



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 17th December 2020

ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

8th September 2020

Present:

Councillor Furneaux (in the Chair)
Councillors Barfield, Cairns, Harness, Hasthorpe, Sheridan and Wilson

Officers in attendance:

- Marcus Asquith (Partnership Director - Engie)
- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Wendy Fisher (Capital and Assets Programme Manager)
- Luke Greaves (Head of Highways and Transport – Engie)
- Damien Jaines-White (Acting Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Simon Jones (Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer)
- Guy Lonsdale (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Tony Neul (Assistant Director Energy and Environmental Policy)
- Mark Nearney (Assistant Director Housing and Interim Assistant Director Highways, Transport and Planning)
- Erika Rankin (Energy Manager UK and Ireland – Engie)
- Dave Tipple (Relationship Manager)
- Amanda Waldron (Lead Officer Enabling and Partnership)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Fenty (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing)
- Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)

SPE.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Callison.

SPE.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

SPE.26 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Economy Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 30th June and 7th July 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

SPE.27 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPE.28 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the published forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPE.29 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Director for Communities (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) tracking the recommendations previously made by this scrutiny panel, which was updated for reference at this meeting.

At SPE.18, Future High Street Funding – Pedestrianised Area of Victoria Street, Grimsby, Mr Jaines-White advised that barriers and CCTV were now in place and operational which would exclude vehicles from the pedestrianised area.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That items referenced SPE.7 (empty homes strategy) and SPE.18 (future high street funding bid) be removed from the tracking report.

SPE.30 PUBLIC TOILETS – UPDATE

The panel received a briefing note, at the request of the Chair, giving an update on Council owned public toilets in North East Lincolnshire. Ms Fisher highlighted important elements of the briefing note. There were no questions from members of the panel.

RESOLVED – That the briefing note be received.

SPE.31 GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS DESIGNATED STOPOVER SITE – UPDATE

The panel received a briefing note, at the request of the Chair, giving an update on proposals to designate a site for a Gypsy and Traveller stopover site in North East Lincolnshire. Ms Fisher outlined key elements of the report and advised of progress and revisions.

The Chair thanked Ms Fisher for her summary and confirmed that he would not want the panel to sit in consideration of technical consultations on sites that may turn out to be unsuitable and therefore not open for further public consultation. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing outlined the rationale for revisiting this issue via the refresh of the local plan. Strong enforcement had reduced the numbers, length of stay and impact of illegal stopovers. This had resulted in reduced need which would be taken into account in the review of the local plan.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding the technical consultations already carried out for proposed sites. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing advised that it would not be appropriate to scrutinise these sites at this time. Given that they may be deemed unsuitable due to the changing circumstances he previously described. In effect, the search for a designated stopover site had been paused pending a reassessment of need within the borough.

Regarding the panel's future consideration of technical assessments and consultation documents plus other papers in relation to this matter. The panel agreed that the complexity and volume of information required the panel to have plenty of time to read, assimilate and prepare to scrutinise. This would be in excess of the usual statutory notice of meetings and publication of agenda papers. The Chair fully supported members in this regard and officers committed to ensuring proper notice and preparation time was afforded to panel members in consideration of future related documents. The Chair reiterated it was crucial that the needs assessment for the local plan be completed before the panel began its challenge on suitable sites via technical consultations and assessments.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

SPE.32 ENERGY: CARBON ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT

The panel received a report from the Interim Director for Economy and Growth outlining the background to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and, as resolved by Cabinet, providing this panel with an update on progress after six months. The panel would also be given an opportunity to determine how it wished to be involved in the development and completion of the roadmap.

Mr Neul introduced a presentation, co-presented with Ms Rankin, covering the key elements of the report now submitted. The presentation would be circulated to panel members after the meeting. Ms Rankin advised that in respect of Council resources, a baseline had been determined and a draft report would be available by mid-October, 2020.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and stressed the importance of the panel being kept up to date on matters relating to climate change and efforts to create a carbon neutral borough. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport commented on the measures already in place and planned around transport. In particular, he referred to a bid to central government for electrification of buses, which would be in the region of £50m.

The panel thanked officers for the presentation which they felt was well balanced. The roadmap(s) would go a long way to keeping the authority and the wider borough on track with initiatives to become carbon neutral.

The pane asked questions about the involvement of, and engagement with, young people in the roadmap. Special mention was made to involving schools and young people in environmental and planting initiatives. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing was pleased to hear the comments and suggestions from members; this was exactly why the panel was being asked to receive the update report. He had noted the suggestions and ideas and would endeavour to realise these in the development of the programme. Ms Rankin concurred and further advised that the borough-wide roadmap would include ways to encourage wider community actions with a view to drive behaviour change.

