

HOUSING, ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 20th December 2012 at 2.00pm in the Severn Room, Business Development Centre, Stafford Park, Telford.

PRESENT: Councillors C. Turley (Chair), F. Bould, E. Carter, C. Mason, C. Mollett, J. Seymour; Co-optees D. Johnson, S. Reynolds.

Also attending: M. Whitfield, Strategic Waste Team Leader; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

HEISC-1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. K. Tomlinson.

HEISC-2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

HEISC-3 VALUE AND MARKET TRENDS OF RECYCLABLE WASTE STREAMS

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and invited the Strategic Waste Team Leader to give a presentation on the value and market trends of recyclable waste streams which was related to the work that the Committee would do next year looking at the detailed evaluation of a Council owned Transfer Station.

The Strategic Waste Team Leader gave a presentation aimed at providing information on the viability and factors affecting the value of waste. This highlighted the following points:

- Clips from waste journals and industry announcements illustrated the volatility and susceptibility of the waste market to global economic conditions over the past 4 years, notably the dramatic fall in demand and prices towards the end of 2008 with the onset of the global recession. This had driven a need for additional storage capacity and increased shipping costs. Prices had recovered although plastics and mixed cans had not reached pre-2008 levels. More recently the dip in demand for plastics from China and the ban on plastic imports to Malaysia had resulted in another dip in plastics prices. It was noted that the last four years had been a period of recession and the bidders for the waste services contract were now looking 20 years ahead.
- A number of tables and graphs illustrated the trends in the average price per tonne of recyclates currently collected in Telford & Wrekin at the kerbside (mixed glass, paper, card, mixed cans, plastics, textiles and footwear); the increases in landfill

tax announced by the government between 2012/13 - 2014/15; examples of gate fees; costs per tonne of landfill; costs per tonne of food waste treatments; the cost of materials separation; the cost per tonne for bulking station handling; the price per mile per tonne of bulk transport; the approximate miles transported to re-processors for each type of waste - all of which affected the potential income from each waste stream.

- In the current market once delivery and handling costs were taken into account, there was a cost to recycling mixed glass and card, paper was very low value, and other waste streams generated varied levels of income. The value of textiles was high, but the volumes collected from the Councils kerbside collection service in Telford & Wrekin were low. Prices for plastics and mixed cans had plummeted to no or negative value in late 2008. There had been a recovery but with another dip in plastics during the second half of 2011. Under the Council's existing waste contract, the contractor makes money on materials whose value covers the cost of handling and transport, and bears the cost of materials which do not cover the cost of handling and transport. There is thus little incentive for the contractor to increase the recycling (and divert from landfill) of materials which cost money (mixed glass and card) or have little value (paper).
- Based on published prices and current volumes, the potential income from the combined waste streams from kerb-side collections in Telford & Wrekin was projected as approximately £60k per month after delivery and handling charges totalling around £79k per month.
- Over 12,000 tonnes per year of plastic film and food currently go into the landfill (black) bins in Telford & Wrekin which could be introduced into the recycling service.
- Big companies such as the bidders for the waste services contract use volume to drive out competitive prices with reprocessors. This would be more difficult for the Council to negotiate because of the smaller volumes of waste produced in Telford & Wrekin, and a drop in the market could make the Council vulnerable. To "play the market" the Council would need storage space for the waste, and someone to watch the market so materials could be sold at the optimum time. Additional storage space at a Transfer Station would increase capital costs.

A number of questions were asked during the presentation and the following detailed information was provided:

- The paper prices were for "news & pams" (newspapers and pamphlets) as collected at the kerbside and not for printed paper such as the Council or a business may dispose of.
- Plastics included trays and bottles, but not plastic film. Plastics had the widest fluctuation in price because it was linked to oil prices. Bidders were being encouraged to recognise this so that the Council is protected against fluctuations and carries no risk. However, the market for plastics is developing and as technology improves the market develops which in turn stimulates further investment. Individual polymers – such as High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) – can be separated and sold to any company pressing plastics, or can be melted down with other plastics, or taken back to the oil refinery. Recycled materials are now starting to be seen in food-grade plastic bottles.

