

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 23 March 2023 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sayer (Chair), C.Farr (Vice-Chair), Blackwell, Bloore, Booth, Botten, S.Farr, Gray, Jones, Prew and Steeds

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen and N.White

ALSO PRESENT (Virtually): Councillors Chotai, Gaffney, Gillman, Moore, Pursehouse and Swann

270. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 19TH JANUARY 2023

These minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

271. QUARTER 3 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING - PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

An analysis of expenditure against the Committee's £1,204k revenue budget for 2022/23, as at the end of December 2022 (Month 9) was presented. An overspend of £126k was forecast (a deterioration of £40k since Q2) mainly due to overspends on salaries; specialist recruitment; and commissioning consultants / legal advice. This was partially offset by other factors, including a surplus on planning application fee income. However, that surplus had deteriorated by £59k since Q2 and such income would need to be closely monitored in 2023/24.

Slippage of £2,085k in the Committee's capital programme was forecast due to the re-phasing of expected CIL contributions.

RESOLVED – that the Committee's forecast revenue and capital budget positions as at Quarter 3 / M9 (December) 2022 be noted.

272. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION RESPONSE

On 22nd December 2022, the Government began a ten-week consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy. These included updates to the National Planning Policy Framework; the approach to preparing National Development Management Policies; and policies to support levelling up. A report was submitted with a copy of the Council's response which had been submitted on 28th February 2023. The response confirmed support for some key ideas, while disagreeing with others.

The Government's response to the consultation process was awaited.

RESOLVED – that the consultation response at Appendix A to the report be noted.

273. SURREY HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY BOUNDARY REVIEW

Natural England had launched a statutory consultation on 7th March (closing on 13th June) regarding proposals to extend the boundary of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Council, as a statutory consultee, intends to prepare a response and consider the implications for locally valued landscapes.

A report was presented which explained Natural England's methodology for the proposed new AONB boundary, which represented a 25% increase over the current area, including an expansion of 28.19% (30,016 km²) in Tandridge. The four intended areas for expansion within the District were Caterham Woods (Evaluation Area (EA 8c); Woldingham Valleys (EA 9a), Limpsfield (EA 10c) and Godstone Hills (EA10a and 10b). However, nearly 66% of the land currently designated in the development plan as Areas of Great Landscape Value would fall outside of the extension area.

Upon introducing the report, Officers confirmed that Natural England would welcome a high level of scrutiny by consultees. The Chair encouraged Members to respond to the Head of Legal's recent e-mail which invited Members to identify areas of concern to help inform the Council's representations. During the debate, Members expressed disappointment regarding the omissions of Chelsham & Farleigh and Staffhurst Wood from the proposed new AONB area.

The Committee supported the report's recommendations for the Chief Planning Officer to prepare the Council's response (in consultation with the Planning Policy Working Group) with the assistance of landscape consultants.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the report be noted and the Chief Planning Officer, given the timescales involved, be authorised to prepare a formal response to the consultation, in collaboration with the Planning Policy Working Group and planning policy officers, and that the response should consider whether:
 - an appropriate extension boundary has been defined in Tandridge District as a Surrey Hills AONB for the future
 - any areas have been omitted that are worthy of AONB designation requiring a review of national AONB designation criteria which might support the inclusion of these areas
 - AONB boundary definition criteria or otherwise has led to exclusion of other areas that should be in the extended AONB and how this might be resolved;
- B. the Chief Planning Officer be authorised to:
 - (i) appoint landscape consultants up to a fee cap of £30k to support the preparation of the consultation response given the highly technical nature of the Boundary Variation Project and its detailed evidence; and

- (ii) undertake further work to consider the future of the Areas of Great Landscape Value currently identified in the Tandridge District development plan as potential candidate areas for AONB status but now omitted from Natural England's Surrey Hills AONB review proposal in the context of locally valued landscapes as provided for in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

274. SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL – HOUSING, HOMES AND ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY FOR SURREY

The Committee received a report on Surrey County Council's final draft Housing, Homes and Accommodation Strategy for Surrey, including a copy of the Council's response (re-produced at Appendix A to these minutes). This matter had also been considered by the Housing Committee on 16th March 2023.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted and the response to Surrey County Council be endorsed.

