



COUNCIL

MEETING : Tuesday, 8th April 2014

PRESENT : Cllrs Chatterton (Mayor), Hansdot (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), James, Wood, Dallimore, Organ, Patel, Hilton, Haigh, Gravells, Durrant, Tracey, Hobbs, McLellan, C. Witts, Smith, Lugg, Noakes, Ravenhill, Hanman, Wilson, Bhaimia, S. Witts, Field, Williams, Llewellyn, Brown, Dee, Porter, Taylor, Beeley, Randle, Toleman and Gilson

Others in Attendance

Peter Gillett, Corporate Director of Resources

Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Sue Mullins, Head of Legal and Policy Development

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services/Corporate Support Officer

Tony Wisdom, Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs Lewis and Mozol

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made on this occasion.

2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. The Mayor read the following question on behalf of Ms Anne Griffiths, a Gloucester resident.

“Why is this Council voting on this JCS pre-submission document before the most up-to-date ONS housing statistics are available in May 2014 and when several of the other vital evidence-based documents including the traffic modelling, infrastructure plans and the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), which are needed to support the sustainability of the site allocations, are still not available?”

The Leader of the Council replied;

“Work on the housing population projections is considered to be very robust and we don’t anticipate any significant differences when the new information is published in May. Throughout the preparation of the JCS, there has been a programme of on-going work on a wide range of technical evidence including the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, supplemented by more recent transport modelling work. This has all been used to inform the development of the Pre-submission Plan. The latest

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findings are currently being drawn together and will be available when the JCS is published for consultation.

“The SEP is rather different in that it is an aspirational document rather than evidence-based; nonetheless, many of the key themes from the emerging SEP have been taken forward in the pre-submission Plan. The final version of the SEP was published on 1 April.”

2. The Mayor read the following question on behalf of Mr Chris Collier, a Gloucester resident representing CPRE who was unable to attend the meeting.

“Noting paragraph 4.11.2 which ‘directs residential development to previously developed (brownfield) land’, how does policy SD1 achieve this in the absence of any phasing policy for the release of Greenfield sites and will members instruct officers to redraft this policy in order to secure its stated intent?”

The Leader of the Council replied;

“The phasing indicated in the housing trajectory reflects previous rates of development within each authority each year and a forecast of the likely rate of build out on the large strategic allocations in the JCS. In reality, in the earlier part of the plan period we are likely to rely more heavily on existing commitments and windfall sites, some of which will be on previously developed land, as the larger sites will take longer to plan and bring forward. Until we have more information about the deliverability of each of the strategic allocations it would not be appropriate to include detailed phasing policies in the JCS; this will be more appropriately done through each authority’s local plan or through development briefs and master plans for each individual site.”

3. Mr John Baddeley of Longlevens asked the following question.

“Why has the Innsworth allocation not been withdrawn as it was turned down by the Secretary of State in 2009 for reasons of inadequate infrastructure, transport and flooding risk?”

The Leader of the Council replied that it was preferable to some other sites and he noted that Twigworth had been removed. He was aware of Longlevens residents’ concerns and noted that the sustainability appraisal had considered that in flooding terms development here would be a positive and it connected to the Northern Bypass.

He referred to the appeal which he believed had been determined in 2010 and noted that had been determined in the context of a speculative development application rather than as part of a strategic development plan.”

4. Mr Ken Pollock of Up Hatherley asked the following question.

“Is it true that Gloucester has an 11 year supply of housing land to bring to the JCS, in excess of the five year requirement?”

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The Leader of the Council replied that he did not believe this to be the case as had been made clear in the report. He noted the City had identified some land including some brownfield sites but not enough for its expected needs.”

3. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no petitions or deputations.

4. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

The Mayor announced that agenda item 7a, Strategic Economic Partnership – Establishment of Joint Committee and Approval of Terms of Reference, had been withdrawn and would be presented to the Annual meeting of Council.

Moved by Councillor James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture), and seconded by Councillor Dallimore (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods).

Resolved that Council Procedure Rules be suspended to allow the relevant officer to address the Council in respect of Agenda Item 6, The Council Plan 2014 – 2017 and Agenda Item 7, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy – Pre-submission Version for Public Consultation.