- The Council offers a kerbside collection for textiles which have a high value, but the volumes collected are low (10 tonnes), possibly due to the fact people tend to give old clothes to charity shops. Some Members thought the Council should do more to promote the textile kerbside collection as they had not been aware that it was available, and this would increase tonnage and potential income, but other members said that the service was already detailed in existing information.
- Mixed glass currently has no value. There is a price differential between colours, and some plants have invested heavily in colour sorting although the differential could get lost in other costs and overall values were low. In Telford & Wrekin glass is collected mixed and is not separated at the kerbside. Usage of recycled glass is developing, for example on road surfaces or white lines.
- Telford & Wrekin collects mixed cans, but different metals have different prices and some authorities collect separately. The price of steel and mixed cans was very close, but aluminium has a much higher value and there was potential to generate more income by separating aluminium at source. However there is a cost to separating the steel from the aluminium.
- The average cost per tonne for bulking station handling was around £3 and average price per mile per bulked tonne is around 29 pence which is linked to fuel costs. Transport costs and emissions depend on the distance to the reprocessor and this would be determined by the bidders – they would know that selecting reprocessors closer to home would drive down costs.
- Card has a low value because it is at the bottom of the recycling cycle when fibre is degraded. Card quality is variable - there has been a shift to replacing plastic food packaging with card but food cartons are then mixed with lower quality card. The very bottom of the cycle (e.g. corrugated cardboard) can be cheaper to dispose of than to recycle. However, there are still many new applications for card, for example parcel shelves in cars.
- There is still a lot of recyclable material such as paper put in black bins, and other materials such as food waste and film which are not currently recycled but which could be in future. Food would require an additional collection. Food waste would cost around £35 per tonne to treat in an anaerobic digester (AD) but this would be less than around £90 per tonne to landfill - the differential would need to be enough to pay for a collection service. AD is a good option for food because it is a “wet” process and generates energy, whereas incineration generates little energy because of the amount consumed to drive off moisture before incineration occurs. Film could be collected using the existing service if a reprocessor was able to take it. Mixed film with the currently accepted plastics could increase landfill diversion but the current income for plastics could be significantly reduced by mixing with film. Diverting plastic film and food waste from residual waste would save money or potentially generate income. The opportunity to increase textile tonnage had already been discussed. All recycling would help the Council to save on landfill tax which will increase by £8 per tonne per year to 2014/15.

Following the presentation, a number of other questions and issues were raised by members as follows:

- Members noted there was no mention of the potential use of the Rail Freight Terminal or rail freight costs in the transport costings. Members were told that the

bidders had been encouraged to consider the RFT as part of their solutions but it remained to be seen whether bids involving the terminal would come forward, and scope is limited by how few reprocessor plants are currently rail linked. Some members felt very strongly that use of the RFT and a co-located bulking station on Council owned land in Hortonwood should be considered by the Council as part of the waste services procurement process. The Council should keep hold of the land at the terminal until this issue is resolved. The aim should be to look at multi-modal transport, and linking the RFT to other terminals around the country to take pressure off roads as much as possible. An advantage of the RFT was that waste could be stored and held in sidings at the terminal until it was ready to be moved. Members felt the Council needed to be liaising with Schenkers about this, especially looking at the longer term 20 year view. It was further suggested that the Cabinet member should also be looking towards the Local Enterprise Partnership, especially Shropshire, to use the RFT. It was suggested that scrutiny has a role in bringing this together.

