal/ South Yard
 - Tamar Science Park – Phase 5
 - Business Support – Growth Acceleration and Investment Network (GAIN)
 - Mayflower 2020/ Britain's Ocean City
 - Deal for Young People/ Skills Hub
 - Social Enterprise City

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (i) it was the expectation that the framework for the LES would be signed off in March 2014; working groups were in the process of working on key actions;
- (j) officers were working hard to ensure that Plymouth's Local Economic Strategy was set up properly in order for Plymouth to make the most of forthcoming opportunities such as bidding for 500m worth of funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership;
- (k) Officers had been in talks with Plymouth Area Business Council and First Great Western regarding the state of the railway and the effect this was having on the business/ visitor community; Members were advised that for every 100 minutes from London productivity was reduced by 6%;
- (l) letters had been written by the Council and the Plymouth Area Business Council to the Secretary of State for Transport highlighting the importance of the South West's railway line;
- (m) Plymouth was currently focusing on attracting day visitors to Plymouth, the aim would then be to attract overnight stay visitors and then the niche market such as the East Coast;
- (n) officers had developed a good working relationship with the Local Economic Partnership and were working hard to raise Plymouth's priorities and profile; Officers were offering the LEP support where possible;
- (o) the Council had asked the Secretary of State and the PABC for Plymouth to be included on the Strategic Transport Corridor for the Southwest;
- (p) Plymouth had submitted '13 asks' to the Secretary of State and the Prime minister with regards to the railway line into Plymouth; the Leader had also asked every member of the transport select committee, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Ed Milliband and the Transport Secretary to write letters with regards to the current issues being faced.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Officers for their attendance at the meeting and for answering Members' questions.

66. **YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT/ SKILLS PLAN**

Patrick Knight (Economy and Employment Manager), Annie Singer (Senior Leadership Advisor) and Linda Crane (Economic Development Officer) were in attendance at the meeting. The Chair advised the Committee and Officers that due to the size of the agenda Officers were required to answer Members' questions other than give a brief overview of the report.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) there was considered to be a skills gap, specifically in terms of construction, both nationally and locally; officers recognised that it was important for everyone to have the right skills for the job;
- (b) the Achievement Pluss course had been cancelled due to lack of funding for the Pluss job coaches; the course was a trial project in order to provide new learning opportunities leading to employment. There was a reduction in the funding that the Council forwarded to Pluss resulting in the scheme being withdrawn;
- (c) the Achievement Pluss course ran for one year and had a small group of five to six young people; the course was a small pilot that was cost intensive however half of the group had secured further employment as a result of the course;
- (d) Officers would provide Members with details regarding the success of last year's Achievement Pluss course and whether young people that got jobs as a result of the course had retained them;
- (e) at a meeting with Careers Southwest Officers requested for benchmarking data against the statistical neighbours; it was expected that benchmarking data would be available at the end of March 2014; this information would be provided to Members once the national data was released;
- (f) Concerns were raised regarding figures for NEETS (not in education, employment or training) in Plymouth however Officers urged Members to look at figures relating to young people 'not known' – Plymouth only had nine 'not known' young people in which they were unaware of the status of young people within the city however aimed to have zero;
- (g) the 1000 Club now had 1027 jobs.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance at the meeting and for answering Members' questions.

67. **PLAN FOR JOBS**

Patrick Knight (Economy and Employment Manager) and Adam Hickman (Economic Strategy and Partnership Officer) were in attendance at the meeting. The Chair advised the Committee and Officers that due to the size of the agenda Officers were required to answer Members' questions other than give a brief overview of the report.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) the Assistant Director for Economic Development would provide Members with the correlation between the fact that at the Cooperative Scrutiny Board the corporate performance measure stated that there was a projected 9000 shortfall in the jobs target for the year yet the Plan for Jobs stated that 2000 new jobs had been created;
- (b) Officers worked hard to ensure that data was not duplicated within statistics provided;
- (c) Officers would provide Members with more information upon the funding for the Plymouth Pavilions and Get Plymouth Building projects;
- (d) the Council had signed up to the Living Wage for its employees however was unable to dictate to the private sector that they should also sign up to this agreement for its workers.

