

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 24 June 2021 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors Sayer (Chair), Farr (Vice-Chair), Blackwell, Botten, Dennis, Duck, Elias (Substitute) (In place of Black), Jones, Lockwood, Prew and Steeds

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen, Flower, Gaffney, Gillman, Moore, Ridge, Swann, C.White and N.White

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Black

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Non-pecuniary interests were declared as follows:

Councillor	Agenda Item	Nature of Interest
Dennis	9 – Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan	Member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Gaffney	9 – Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan	Former member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Flower	10 – Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Proposal	Employed by the Independent Pilots' Association, representing commercial pilots across the UK
N. White	10 – Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Proposal	President of the Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions

Councillor Elias questioned whether the Chair and Councillors Farr and Lockwood should declare interests in agenda item 8 (Local Plan Update) as they had submitted third party representations to the Planning Inspector during the public examination of the Local Plan and had therefore pre-determined their views. He questioned whether they were now conflicted and, if so, whether they should exclude themselves from future discussion to avoid the potential for decisions to be challenged.

The Chair confirmed that she was happy to declare that she had made representations to the public inquiry but observed that the matter was now with the Inspector and subject to due process.

Councillor Farr confirmed that Godstone Parish Council (of which he was an elected Member) had made representations to the public inquiry in respect of the proposed garden village development but he did not believe this compromised his position on the Planning Policy Committee when considering the Local Plan and saw no reason to exclude himself.

Councillor Lockwood considered that Members were entitled to have opinions about Council business while retaining an open mind when matters were being determined at committee meetings. She believed that her remit was to represent residents in her Ward and stated that her personal views about the Local Plan were immaterial.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 18TH MARCH 2021

These were confirmed as a correct record.

45. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 27TH MAY 2021

These were confirmed as a correct record.

46. FINANCE REPORT - MONTH 2 (21/22)

A report concerning the Committee's revenue budget and capital programme as at the end of May 2021 (month 2) was presented.

The report advised that the budget was provisional, pending the 2020/21 budget outturn to be presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee following the completion of the forensic review of the potential deficit by Grant Thornton (minutes of the 8th June 2021 Strategy & Resources Committee refer).

The provisional revenue budget of £1,188,000 had been adjusted by virements totalling £136,100 (resolution A below refers). An overspend of £23,000 was projected to cover the cost of a previously unforeseen public inquiry. It was confirmed that budgetary provision was not made as a contingency for the cost of possible planning inquiries, although this could be considered as a potential growth item as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process.

The scope for modelling likely future volumes of planning applications to inform future planning fee income budgets was discussed.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. relevant budget changes since approval of the 2021/22 budget at Full Council in February 2021 (paragraph 4 of the report) be approved, namely:

“The most significant reason for Planning Policy budget to be reset is to realign the relevant case workers to Planning (+£170.9k), and aggregation of legal costs to Legal Services (-£34.8k). Overall, the Planning Policy Committee budget has increased by c£136k.”

- B. the 2021/22 budget after recent budget virements be noted; and
- C. the Committee's forecast revenue and capital budget position as at month 2 (May 2021) be noted

47. PLANNING POLICY QUARTER 4 20/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were presented with an analysis of progress against the Committee's key performance indicators (KPIs) and risks for the fourth quarter of 2020/21. This identified risks in connection with the Local Plan and resourcing issues pending the outcome of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) peer review. The report also advised that the processes for extracting robust KPI data were still being developed and that data sets for certain indicators were currently unavailable.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- a pre-application advice service for householder applications would be reinstated from the 12th July;
- the PAS review should help identify the necessary resourcing requirements for the planning service, including solutions to current staffing shortfalls – the PAS report had now been received by the Executive Leadership Team and would be shared with Members;
- officers would investigate issues raised about the Council's website and associated communication services, i.e. the need to reinstate e-mail notifications of planning applications and planning appeals;
- an up to date suite of Supplementary Planning Documents was required to enable more objective assessments by the Planning Inspectorate when considering appeals, thus reducing the tendency for Planning Committee decisions to be overturned.

RESOLVED – that the Quarter 4 (2020/21) performance and risks for the Community Services Committee be noted.

48. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

A report was submitted which updated the Committee about the Local Plan process in light of the Inspector's preliminary findings and other matters.

Consultants had been engaged to undertake high level transport modelling regarding the capacity of Junction 6 of the M25 to help inform the Council's decision about whether to pause or withdraw the plan. It was now hoped that this work would be completed by the end of June 2021. The Inspector had accepted this extended timescale but, by the end of August, would consider whether a sound Plan could be achieved in a timely way and, if not, whether he should conclude the Examination. A special meeting of Committee in August was, therefore, likely to be required.

The report also updated the Committee about:

- national planning policy developments, namely the progress of the Planning Bill (aimed at improving the process for delivering new housing and infrastructure) and the First Homes initiative (a new model for shared ownership); and

- the progress of neighbourhood plan initiatives throughout the District (clarification would be sought regarding the position of the Dormansland and Lingfield Neighbourhood Plans as these were not mentioned within report).

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

49. CATERHAM, CHALDON AND WHYTELEAFE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Neighbourhood Plan had proceeded to a referendum throughout the relevant polling districts on the 6th May 2021. Of the 6923 ballots cast (38% turnout) 87% had voted ‘Yes’ to the question:

“Do you want the ... Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan ... to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

The Committee was therefore invited to ‘make’ (or adopt) the Plan to become part of the Council’s Development Plan. This would give full weight to the Plan in relevant planning decisions and would increase the neighbourhood proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy from 15% to 25%.

RESOLVED - that the Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan be made (adopted) to become part of the Tandridge District Council Development Plan.