- Members asked the Strategic Waste Team Leader whether the Council had a view on the ownership of a Transfer Station. As an officer he was not able to comment but said it would be unusual for a Council to have its own Transfer Station and there were many considerations but both options would be considered.
- Members wanted to know whether the Council had scrutinised TWS' accounts over the last 4-5 years to find out how much profit they made from Telford & Wrekin's waste. The officer replied that TWS accounts had been looked at, but as there is a sub-contract arrangement with Pink Skips, and because of the way the accounts are reported, it was not possible to extrapolate exact figures. A significant amount of work had been done with expert advice on the payment mechanisms for the future contract to avoid unforeseen consequences. Members felt it was important for the financial information about TWS to be available to scrutiny in order to make recommendations.
- Members wanted to know how the opportunities for income from commercial waste would be factored into an assessment of a Council-owned Transfer Station, and whether the Council was influencing bidders to look at commercial waste opportunities. The officer replied that the bidders had been told that the Council would be happy for a Transfer Station to be used to handle commercial wastes collected by the contractor, and for a CRC type facility to accept commercial wastes to be proposed. Members pointed out that a lot of trade waste currently goes to landfill, and this should be factored into the evaluation of the waste services solutions. For example, members suggested that the Council could have a role in helping small businesses to negotiate collection services - small businesses pay for a regular collection service regardless of whether their bin is full or not, so there could be the potential for shared collection points or smaller bins. The Council could sell this as a service and the waste could be merged with the domestic recycling waste and sold on.

At the end of the discussion, Members said that for the Council to carry out a proper evaluation of a Council transfer and bulking facility, work must already have been done and be on-going to identify the costs and potential income in order to evaluate

the option against the bidder solutions. It was agreed that another meeting would be held early in the New Year, and that the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Co-operative Council should be invited with officers to present this information and answer questions.

RESOLVED

That a Committee meeting be held early in 2013 and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Co-operative Council be invited.

HEISC-4 WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer had circulated a short briefing note on the items suggested for the Committee's work programme for members to consider. Notes from the West Midlands Scrutiny Chairs' Network had also been circulated, along with an e-mail giving feedback from Cllr. Carter who had attended the meeting with the Scrutiny Officer.

There was a discussion about the suggested topics for the work programme and the following was agreed:

- That a meeting would be held for members to receive a briefing on the Community Infrastructure Levy. Members noted that this was a matter which had been referred to scrutiny by Cabinet and there was therefore a duty for scrutiny to look at this. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the same meeting as the waste issues discussed earlier in the meeting.

- Cllr. Carter provided feedback from the West Midlands Scrutiny Network which he had attended on 6th December. Cllr. Simon Hackett, Cabinet Member for Housing at Sandwell MBC had presented the Council's Housing Stock Policy. Sandwell were in a different position to Telford & Wrekin in that they had their own Council housing stock, but the Council was implementing some innovative strategies which Cllr. Carter felt it would be interesting to explore in Telford & Wrekin. Cllr. Carter highlighted a number of issues which he felt the Committee should look at including the role of the Cabinet Member and Council in developing relationships with the Registered Social Landlords and Housing & Communities Agency; the release of land for housing development; tackling over-crowding and under-occupancy, linked to the housing benefit changes; meeting the demand for bungalows; working with private landlords; the opportunities for non-traditional build; the opportunities for Council owned stock. A further presentation had been given by the LGA on housing policy and the Autumn Statement, which had highlighted the expanded role and flow of funding for the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and Cllr. Carter suggested the Committee explore what the Council was doing to develop the relationship with the LEP, and how the Housing Economy & Regeneration Board was being developed. There was a discussion about how these issues could be tackled and the following was agreed;
 - a) The Scrutiny Officer would draft a list of questions for approval by the Committee about the strategic issues discussed which would be put to Cllr.

Charles Smith as Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development at the Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 18th January.

- b) Scrutiny members should be encouraged to attend the welfare benefit training sessions during February and March, and to send in questions in advance which would be responded to during the sessions.
 - c) Following the training sessions, the Scrutiny Chairmen would meet to discuss all the scrutiny suggestions relating to the welfare reforms to decide which Committee would lead each strand of work as there was the potential for duplication in looking at the impact of the housing benefit reforms. The Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee would then scope further work on housing issues, potentially involving the HCA and RSLs.
- Scrutiny of the waste procurement process would proceed as discussed in the previous agenda item.

The meeting ended at 4.00pm.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....

HOUSING, ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee held on Friday, 1st November 2013 at 10.00am in the Large Meeting Room, Wellington Library, Wellington, Telford.

PRESENT: Councillors C. Turley (Chair), E. Carter, C. Mason.

