

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 23rd September 2021 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sayer (Chair), Farr (Vice-Chair), Black, Blackwell, Caulcott (substitute) Duck, Lockwood, Prew and Steeds

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen, Bourne, Crane, Davies, Gaffney, Gillman, O'Driscoll, Pursehouse, Ridge, C.White, N.White and Wren

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Botten, Dennis and Jones

116. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Sir Nicholas White declared an interest in agenda item 5 (Gatwick Airport Consultations – Governance Arrangements for TDC responses) on the basis that he was president of the Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE).

117. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 26TH AUGUST 2021

These minutes were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair confirmed that the Planning Inspector had responded to the letter attached at Appendix C to the minutes (regarding Minute 99 - Local Plan update...). This had been published on the Council's website as 'ID 19'. The Council was considering its reply and, when drafted, it would come to this Committee for consideration.

118. GATWICK AIRPORT CONSULTATIONS - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TDC RESPONSES

Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) was preparing an application to the Secretary of State for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to allow use of the existing emergency runway for departures. A report was submitted which addressed the need to agree governance arrangements for submitting consultation responses on behalf of the Council in the context of the six stages of the DCO process, namely:

- a statutory 12-week consultation (9th Sept to 1st December 2021)
- DCO application submission to the Planning Inspectorate (July 2022)
- Acceptance of the application by the Planning Inspectorate (Aug 2022)
- Pre-examination preparation (Sept 2022 – Jan 2023)
- Examination conducted by the Planning Inspectorate (Jan – Jul 2023)
- Secretary of State review (June – Sept 2023)
- Earliest decision by the Secretary of State (Jan 2024)

The report explained that the Council would be required to make representations during the pre-examination and examination phases, including attendance at meetings convened by both GAL and the Planning Inspectorate; preparation of a Local Impact Report; input to a Statement of Common Ground; submission of representations during the examination; responses to the Planning Inspectorate's written questions; and attendance at the examination hearings.

While the Council's response to the initial statutory consultation was due to be considered by the Committee at its next scheduled meeting, subsequent submissions would need to be made within short timescales. Delegation arrangements were therefore sought to enable the Chief Executive and / or the Chief Planning Officer to make the necessary representations on the Council's behalf.

The Chair introduced the item by advising that GAL had now agreed that, in addition to scheduled visits to Lingfield, Caterham and Oxted, its mobile project office would also visit Burstow with the date and venue to be advised. It was also confirmed that GAL's consultation team had agreed to provide a separate briefing for Tandridge Councillors. Officers were seeking to arrange a date during October for this.

Officers commented on the significant workload implications for the Council associated with the consultation process. While the work would be led by the strategy team, other parts of the organisation (e.g. Development Management, Environmental Health and Emergency Planning) would also have to contribute, provisional allocations of working days for which had been identified for the respective areas. GAL would be providing £160,000 for a coordination service to assist the consultee authorities (which might also be available for staffing resources) but Chief Executives doubted whether this would be sufficient.

Various views were expressed during the debate, including:

- all Councillors should ensure that residents and Parish Councils were engaged in the consultation process
- the wide geographical distribution of consultation roadshows (as far away as Brighton) could dilute environmental objections from communities close to the airport
- the impact of greater volumes of airport related traffic on local roads (arising from an increase in passenger numbers) had been overlooked
- GAL's consultation process should not disadvantage those residents unable to engage via digital channels.

It was also clarified that, following representations, GAL would now be engaging with Parish Councils. The Committee considered this to be an important feature of the consultation process.

The report recommended that officer delegation arrangements be in consultation with Group Leaders. However, the Committee considered that, in view of Group Leaders' workloads, a Working Group of different councillors should be established for this purpose. It was agreed that the size of the Group should not be specified at this stage, but that Group Leaders be asked to nominate an appropriate number of Councillors for the role and that political balance would not apply.

RESOLVED – that

- A. the contents of the report regarding the progress made to date in the DCO process be noted;
- B. the response to GAL's 12-week consultation be taken to the 25th November 2021 Planning Policy Committee for agreement and submission;
- C. authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and / or the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with a Working Group of Members (the membership of which to be nominated by Group Leaders) to respond to future consultations and other forms of engagement from relevant stakeholders at various stages of the DCO process, so that such responses can be considered at the appropriate level and actioned in an agile way.

119. PLANNING POLICY QUARTER 1 (21/22) PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered an analysis of progress against its key performance indicators, together with an updated risk register for the first quarter of 2021/22.

RESOLVED – that the Quarter 1 (2021/22) performance and risks for the Planning Policy Committee be noted.

120. PLANNING TRANSFORMATION BUSINESS CASE – INTERIM REPORT

An interim report was presented regarding the first phase of the planning service transformation project. This explained that:

- work was underway to analyse the activities currently undertaken by Development Management staff with a view to informing future team structure, job titles, training needs, capacity and resilience
- a benchmarking exercise to compare performance against planning authorities of a similar size was in progress and would form part of the business case to be presented to the Committee's meeting on the 25th November 2021
- external reviews of the planning validation process and performance reporting would be undertaken (planning enforcement statistics and 'government live' planning application tables would be included in future performance reports)
- various staff training & development initiatives and planning related IT and website improvements were being pursued

- it was still intended to revise the Planning Protocol (a Member Working Group had been formed for this purpose) and establish an informal Planning Forum for Councillors.

The Chair reflected that the transformation project should help mitigate some of the risks highlighted in the performance report for the previous agenda item. Indicative costings were also presented and, during the debate, the need for the Committee to find savings within its budget envelope to fund the transformation work was discussed.

Officers referred to recent improvements to the planning sections of the website and agreed to summarise these in an e-mail to all Councillors, together with advice about how to navigate the respective pages.

The potential impact of the Environment Bill was discussed, and Officers acknowledged that the forthcoming Act would have significant implications for the planning process. Government guidance was still awaited and advice from Surrey County Council about how it might be able to assist Districts would be sought.

RESOLVED – that the interim report be noted.

Rising 8.15 pm