In response to questions about the consideration/inclusion of carbon capture technologies within the boroughwide roadmap, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing advised that carbon capture was being picked up within the borough's industrial strategy although he acknowledged that reference to same would be appropriate in the roadmap. He committed to involving the panel in future consideration of the industrial strategy. Mr Neul acknowledged the point and confirmed that contact had already been made with Catch, an industry led partnership supporting the process, energy, engineering and renewable industries in the Humber region. It was leading on an industrial de-carbonisation initiative for the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership (HLEP) called Humber Zero.

In closing the item, the Chair enquired about available funding streams to support the ambitious projects being proposed. Ms Rankin advised that the roadmap would include reference to the funding streams currently available to councils to support this work. The road map would also explore various 'routes to market' and financial sources available. The eventual output would be proposals around priorities and a number of funding options. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing reiterated that the roadmap would engage local business and industries wanting to reduce their impact on the environment. These businesses

would continue to have access to various government funding streams encouraging improved insulation and greener energy. He reminded the panel that the local plan review would also offer an opportunity to influence and reduce climate change through building control. In addition, there was a need to explore retro-fit of greener energy sources to existing properties across the borough, not just to council owned assets.

In response to comments from the Chair, Mr Neul confirmed that Ms Rankin's email address would be circulated to members to allow supplementary questions and comments to be garnered following this meeting.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That regular updates on energy be presented to this panel.

SPE.33 ENGIE PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE – JUNE 2020

The panel received a report from ENGIE containing a summary of performance against key performance indicators for June 2020

Mr Tipple reminded the panel of the background behind this regular report. Mr Tipple explained that during the period of the report, ENGIE had been heavily involved in the Council's response to COVID-19 and this would remain the case going forward. ENGIE colleagues were present at this meeting to respond to members' questions. Mr Asquith further advised that services had been maintained throughout the lockdown and no staff had been furloughed. Demand responsive transport support resources and skills sets were reallocated to other authority demands. This included the conversion of the Cambridge Park facility to release extra beds and facilities to NHS partners and measures to improve social distancing. An opportunity had also been taken during local down to undertake repairs and maintenance in the market hall and various car parks. New technologies had been embraced to continue surveys and site visits in planning and enforcement matters.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding paragraph 5.1, five year land supply, Mr Asquith committed to provide a written response to panel members outside of this meeting.

Regarding flood risk management 3.1.10, Mr Asquith committed to provide a written response to panel members outside of this meeting. Mr Nearney went on to assure the panel that much consultation and engagement had taken place with affected residents in Healing and along Great Coates Road. He assured members that residents were fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to ditches on their property.

Regarding delays to the Humber Link Road and any corresponding impacts on other projects. Mr Greaves advised that there had been some delays relating to COVID-19 but outside of that there was nothing to report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be received.
2. That written responses to queries on five year land supply and flood risk management be provided to members of this panel.

SPE.34 HIGHWAYS WINTER SERVICE POLICY 2020/21

Mr Nearney apologised and advised that the scheduled report was not able to be presented to panel due to unforeseen circumstances. With the approval of Chair, he committed to send the report out to members early next week for members to comment on in plenty of time for inclusion at the meeting of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport to be held on 28th September, 2020. The Chair asked that members be given five working days in which to respond prior to matters being collated and presented to the portfolio holder.

RESOLVED – That the report on highways winter service policy 2020/21 be circulated to members of this panel for comment, ahead of consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport at his meeting on 28th September, 2020.

SPE.35 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The panel received a report from the Interim Director of Economy and Growth setting out a policy for spending Section 106 affordable housing commuted funds. Mr Nearney highlighted key sections of the policy.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding information about specific developers, Mr Jones advised that this information was exempt within paragraph three of the local government act 1972 (as amended) and would be notified to panel members outside of the meeting.

In response to a request from members regarding more information on social housing in the borough, Mr Nearney was happy to provide a report or presentation in the future on the council's working relationships with registered social housing providers in the borough. The Chair supported this addition to the panel's agenda but was minded that affordable housing could also be relevant to other scrutiny panels, and members must be cautious not to stray within the terms of reference of other panels.

Regarding details of the application and impact of the policy, Mr Nearney committed to include this detail in future information as previously requested.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a further report be presented to scrutiny providing more information on social housing in North East Lincolnshire and the application and impact of the policy.

SPE.36 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING 2020/21

The panel received a report from the Director of Resources and Governance providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance at the end of quarter one of the 2020/21 financial year. The panel noted this report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5th August 2020 and was referred to all scrutiny panels. Mr Lonsdale highlighted key elements of the report within the terms of reference of this panel and invited questions from members.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding clarity around the co-payment scheme, Mr Lonsdale explained that current Government policy was constantly reacting to a rapidly changing environment. Just as the authority was pulling its quarter one report together, the Government announced changes to available support around councils' fees and charges. Hence this scheme was now being applied. He added that whilst the scheme was not perfect, it was something not previously available to councils. The quarter one report did not reflect these changes as, at the time of writing, professionals did not know exactly which areas would benefit from the scheme.

In response to questions from members, Mr Lonsdale confirmed that the quarter two finance monitoring report would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 4 November, 2020.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.54 p.m.