Also attending: Cllr. C. Smith, Cabinet Member Housing, Development & Borough Towns Development; T. Keever, Home Improvement Team Leader; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

HEISC-5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs. S. Bentley, C. Mollett, R. Sloan, J. Thompson, K. Tomlinson and Co-optees D. Johnson and S. Reynolds.

HEISC-6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

HEISC-7 REVIEW OF EMPTY PROPERTIES AND ROGUE LANDLORDS

The Chair said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and ask questions about the September Cabinet report on Empty Properties and Rogue Landlords, the information gathered to date by scrutiny and to plan further scrutiny work.

The Home Improvement Team Leader summarised the Cabinet report and made the following points:

- There were around 400 long-term (6 months +) empties in the borough – this was a rolling number as properties come in and out of occupation.
- The report set out a number of recommendations for Cabinet
 - capital allocation of £150k to help bring empties in Sutton Hill back to use
 - the establishment of a Landlord Accreditation Scheme
 - delegated authority to officer to serve Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) or Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)
 - use of Enforced Sales Procedure on empties where there is a minimum £1,000 outstanding debt.
- The report listed some of the main reasons why properties were empty, often for personal reasons which could be very emotional. The HIA first response was always support and encouragement. Since publication of the report, there had been some positive feedback to letters sent to owners of empties. A few owners said they were pleased that the HIA had contacted them because they had not known what to do or where to go for help – one was the owner of a long-term

empty. The HIA was working with them to support and encourage them, but there was no magic wand – bringing empties back to use could be difficult and complex and take a very long time. Cllr. Mason said any progress was good, and Cllr. Carter said he was pleased the Council was trying to deal with these issues.

- The Landlord Accreditation Scheme was described in the report. This would be a voluntary scheme. The aim was to raise standards, support good landlords and connect Council services and tenants with accredited landlords. It was also about educating tenants, getting tenant feedback and having a database of accredited landlords for tenants to use. The work would be done jointly with the Housing Options team who deal with tenants, and the HIA who deal with the property element. Cllr. Carter asked how rogue landlords were identified and the Team Leader said it was usually from tenants.
- In terms of financial assistance owners could access Empty Homes loans of £5k-£15k for repairs to bring properties to the Decent Homes standard for renting out at affordable rents. The Council could either refer owners direct or carry out a schedule of works in support of the owner's application.
- The HIA linked into the Housing Action Team (HAT) and other Council services to co-ordinate appropriate support and action. The first course of action was always encouragement – there are often emotional reasons why an owner has left a property empty - but the HAT can use enforcement powers (serve Section 215 notices) or Enforced Sales. EDMOs or CPOs would only be used as a last resort because of the complexity and cost.
- It was key for the Council to bring the empties back to use to generate income from the New Homes Bonus. The New Homes Bonus is paid on new homes and empties which have been turned around. The amount is calculated from Council Tax Base data submitted to DCLG each October (the number of taxable properties plus new properties minus empties). For each property brought back to use the Council would receive around £1100 per year for 6 years.

A number of points were raised and discussed:

- Cllr. Carter raised an issue with a property in his ward which belonged to a housing association but the tenant was not looking after the property and the overgrown garden was affecting private neighbours. Cllr. Mason said the walkabouts in his ward with housing association staff were useful for spotting these kinds of problems. The Team Leader said members should report this sort of issue because the Home Improvement Agency may be able to work with other departments and use enforcement powers.
- The Team Leader suggested a useful issue for scrutiny would be to look at how to prioritise the empties for work. Cllr. Carter said the focus should be on empties which are easy to get back to use in order to maximise financial gain. The Team Leader said there needed to be a balance between properties which were the easiest to get back to use and those which cause the most blight to neighbourhoods. She emphasised again that it was not easy to get properties back to use and it would take time.
- Cllr. Carter asked about Rough Park House and Cllr. Smith said the building was listed and of historic value but the owner was absent and it was being looked at. Wrekin Housing Trust was looking to build around it. The Chair said this had been

discussed at the last meeting and there was information in the minutes.

