



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

## **ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL 8th November 2022 at 6.30pm**

### **Present:**

Councillor Freeston (in the Chair)  
Councillors Callison, Cairns (substitute for Dawkins), Reynolds, Smith, Wheatley and Wilson.

### **Officers in attendance:**

- Peter Bright (Project Manager)
- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny Advisor)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Maggie Johnson (Head of Economy and Funding)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Ian King (Spatial Planning Manager, EQUANS)
- Mark Nearney (Assistant Director for Housing, Highways, Transportation & Planning)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director, EQUANS)
- Jacqui Wells (Head of Housing Strategy)

### **Also in attendance:**

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing)
- Councillor Harness (Portfolio Holder Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
  
- Councillor Holland
- Councillor Shutt

There were no members of the press or public present.

## **SPE.32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

### **SPE.33      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **SPE.34      MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of the Economy Scrutiny Panel held on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

### **SPE.35      QUESTION TIME**

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

### **SPE.36      FORWARD PLAN**

The panel received the published forward plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

### **SPE.37      LOCAL PLAN REVIEW- SCOPING AND ISSUES**

The panel considered a report from the Executive Director for Environment, Economy and Resources on the above. This report provides information on the review of the North East Lincolnshire Local Plan. The report outlined the scope and issues and marked the first informal stage in the preparation process. This was a first opportunity for engagement and scrutiny of the process.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding 130 responses to consultation; Mr King advised this was the start of the consultation process and more engagement could be anticipated at later stages. Later consultation stages would identify options and opportunities to make choices and it was at this stage that consultation would garner more engagement. Numbers and methods of engagement would be measured and reported to the panel in due course.

Mr King reassured members that the local plan would evolve over the period of its development to reflect changes in legislation and the influence of consultation responses. Responding to a related query from the Chair, he added that since the previous plan there had been many changes; (local) Government administration, Brexit, global pandemic, economic factors, green issues and demographic changes. All these factors would influence the emerging local plan.

In response to questions about consultation definition and methodology, members were signposted to the council's [Statement](#) of Community Involvement.

Mr King confirmed that there were consequences for not meeting the expectations outlined in the local plan. The Government could step in if it were deemed that the authority was not making sufficient progress.

Members sought reassurances that the consultation process would allow local (lobby) groups to comment and influence the plan. Mr Jones confirmed that the local plan was a key strategy of the authority. This report on process was the first of many reports to be submitted to members on the local plan. At this stage the panel would be minded to focus on the scope of the plan rather than extraneous issues. Scrutiny members' and others' comments and recommendations would be sought via various methods over the period of the review.

In response to suggestion from the Leader, it was agreed that methods of engagement with councillors, including the possibility of a scrutiny workshop, be explored. In addition, the Chair would ensure that the panel was updated at a future meeting, on how the local plan consultation responses would be assessed and how this influence or impact would be evidenced.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **SPE.38      BUS PARTNERSHIP REVIEW - UPDATE**

The panel received a briefing note from the Assistant Director for Housing, Highways, Transportation and Planning on the above.

Members raised the following issues:

Regarding the 'bus bridge'. Mr Nearney advised that the bridge would not meet the criteria to qualify for funding. Hence a business case was being drawn up with a hope to secure alternative resources. The Chair commented that this bridge had been a matter for debate and concern for some time yet improvements remained unfunded. He was glad to hear that there may be other options and looked forward to a successful outcome.

Regarding the governance and transparency of the partnership. Mr Nearney confirmed that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport would sit on the 'board' and it was hoped that the minutes of meetings would be published via the agenda for portfolio holder meetings. This process was still to be agreed. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport confirmed that the partnership was currently establishing a website. He informed members that Councillor Mickleburgh was also a member of the bus forum.

The Chair asked for a further update as and when key milestones were achieved.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That an update be brought to the panel as appropriate

### **SPE.39 NEW HOMES PERFORMANCE**

The panel received a briefing note providing an update from the Assistant Director for Housing, Highways, Transportation and Planning on the progress for housing delivery in North East Lincolnshire.