50. GATWICK AIRPORT NORTHERN RUNWAY PROPOSAL - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DISTRICT

The Committee considered a report about Gatwick Airport Limited’s (GAL) intention to use the current standby (northern) runway, in addition to the main runway, as part of its routine operations. This reflected ‘scenario 2’ of GAL’s 2019 masterplan for future growth and would require the seeking of a Development Consent Order to obtain planning permission. A DCO application for this purpose was being prepared by GAL and a public consultation process was scheduled for the later in the year followed by a final DCO submission to the Planning Inspectorate early in 2022. The process would culminate in a public examination of the proposals and the Planning Inspector’s recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport for decision.

The report recommended that representations be made to GAL conveying the Council’s expectations for the northern runway consultation process; the need for GAL to explain the impact of additional flight capacity upon the District; and disappointment that GAL’s plans appeared to be incompatible with 2050 climate neutral objectives. Councillor Botten proposed amendments to the recommendations, namely:

- two additional resolutions (A and B below);
- addition of the words “and regrets” at the beginning of resolution C below, i.e.:

“The Council acknowledges and regrets Gatwick Airport Limited’s (GAL) decision to continue with the Development Consent Order to redevelop the northern runway as a second runway to increase capacity ...”

- the deletion of the following words from the end of Resolution E below:

~~“Whilst the Council is not against the use of planes for business and leisure and recognises the economic and social advantages, it is concerned about the environmental impacts, short and long term, that significant growth at Gatwick will have on the District.”~~

The Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) had been invited to submit representations to the meeting and a video recording of a statement from Sally Pavey (a CAGNE member) was duly replayed to the Committee. The statement urged the Council to oppose GAL’s growth proposals, asserting that the additional runway capacity would have significantly negative environmental impacts and that new ‘greener’ jobs were needed to create a more sustainable economy for the area, without a disproportionate reliance on Gatwick.

During the debate, it was suggested that the Council should not be submitting representations in isolation and should, instead, collaborate with neighbouring Local Authorities and benefit from expert advice which could be commissioned (via funding made available from GAL) more effectively as part of a joint approach. In response, the Chair advised that the Council had signed up to a joint agreement with other Councils to engage with GAL but considered that, given the timescales, it was important for the matter to be considered at this meeting from a Tandridge perspective. Other Members supported the case for Tandridge to submit its own representations prior to any multi-agency submission.

Other Members argued against the proposed amendments on the grounds that:

- there was no basis to the assertion that “*the case for airport expansion at Gatwick or anywhere else*” has not been made; and
- the representations from CAGNE were too one-sided and, notwithstanding the need to address environmental concerns, the Committee should consider more balanced arguments, including the operational advantages of the second runway; the relative fuel efficiency of modern aircraft; and the major contribution of the airport to the local economy, illustrated by the severely adverse impact of Gatwick job losses upon livelihoods and the welfare of households in the region.

Those in favour of the above mentioned amendments observed that the representations would align with the Council’s previous declaration of a climate change emergency and that there was no wish to seek the closure of the airport.

Councillor Botten’s amendments were seconded by Councillor Lockwood and, upon being put to the vote, were agreed by the majority of committee members.

RESOLVED – that the Council writes to Gatwick Airport Limited to make the following points:

1. Tandridge District Council has declared a Climate Emergency. It does not believe that the case for airport expansion is made, either at Gatwick or anywhere else, and expects the consultation process to set out clearly what that case is. The Council is concerned about the environmental impacts, short and long term, that significant growth will have on the District.
2. In the light of the impact of the pandemic on both working practices and the demand for air travel, the move to consultation on the conversion of the north runway is premature and cannot reflect a full understanding of those impacts.

3. The Council acknowledges and regrets Gatwick Airport Limited's (GAL) decision to continue with the Development Consent Order to redevelop the northern runway as a second runway to increase capacity. The Council expects that GAL will fulfil its obligation to consult with all those who live or work in the District, including those hard to reach groups such as those without access to the internet. The consultation needs to provide alternative opportunities for consultation responses to be made offline. The Council requests GAL to inform the Council of its proposals for achieving this.
4. The Council is also aware that the Future Airspace Implementation South ('FASI-S') is currently being progressed by the Civil Aviation Authority to increase capacity over the southern part of the UK. With the proposed increased traffic movements from the additional capacity at Gatwick, the Council requests that GAL explains the full impact of the changes on all parts of the District and, in particular, on those areas where traffic could be routed that have never been overflowed before, including the north of the District which has both significant residential populations and the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
5. The Council has adopted a Climate Change Strategy and endorses national proposals to reduce the use of fossil fuels and is therefore disappointed that GAL are seeking to increase the use of these fuels which does not seem to be compatible with the 2050 climate-neutral objectives.

51. ANY OTHER BUSINESS - SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S PROPOSALS FOR A GYPSY & TRAVELLER TRANSIT SITE

The Chair raised this matter to update Members following the previous day's meeting of the Surrey Leaders' Group. She advised that Surrey County Council (SCC) would be progressing its proposal to establish a transit site at the Pendell camp off Merstham Road, Bletchingley on the border with Reigate & Banstead. As SCC would be developing the site (which it also owned) it would submit a planning application to itself under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. The application was due to be submitted at the end of July 2021 with a view to the transit site to be operational 12 months later.

The Chair reflected the District Council's wish to be engaged and considered that SCC should allow the matter to be referred to (TDC's) Planning Committee as part of the Regulation 3 consultation process. She confirmed SCC's willingness to enable this and for a similar right of scrutiny to be given to Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. A meeting between the three Authorities was being arranged to agree the arrangements.

Members supported the view that SCC's proposals should be considered by the Planning Committee.

Rising 9.17 pm