68. **PLAN FOR HOMES**

Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) was in attendance at the meeting. The Chair advised the Committee that due to the size of the agenda the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure was only required to answer Members' questions other than give a brief overview of the report.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) the code for sustainable homes set out different levels of energy and building standards; code level 4 set out specifications over and above average building requirements;
- (b) notwithstanding the initiative in the Plan for Homes stating that where appropriate, more flexible land and Section 106 payments would be considered, this did not change the normal consideration of planning applications by the Planning Committee;
- (c) there was a need to mitigate the impact of development upon local communities which existing adopted planning policies would continue to do;
- (d) an initiative contained within the Plan for Homes set out to incentivise the delivery of city centre housing by creating a “city centre density bonus” in order to provide more homes;
- (e) since the launch of the Plan for Homes initial meetings had been held with four potential investors who had expressed interest in investing in Plymouth but these discussions were commercially confidential at this stage;
- (f) a dedicated board for Sherford had been initiated with City Council representation in order to drive forward delivery of this development;

- (g) the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was different to the Section 106 funding and could only be spent on items listed in the Regulation 123 List and that monitoring of Section 106 expenditure was reported on the Council's website on a generally quarterly basis;
- (h) there were sites still allocated for residential development contained within the Central Park Area Action Plan and in total, in all Area Action Plans, there were over 11,000 dwellings allocated for housing with Officers working hard to proactively bring these developments forward.

The Chair thanked Paul for answering Members' questions.

69. **GET PLYMOUTH BUILDING: UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH CITY COUNCIL SITES**

Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) was in attendance at the meeting. The Chair advised the Committee that due to the size of the agenda the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure was only required to answer Members' questions other than give a brief overview of the report.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) the Former Southway Primary School, with the proposal of 156 dwellings, was still at the pre-application stage however discussions had commenced with the focus on addressing the Section 77 issues. Section 77 related to the re-provision of education facilities, specifically playing pitches, with the Department for Education;
- (b) officers were proactively working with the Department for Education to take forward the Former Southway Primary School site;
- (c) Officers were trying to work with developers during the pre-application process to speed up housing delivery in city council sites;
- (d) the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure would inform Members with how the Committee could help accelerate housing delivery and monitor progress through the scrutiny process;
- (e) the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure would inform Members in relation to Ward Members involvement in pre application discussions.

The Chair thanked Paul for answering Members' questions.

70. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, provided Members with an update on the Local Development Framework.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the Local Development Framework Authority's Monitoring Report was produced annually;
- (b) the Community Infrastructure Levy was formally adopted in April 2013 and came into effect on 1 June 2013 and Plymouth was one of the first group of authorities to adopt it;
- (c) the Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan was submitted to the Government in December in December 2012; in August 2013 the Council received the Inspector's report detailing that the AAP had been found 'unsound';
- (d) the review of the Core Strategy and planning for the Plymouth Plan took place between October 2012 and June 2013 with over 30 sofa events held around the city;
- (e) the number of planning applications for major developments has increased to 111 which compares favorably to other big cities;
- (f) planning application appeals were at a similar level to 2011/2012 with 28 appeals and appeals performance having improved with 75% wholly or partly agreed by the Inspectorate;
- (g) in 2012/13 the Council negotiated £3m for planning obligation contributions from developments recently completed or under construction and had so far received £2.3m of which £217,000 had been spent on schemes in neighbourhoods or on citywide projects;
- (h) 28 of the 40 Core Strategy targets had been met or were on-track;
- (i) housing delivery was approximately two years behind where they expected to be in terms of figures; there was a gradual increase in numbers of homes being built since the recession;
- (j) the economic crisis and lack of availability of grant funding has seen the number of affordable dwellings built decrease from the record numbers in 2012/11 although overall 36% of all new homes delivered since the start of the plan had been affordable, above the Core Strategy target;
- (k) in the years up to 2009, 83% of new homes were flats (mainly one and two beds) producing an average density for new developments of 131 dwellings per hectare;
- (l) since 2010 the type of dwellings completed show a more balanced mix (a higher proportion of semi-detached and terraced houses, and a higher number of four or more beds) as a result of a number of large redevelopment sites - at Southway, Derriford and Barne Barton;