Members raised the following issues:

In response to questions from the Chair, Mr King advised that the sharp increase in completions during 2021-22 was likely due to developers having confidence in the local market. Housing growth had accelerated despite unanticipated demolitions in Immingham (by Lincolnshire Housing Partnership). Major developers were coming back into the borough and building at faster rate. As a result, there were more developments on more sites. Responding to the Chair's concerns about the speed and rate of development, Ms Wells made members aware of an impending housing assessment which would be completed by end of quarter four (March 2023). The assessment would be guided by the strategy outcome of 'the right home in the right place'. The results of this would be presented to the panel at its meeting in June 2023.

Regarding percentages of affordable/social housing on the former Western Secondary School site. Ms Wells advised that Homes England would be providing funds to increase social housing on the site.

Regarding new homes from empty homes, Ms Wells advised that a full report on empty homes was scheduled to be presented to the panel in January 2023. However, albeit due to change, she could confirm that a new homes bonus grant of up to 5x the rateable value of an empty property could be claimed. Ms Wells committed to include more detailed information in the January report.

Members also sought clarification about, five year supply of land calculations, ensuring a spread of new homes across the borough, avoiding over-intensification of new sites, housing needs, multi-generational living and the significance of March 2023 in terms of speculative planning applications.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

### **SPE.40 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing providing an update to Economy Scrutiny on the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which was launched by government in April 2022. Ms Johnson advised that UKSPF was an allocated fund based on population size and a needs-based index. The authority had been awarded a total of £6,244,819 which was allocated as £962,714 to support adult numeracy and £5,282,105 for core UKSPF. Its primary goal was to build pride in place and increase life chances, the priorities being; community and place (a mixture of culture/communities/voluntary sector), supporting local businesses, and people and skills. The UKSPF programme was now ready to launch, pending approval from government.

In response to queries Mr Jaines-White and Ms Johnson clarified issues relating to measurement of outcomes, how the project's success would be evaluated, additional topics (to mathematics), strategies to reach 'hard to reach' learners, target-based payments, the project's impact on local qualifications and worklessness, supporting people in work and out of work, survey communication and responses, and the membership and governance of the partnership group.

The Chair looked forward to a further update.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That an update be brought to the panel as appropriate.

## **SPE.41 RIVERHEAD SQUARE**

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing on the above. Members noted the report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and was brought to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny and comment. Mr Jaines-White tabled a plan detailing the finalised version of the scheme depicting scaled down public art. He assured members that much of the scheme remained intact.

Members raised the following issues:

In addition to the report circulated with the agenda the Chair permitted the tabling of a plan at the meeting, allowing members time to consider it. He stressed that in future prior permission and adequate notice would be the norm.

The Chair and members were extremely disappointed that a number of elements of the design and members' suggestions from the panel's

workshop held in August, 2022 were not included. Mr Jaines-White confirmed that some features; nesting island, enhanced ecology and water planting, and public art and staging/canopy for events would be priced separately. It was anticipated that these would be unachievable within the £3.3m available. It was feared that including them at this stage would mean that the cost would be too high and the project would stall. However, should the initial works be achieved underbudget, then other elements may be able to be added. Utilities to support future events and features were included plus a fountain to improve water quality.

Members talked at length and with passion about their hopes and fears for the Riverhead Square. In summary the Chair reiterated that the panel generally supported the scheme of works but ultimately there were concerns about what would be achieved given the limitations now in place. He asked that future developments with the scheme be brought to the panel as appropriate.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be received.
- (2) That the panel's comments and support for proposals for regeneration of Riverhead Square be noted.

## **SPE.42 ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL – WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The panel considered a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) This report reflects on progress with the panel's work programme at the half-year stage and provides a formal opportunity for the panel to update its work programme as it considers appropriate.

The Chair was content that the panel was on track with its work programme. He noted members approval and reminded members that they could contact him should they have any issues of concern.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **SPE.43 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY**

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Assistant Chief Executive) tracking the recommendations of the Economy Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **SPE.44 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

There were no members' questions to the Portfolio Holder.

#### **SPE.45 CALLING-IN OF DECISIONS**

There were no formal requests from members to call in decisions taken at recent meetings.

There being no further business, and noting that there had been no need to exclude the press and public for any further consideration of the Freshney Place item, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.