

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Ros Wyke (Chair)
Cllr Bill Revans
Cllr Dixie Darch

In attendance:

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Mike Rigby

1 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

No apologies were received.

2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Councillors present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor of a Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

SOMERSET COUNCILLOR	CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL
Mike Rigby	Bishop's Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Ros Wyke	Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3

Public Questions were received from:-

- David Redgewell – Public Transport
- Roger Foxwell – Local Transport Plan

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annexe A.

4 Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee Forward Plan - Agenda Item 4

The Head of Planning, Alison Blom-Cooper, introduced the Forward Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the forward plan and the following points were raised:-

- Mendip Local Plan Part II Site Allocations Review would be added to the February meeting.
- Clarification was given that the two CIL reports for the January meeting would be merged into one report.
- Nexus LDO would be added as a provisional item to the February meeting.
- Six-monthly update on the Somerset Local Plan would be added to the February meeting.
- Councillors queried the timescales for all the Neighbourhood Plans items listed on the forward plan.

The Head of Planning advised that the Sub-Committee was responsible for approving the local plans and clarified that once the referendum had taken place, officers had 8 weeks to take the local plans to the Sub-Committee for decision.

Resolved that the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee noted the Forward Plan.

5 Local Transport Plan - Programme Timescales and Governance - Agenda Item 5

The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport, Mike O'Dowd-Jones, introduced the report which sought the agreement from the Sub-Committee on the proposed timescales and internal governance processes for the Local Transport Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were pleased to see an integrated approach to the report.
- Concern was raised that Government guidance had not been received, but councillors assumed that officers would continue with the work and amend any details, if required, once the guidance had been received.
- Councillors were pleased to see that carbon reduction had been included.
- Councillors queried what area was covered by 'a place-based approach'.

The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport advised that the place-based approach would operate in a functional way and that the county would be divided and grouped into different types of place.

- Councillors queried funding and how much had been inherited from the District Councils with Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

The Strategic Manager for Highways and Transport advised that some work had been carried out on larger towns and that the District Councils had worked on rural plans and that officers would work on integrating those plans. The Service Manager for Transport Policy added that a report had been taken to Active England which identified that 49% of Somerset's population was covered by a LCWIP and that they had commissioned a piece of work for the whole county, focusing on rural connectivity, which was based on the LCWIP. Principle of strategic network planning. Clarification was given that the funding needed to be committed by December 2024.

Resolved that the Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee:-

- a) Approved the Local Transport Plan programme timescales outlined in Appendix A; and
- b) Approved the governance process, as set out in Appendix B.

6 Mendip Local Plan Part II Site Allocations Review - Update Report - Agenda Item 6

The Principal Planning Policy Officer, Andre Sestini, gave the Sub-Committee a verbal update on the Mendip Local Plan.

The Sub-Committee discussed the item and the following points were raised:-

- The Principle Planning Policy Officer gave the following update:-
 - Officers had applied to vary the court order to request the timetable be extended.
 - Rather than bringing a written report to the Sub-Committee, officers had met with legal counsel and deemed it be more prudent to use the time to prepare the application ready to submit to court before the end of December 2023.
 - The sites listed were more than expected.
 - Officers had to re-digitise the maps which had led to delays.
 - 140 sites had been assessed following a thorough process.
 - 90% were deemed to have an impact on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
 - The consultation would start after the report had been taken to the February meeting.

- Councillors had attended two of the workshops on the site allocations and had found them to be a very helpful and an open exercise. Officers were praised for making the workshops transparent.
- Concern was raised on the cost of taking the application to court.
The Head of Planning advised that the cost was unknown yet.
- Councillors queried what the plan was to engage with City, Town and Parish Councils and the Local Community Networks (LCNs).
The Head of Planning advised that there was a set guide on who was included in the consultation document, but they were happy to review and look to include LCNs.
- Councillors highlighted that it would be a good opportunity to use this process as a guide on how other consultations would engage with consultees, especially for when the Local Plan goes out to consultation.
- Councillors requested that officers shared the consultation document with councillors for input and that they could include the LCNs.

Resolved that the Planning and Transport Sub-Committee noted the verbal update.

(The meeting ended at 10.45 am)

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CHAIR