- (m) the percentage of Lifetime Homes target had been met for the previous two years;
- (n) the Council had seen a rise in employment land developed in 2012/13 to 3.58 hectares with the average annual amount now 4.41 hectares which was above the Core Strategy target of 4 hectares per annum;
- (o) the Council had a target of 13,000sqm for office floorspace delivery however in 2012 to 2013, 6,325sqm of office space had been completed;
- (p) 7.27 hectares of employment land development was under construction or had been delivered and 17.76 hectares had been given permission;
- (q) since September 2012 there had been an increase in vacancies at Drake Circus; it was expected that this was partially down to the refurbishment of a number of units within the shopping centre and that vacancy rates should return to normal levels soon;
- (r) overall vacancies since October 2013 were at 14.75%; this was slightly above the national average.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (s) the figures provided in the presentation related to the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013;
- (t) the percentage of flats developed in the city also included figures for houses that had been converted into flats; the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure would check if these figures could be broken down further in order to give Members a breakdown of house conversions;
- (u) the figures relating to Section 106 monies negotiated, received and spent was a snapshot in time from April 2012;
- (v) the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure would provide a copy of the presentation and confirm if the information regarding the vacant units in the Drake Circus Shopping Centre was from 2012 or 2013; he would also check the feasibility of providing Members with the data from 2013 as well as national comparative figures for 2013 and local figures for 2013.

The Chair thanked Paul Barnard for his attendance at the meeting and for answering Members' questions.

71. **SUBSIDISED BUS ROUTES**

The Chair advised Members that the Subsidised Bus Routes report was an update from the review that had taken place in 2012 – an Officer was not in attendance for this item however the report set out an update from recommendations made during the review.

Members raised concerns that recommendation eight, relating to the request for the Council to seek the support of local MPs to make representations to the Secretary of State for Transport on the current financial pressures facing the bus industry, had not been implemented.

Agreed that the following information would be requested:

- (1) figures relating to Council spend on subsidised bus services;
- (2) passenger numbers for subsidised bus services;
- (3) the criteria for subsidised bus services with regards to the state of buses;
- (4) information detailing how local bus companies advertised the skipper ticker;
- (5) numbers of passengers that used their concessionary bus passes on subsidised routes;
- (6) the frequency of subsidised buses/ timetables.

Members were advised that the Lead Officer and Democratic Support Officer were not involved in the review so were unable to answer Members' questions however it was expected that much of the information requested would be contained within the Subsidised Bus Services Review report; the report would be circulated to Members if this was the case.

Members raised their concern that recommendation 8, encouraging the Council to seek the support of local MPs to encourage them to make representations to the Secretary of State on the current financial pressures facing the bus industry, had not been implemented. It was agreed that Members' concerns would be referred to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

72. **PARK AND RIDE BUS SERVICE REVIEW - UPDATE**

The Chair informed Members that the Park and Ride Bus Service Review report had been submitted to Cabinet on 12 February 2014 and four of the five recommendations were accepted. Cabinet rejected the first recommendation to investigate the feasibility of introducing parking metres to the Park and Ride Bus Service car parks. The Vice Chair encouraged Members to get involved with future reviews.

73. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND UPDATE FROM THE COOPERATIVE SCRUTINY BOARD**

Members noted the tracking resolutions document.

74. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the work programme for 2013/14. Under this item the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their hard work over the past 12 months.

75. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.