5. COUNCIL PLAN 2014-2017

The Leader of the Council presented the Plan which he believed was the Council's core document. Some Members believed that it should be considered after the elections in May and although he noted that some sections required more work, he believed that it should be presented to Council at this time. He noted that the plan had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose comments had been incorporated.

He drew Council's attention to a number of exciting projects within the Plan including Kings Quarter, Blackfriars, recycling and the Rugby World Cup.

Councillor Wood, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that the Plan laid out the Council's priorities for the next three years and it would be finalised after the elections in May. The Plan was based on Prosperity, People, Place and Performance with economic development and regeneration at its heart.

He believed that the Plan would build on the synergy generated between economic and social regeneration. There was a focus on financial viability and performance with SMART indicators and targets. He believed that the Council should not do anything that did not link to the Council Plan.

Councillor Field called for improvements to the design and presentation of the Plan which in its present form would be difficult to read for the visually impaired.

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Councillor Hilton believed that it was right to leave final approval until after the election as the plan could be improved. Councillor Haigh agreed.

The Leader of the Council assured Members that the final version would be accessible.

Moved by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Wood.

RESOLVED that the April 2014 draft of the Council Plan for 2014 – 17 be noted and that a final version be considered by Council following the elections in May 2014.

6. GLOUCESTER, CHELTENHAM AND TEWKESBURY JOINT CORE STRATEGY - PRE SUBMISSION VERSION FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Leader of the Council presented the report which summarised the pre-submission version of the Joint Core Strategy and sought Council approval to publish the document for consultation as the version of the Joint Core Strategy proposed for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

Councillor James noted that the preparation of the strategy had been a long process with some way yet to go. He believed that it was important for the City to have a plan otherwise developers would determine where houses would be built. The plan would also ensure that sufficient land was identified for housing, the environment was protected and flooding issues were addressed.

He believed that the JCS would set the context for the City Plan and that the Council had been right to work with Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. Both Cheltenham and Gloucester were constrained in identifying potential housing sites and it would be necessary to build on land in the green belt in order to meet housing needs during the period of the Plan.

He noted the complexity of the issues and outlined the key changes detailed in paragraph 3.24 of the report. He believed that the guidance in respect of brownfield sites should be strengthened and he acknowledged the concerns of residents regarding the proposed Innsworth allocation.

Councillor Haigh acknowledged the large amount of work undertaken by Councillors and officers. She noted that the numbers on the waiting lists for social housing indicated the level of need and affordability issues. The City needed a plan as places similar to Gloucester were surrounded by 'stick-in-the-mud' local authorities unwilling to use green belt land. She stated that this was not the case with Gloucester as our neighbours were prepared to work with us.

She noted the importance of planning for the right kind of properties for the elderly and vulnerable and the right sort of homes in terms of carbon footprint. She believed that the City must plan a real future for housing in a controlled, well argued manner.

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Councillor Hilton thanked the Members and Officers of all three authorities for their work in producing the JCS. He believed that Councillors would be failing in their public duty if they did not approve the document for further public consultation and submission to the Secretary of State. If the JCS was not approved it would be difficult to refuse development in totally unsuitable places, development would be unplanned and unco-ordinated. He noted the changes especially regarding Churchdown and the need to protect the flight path of the airport. He expressed his belief that Highnam would be a great place for additional homes.

Councillor Smith called for thanks to be sent to Mick Thorpe and Adam Gooch for their work on the strategy. She noted that specialist advice had been sought in appropriate areas and huge amount of work had been undertaken. She believed that it was appropriate to review the green belt and to protect the areas that were worthy of retention.

Councillor Chris Witts supported the strategy as he believed that young people would need the homes in future.

Councillor Porter supported the need for a plan but he believed that it should be driven by employment rather than housing need. He believed that the numbers had been overstated by some 10,000 and the strategy should await the latest Office for National Statistics figures.

He noted that the green belt had been established to prevent urban sprawl and the Planning Minister had stated that the green belt should only be built on in the most exceptional circumstances. The only land not in the green belt was Highnam and Whaddon.

