

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 2nd November 2020

Present: Councillor R Caserta (in the Chair)
Councillors T Cummings, R Gold, J Harris, K Leach,
B Mortenson, M Powell, S Smith, Susan Southworth,
D Vernon, R Walker and C Walsh

Also in Attendance: G Little, L Kitto, J Summerscales, J Witkowski &
Councillors E O'Brien, R Cathcart and C Cummings

Public Attendance: 3 members of the public were present virtually at the meeting.

OSC.1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

OSC.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Susan Southworth declared an interest in the first call in item, public consultation on the draft housing strategy as she was the Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing. Councillor Susan Southworth would leave the virtual meeting during discussion of this agenda item.

OSC.3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were three members of the public present virtually to ask questions.

The Chair stated he would split the public question time into two sections, so the questions would proceed the debate on the different call in topics.

Jane Price asked a question on the draft housing strategy:-

The consultation document states that there will be flood prevention work, additional infrastructure for drains, roads, new bike paths and a school. Where are the detailed plans and costings for these? And why is there no mention of what happens to the wildlife living in the Bury areas (Walshaw). This is labelled brown belt but it is not, it has been natural grazing land for many years, why was it not classified as green belt?

Plans for estates were previously passed, for example in Ramsbottom stating they would do all these things and they did not happen. Planners, builders and councils go ahead and run out of money as they did not plan properly and undercut costs to get planning agreed in the first place. Then the real requirements and infrastructure are not completed leaving locals with thousands of additional houses and cars and the fallout of incompetent planning. Where is your detail, money and research into how to carry out the infrastructure changes needed?

Why was planning permission for a one storey building driving range previously turned down for Walshaw as this land was classed as key to the local environment

and community? How can you justify destroying it now with so many old industrial areas around Manchester which need redeveloping?

The Chair felt that parts of the questions were not directly related to the call in topic and advised that the member of the public be informed on how to submit a question to the relevant committee outside of this meeting.

Stephen Cleur, a member of the keep Bury green group asked a question on the draft housing strategy:-

The survey had only interacted with a very small percentage of the whole population and would it be possible to delay the consultation for a further six weeks.

Mr Grant Hutchinson who was not present virtually, had submitted a question before the meeting but the Chair would not accept this as it was not directly related to the call in item.

OSC.4 CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION- PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY

The Scrutiny Committee considered a called-in decision of the Cabinet meeting held on the 14th October 2020 in accordance with the Council Constitution.

The Cabinet had made the following decision:

Delegated decision

Cabinet agrees to:

1. Acknowledge the work to date on developing the draft Housing Strategy.
2. Approve the draft Housing Strategy at Appendix 1 for public consultation for a period of six weeks.
3. Note that a further report will be produced with the final draft Housing Strategy, that has taken into account the results and feedback from the consultation.

Reasons for the decision:

Although there is no requirement for a Housing Strategy, it is best practice and provides for consideration of associated duties such as homelessness provision. The Council has undertaken an assessment of housing need within the borough. This report presents the new housing strategy based upon that assessment, which ties into other strategies including the Council's overarching 2030 Strategy.

A call-in notice had been submitted by Councillor Harris setting out the reasons for the call-in of the decision.

The reasons were set out below:

- There is inadequate information as to how the consultation methodology will reflect the views of all residents within the stated time frame. The proposed consultation methodology is inadequate to fully reach all residents.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Councillor Cummings to the meeting and she responded to the public questions and reported that the piece of land at Walshaw was included in the GMSF which would be presented at an upcoming Cabinet meeting on the 11th November.

Dr Carol Birchmore who was present at the meeting to ask a public question was invited by Councillor Harris, to provide some background information on how data was collected for research methodology. She explained how surveys were carried out in her professional role at Manchester University.

Councillor Cummings explained that the draft strategy set out the scale of the challenge facing the Borough on housing issues such as driving up quality, improving health and wellbeing, affordability, attracting and retaining skills along with climate change.

The last full assessment of housing need and demand in the Borough was undertaken in 2011. The changes within the housing market since then, together with the expected growth in population and household formation required an update to the housing profile; therefore in January 2020, Campbell Tickell in partnership with arc4, were appointed to support the Council to deliver a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, which informs the new draft Housing Strategy.

The final version of the Housing Strategy would include an implementation plan, which would be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is up to date in terms of available and committed resources.

Councillor Walker questioned if now was a good time to consult during the Covid 19 pandemic as certain groups were not meeting such as the faith alliance network. Also no displays could be promoted in locations such as local libraries or the Town Hall reception area.

Councillor Harris suggested the use of leaflets and posters in supermarkets and GP surgeries and to put the consultation on hold. A letter should be sent to every household with a reply service enclosed.

It was reported that people can obtain hard copies of the consultation documents upon request and there was a dedicated phone line to deal with enquiries. The costs of letters to all homes in the borough would have to be investigated.

Councillor Vernon questioned if the GMSF should be approved first before the housing strategy but it was explained that this was just the consultation stage of the process. It was stated that whilst it was aligned to the GMSF the housing strategy was a different piece of work.

It was agreed:

That, having considered the points raised in the Notice of Call-in, this Committee does not offer any comments to the Cabinet in respect of Minute CA.08 Public Consultation on the Draft Housing Strategy.