275. GATWICK AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER (DCO) CONSULTATION PROCESS UPDATE

Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) intended to seek consent for its Northern Runway Project which, as a 'nationally significant infrastructure project' required a DCO from the Secretary of State. The project included:

- repositioning the northern runway (12m north)
- expansion of both the north and south terminal buildings
- other airport facilities, including a waste facility and a new hangar
- new office space (9,000m² floorspace) and three new hotels
- 18,500 extra car parking spaces
- road improvement works
- environmental and mitigation measures.

The report before the Committee summarised the DCO process which, subject to GAL's DCO application being accepted by the Planning Inspectorate in June, would culminate in a public inquiry concluding in March 2024. A consortium of 10 local authorities in the vicinity of Gatwick, including Tandridge, had been established to ensure their interests were represented at local level. Notwithstanding a financial contribution from GAL, the consortium would be required to fund most of its legal costs, including the appointment of a parliamentary agent and a King's Counsel for representation at the public inquiry.

The report highlighted the potential impact of the project upon the District and advocated that the Gatwick Working Group (originally established in accordance with the Committee's decision on 23rd September 2021 – Minute 118 (21/22)) be reconvened to provide advice and guidance for officers for the duration of the DCO process. The Chair invited Group Leaders to inform Democratic Services of any changes to their representatives on the Group.

RESOLVED – that

- A. the Gatwick Airport Working Group of Members and Officers be reactivated to ensure adequate engagement with the DCO process and decision making on behalf of the Council going forward; and

- B. while the DCO process is underway, update reports on progress are made to each meeting of this Committee so that Members are aware of latest developments and can engage in the DCO process.

276. GATWICK AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER (DCO) CONSULTATION PROCESS - FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The press and public were excluded from this item in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) on the grounds that:

- i) the item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act; and
- ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Arising from discussion under Minute 275 regarding the Gatwick DCO process, the Committee considered measures aimed at ensuring value for money and limiting expenditure to that deemed essential to protect the interests of local residents, especially as Tandridge was one of the smaller and less wealthy councils in the Local Authority consortium. It was proposed that:

- Crawley Borough Council, as lead local authority, and each consortium working group, be advised that TDC cannot commit to further expenditure beyond that stated below until estimates of the total spend on the DCO process per authority are provided and processes for controlling expenditure are in place; and
- in the interim, up to £30k of expenditure on the DCO process be agreed, including expenditure incurred to date. This would also enable the Council to continue participating in the consortium until the next Planning Policy Committee in June 2023, when the matter can then be further considered, based on financial information of the costs to the consortium and its constituent member authorities which, hopefully, can be secured in time.

While accepting the need for the Council to contribute to the consortium given the impact of northern runway project upon Tandridge residents, the Committee supported the above proposals to counter the risk of exposure to potentially unlimited costs.

R E S O L V E D – that:

- A. the Committee endorses the approach to seeking to control expenditure on the Gatwick Airport DCO process as set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report;
- B. subject to C below, the Committee approves combined expenditure of up to £30k in the current financial year (2022/23) and until the 22nd June Planning Policy Committee in 2023/24 to allow for continued engagement with the consortium of local authorities, pending clarification on future expenditure with regard to the DCO process and improved financial controls being in place; and
- C recommendation C of the report (regarding the delegation of certain matters to the Chief Planning Officer and Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee) be approved.

277. LOCAL PLAN - LETTER TO THE INSPECTOR

The press and public were excluded from this item in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) on the grounds that:

- i) the item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act; and
- ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

In September 2022, the Council informed the Local Plan Inspector that it would not be sending any further monthly progress updates for the time being, but would resume upon further clarification of government policy. Those policy changes had been published by central government in December 2022 and reported to the Committee on 19th January 2023. A proposed way forward for Tandridge had since been prepared with advice from external consultants. This formed the basis of a draft letter to the Local Plan Inspector which was presented to the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED – that the letter, attached at Appendix B, be agreed and the Chief Executive be authorised to sign and send the letter to the Local Plan Inspector.

In accordance with Standing Order 25(3), Councillors Bloore and Prew wished it recorded that they voted against the above resolution.

Rising 9.00 pm