He believed that it would be sheer lunacy to put more homes in the flood plain. He stated that there was no information on the infrastructure required to support the strategy and he foresaw congested roads, schools and surgeries. He believed that the 4,000 responses received had virtually all been ignored.

Councillor Williams agreed with the need for a plan but she did not accept the allocations north of the City with proposals for development in the green belt and in the flood plain. She noted that recent flooding had occurred in different locations to that in 2007. She noted that 510 homes were currently being built in Longlevens and any further development would have a significant impact on residents. She believed that there was a need for an updated Environment Agency report on flooding.

Councillor McLellan noted that the Local Plan had been adopted in 1983 since when government guidelines had kept changing. He referred to a recent university course where students had had to examine the evidence for housing need and they had concluded that without housing or employment they could have to move away from the area. He believed that the strategy was essential for young people.

Councillor Wilson agreed with Councillor McLellan. He noted that as a generation we had accumulated student debt and national debt while creating unaffordable housing and unaffordable pensions. He believed that house prices were related to supply and demand and the present high prices indicated that not enough houses

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were being built. He believed that developers would not build houses that nobody wanted and the plan would protect from 'free fall' development.

Councillor Susan Witts had attended a consultation evening on infrastructure hoping to learn about hospital beds and sub-stations and found references to violet click beetles. She noted that the plan made reference to major infrastructure but provided no detail. She expressed concerns on the allocations at Brockworth (flooding), South of Churchdown (traffic issues) and Innsworth (impact on people in Longford).

Councillor Organ, Cabinet Member for Housing Health and Leisure, thanked Councillors and officers for their hard work in producing a complex, far reaching plan. He believed that it was important that the Council helped all sectors and that young people would bring cities and the country forward and they would need homes.

He announced that the Government had approved the restructuring of the management of the City's housing stock. While the final decision was subject to a tenant vote, this could result in an additional £30 million investment in City homes and the writing off of £50 million historic debt.

Councillor Taylor noted that the background work to produce evidence for the plan had been going on for a long time. The plan would be rejected by Government if it was not considered to be sound. He believed it to be an employment based plan with input from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Leader of the Council stated that there would be a significant impact on the local economy if the Council were not to proceed with the plan and if there was no plan in place developers would have a field day. If people wished to protect the green belt then houses would have to be built somewhere else.

He noted that the ONS figures could increase or decrease but the plan could be adjusted when the information was available and he noted that the Planning Minister Nick Boles had said that unless they were in London, a National Park or on the coast, authorities had no excuse for not achieving their numbers.

Moved by Councillor James, Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Dallimore, Deputy Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED that the Council

- 1. Approves the Joint Core Strategy Pre Submission, set out in Appendix 1, for publication under regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as the version of the JCS proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination;**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executives in Cheltenham and**

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Tewkesbury and the Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods for Gloucester City Council in consultation with the relevant Lead Members to make any necessary minor amendments including the identification of any saved plan policies as considered appropriate by the three JCS Councils prior to;

- i. publication of the Pre Submission JCS and**
- ii. submission of the JCS to the Secretary of State for independent examination.**

Notes:

- (1) It should be noted that the JCS team will advise the JCS Member Steering Group of any technical advice or evidence which arises after the publication of the Pre-Submission version of the JCS and of the outputs of the next stage of transport modelling.**

7. CLOSURE

On behalf of the people of Gloucester, the Mayor thanked those Councillors who would not be seeking re-election in May for their contribution to the life of the City.

Councillor Fred Wood

Councillor James thanked Councillor Wood for the wisdom and real world experience he had brought to the Cabinet. He had served as Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and as the Council's Risk Champion and Armed Forces Champion.

Councillor Nick Durrant

Councillor Haigh paid tribute to Councillor Durrant's service for over 25 years as a City Councillor. He had first been elected to represent Tuffley in 1986 and became a ward member for Morelands following boundary changes.

He had served as Chair of the Highways, Planning and Licensing Committees at various times and had been particularly involved in pedestrianising the Gate Streets, introducing Park and Ride and setting up Gloucester City Homes. She stated that he would be missed in the Council Chamber.

Time of commencement: 19:30 hours

Time of conclusion: 20:40 hours

Chair