OSC.5

CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION- TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE RADCLIFFE REGENERATION DELIVERY BOARD

The Scrutiny Committee considered a called-in decision of the Cabinet meeting held on the 14th October 2020 in accordance with the Council Constitution.

The Cabinet had made the following decision:

Delegated decision

Cabinet agrees to:

Approve the Terms of Reference for the Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board as detailed in the report.

Reasons for the decision:

It is important that there are clear roles and responsibilities for oversight and delivery of the Radcliffe SRF. Each structure for governance including the RRDB needs clear terms of reference and division of responsibilities to enable the delivery of the SRF and other regeneration initiatives that may emerge over time.

A call-in notice had been submitted by Councillor Caserta setting out the reasons for the call-in of the decision.

The reasons were set out below:

- It is unclear how the members of the board was established. It is unclear on the size and scope of the budget available. It is unclear on the responsibilities of the board. There needs to be a more detailed description of the aims and objectives.

As mentioned previously in the meeting, the Chair had split the public question time item and dealt with the public questions related to the agenda item at this stage of the meeting.

Carol Birchmore asked a question on the Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board:-

At a recent meeting regarding the 2020 draft of the GMSF I questioned the Head of Strategic Planning and Development at Bury Council about the choice of the Elton Reservoir site. He replied that the site was chosen because of its infrastructure. When I refuted this saying it was well known that there was a severe lack of decent infrastructure in Radcliffe it was pointed out that Radcliffe was currently the subject of a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). At a recent webinar the public were informed that investment in the SRF was not dependent on Radcliffe being included in the GMSF and that the two issues were entirely separate. It was recently reported on Facebook by the chair of the SRF that Radcliffe will be receiving an investment of £100 million over the next decade but failed to say where this investment would come from. I therefore would like to know if investment in the SRF will only come about if the residents of Radcliffe accept another 3,500 homes built on their greenbelt and is long overdue investment in Radcliffe only now being considered in order to get Bury's GMSF plan through?

A Supplementary question was asked:-

Is it not questionable that the individual in charge of trying to push through one of the largest proposed greenbelt developments (Elton Reservoir) in the plans of all 10 authorities making up the GMCA is also in charge of decisions about spending of public money in Radcliffe?

Gareth Staple-Jones asked a question on the Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board:-

Will the council please declare whether funding for the Radcliffe regeneration project has been ring fenced and protected amidst a climate of cuts from Bury MBC?

Over the last 50 years there has been a chronic lack of investment in Radcliffe compared to other towns in the borough - given recent statements from the council leader regarding the council's budget after the COVID-19 pandemic it has become a concern of Radcliffe residents that funding will now, yet again be scrapped for Radcliffe.

A Supplementary question was asked:-

Can the councillor/officer in question specifically declare what funds will be protected and what quantities will be available for the project?

The Chair welcomed the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, Councillor Eamonn O'Brien to the meeting and he responded to the public questions and reported that following Cabinet's endorsement of the Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) the Council had been moving to implement the SRF as a priority. This was not dependent on the GMSF and a budget had been allocated towards this project.

Councillor O'Brien informed the committee that a report to Cabinet in September 2020 set out a governance framework to deliver the proposals within the Radcliffe SRF. It asked that a clear terms of reference and division of responsibilities was produced for each of the delivery agencies.

This report proposed a terms of reference for the Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board (the Board), the body which will provide strategic direction, and oversight of the SRF's proposals.

The SRF was now in the preliminary stages of its delivery phase. As such, it was a critical time to establish a robust governance framework, with strong remits and clearly marked parameters, to ensure a sturdy platform was built from which prompt delivery can come.

The Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board would be chaired by Sir Howard Bernstein and would coordinate the strategic direction, delivery, oversight and monitoring of the SRF's projects.

Councillor Susan Southworth had some concerns with the make-up of the board and the lack of females included on it and would welcome outside bodies being contacted to be included.

The highest standard of membership was hoped to be met although right representation was important to get the wider views of all in Radcliffe.

The Chair asked about wider public engagement on the board and it was stated that with Council Members sitting on the board, they had been elected by the public to represent local residents.

Councillor Harris questioned if Sir Howard Bernstein would have conflict of interest given his other advisory work. It was stated that he would chair the board but receive no financial benefit of any payments.

Councillor Powell commented on cross party representation on the board. It was reported that the MP for Bury South had a place on the board.

The Chair enquired about what criteria had been sought for the chairmanship of the board and had there been any other candidates. It was acknowledged that Sir Bernstein was very experienced and a well-known name which could draw attention and investment into the plan with his range of contacts along with his local knowledge of the area.

A discussion took place on Deloitte LLP who had been appointed in February 2020 to prepare the (SRF) for Radcliffe.

The Chief Executive, Geoff Little provided the committee with a brief summary of the key projects for Radcliffe which included improved health and leisure facilities, housing and a new education establishment.

It was agreed:

That, having considered the points raised in the Notice of Call-in, this Committee does not offer any comments to the Cabinet in respect of Minute CA.10 Terms of Reference for the Radcliffe Regeneration Delivery Board.

OSC.6 URGENT BUSINESS

No other business was reported.

COUNCILLOR R CASERTA
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9.10pm)