- The Chair pointed out that the number of empties by ward in Appendix A of the Cabinet report was a snap shot in time and would change.
- The Chair asked members if they had any questions about the Targeted Work Flow chart in Appendix 2 but there were none.
- Cllr. Carter welcomed the work that was taking place and felt it was important because one empty property could blight a whole neighbourhood.
- The Chair said he understood that the work was still in the early stages but that the team had come a long way in 4 months.
- Cllr. Mason asked specifically what had been achieved so far and whether there were any examples of empties that had been brought back to use. The Team Leader said none had been brought back yet but gave examples of two properties which had been blights but repairs were in progress so that they were getting ready to come back to use or to come to market. Cllr. Mason said it would be good for the public to know that the Council was doing something.
- Cllr. Carter requested updates to come to the Committee so members could monitor the flow of properties. Cllr. Smith said there would be a report to Cabinet every 12 months and that he held regular meetings with the Team Leader to monitor progress. He said the letter had pushed things into action. The Team Leader said it was not always easy to turn a property around - there was story behind every property and quite often there were emotional issues that had to be handled very sensitively so it was not a quick turnaround. Cllr. Carter said it could be difficult with houses in probate where there were multiple owners and the Team Leader agreed there was one such case in Sutton Hill now. Cllr. Smith said probate could take a long time. Cllr. Carter said the Council needed to be in a position of saying what it was doing and why.
- The Revenues service had inspected properties which had been empty and exempt from Council Tax until April 2013 to see if they were still empty because since the removal of the discount owners had no incentive to notify the Council that the property was empty. The Team Leader said this was good work, but it would not pick up all the empties and some had already been found that were not on the list. For this reason any work scrutiny could do on helping identify empties would be useful.
- The Chair drew members' attention to Appendix A3 which summarised the information gathered by the Committee including the Stockton scrutiny report and the Welsh Assembly report on the private rented sector. The Scrutiny Officer explained that the summary highlighted case studies of work in other authorities on bringing empty properties back into use and tackling rogue landlords and members may want to suggest ideas to the service area or look at some of the case studies in more detail to see whether they would benefit Telford & Wrekin.
- Cllr. Carter asked whether Manor Heights was included in the list of identified empty properties and Cllr. Smith said it was not but it was being worked on. The Team Leader said it highlighted some of the issues with empties – this was a massive building with massive issues which required a massive amount of investment to bring back to use. Cllr. Carter asked if any funding would be available via the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Cllr. Smith said this was being explored but the funding was tied up in such a way that it was difficult to unlock for residential projects. In future 40% of the new homes bonus would be

top sliced and allocated via the LEP and this would be looked at to see how funding could be accessed. Cllr. Carter suggested that all efforts should be made to see if funding for Manor Heights could be accessed via the LEP. Cllr. Smith said the Council did not have the money to CPO the building, and the other authorities in the LEP – Herefordshire and Shropshire - would need to approve investment decisions. Over £2m was needed to get the building back to use. Cllr. Carter said the Council should highlight the problem to DCLG and make a direct approach to Eric Pickles.

The Chair opened a discussion about scrutiny work in the light of the discussion, and whether the Terms of Reference and schedule of activity agreed at the last meeting needed to be revised. A number of ideas were put forward:

1. Contact Stockton for more information about the EDMOs - how they had worked and what they cost.
2. Incentives for landlord accreditation schemes. The Cabinet report set out a number of ideas, but it would be useful for scrutiny to look at how other authorities had incentivised landlords, and possibly the option of joining a regional or national scheme. It was agreed that an update from Sandwell would be useful.
3. How to raise awareness through local networks. The Chair updated members on his discussion with officers in the Community Engagement Team who had made a number of suggestions about potential links into communities, but also suggested members should consider their approach carefully so that they do not raise unrealistic expectations. Members agreed that scrutiny should look at how the Council can work with Town and Parish Councils on this issue and that members would visit Town and Parish Councils in the areas with the highest concentration of empties (e.g. Cuckoo Oak, Ketley and Oakengates) to discuss their ideas and views on how to work together. It was also agreed that members would visit resident or community groups in similar areas to discuss the issue.
4. The suggestion at the previous meeting to contact other organisations such as utility companies about sharing information about empty properties had not been progressed. It was agreed that Severn Trent would be approached to find out if this was possible.
5. There was a discussion about how the owners of empty flats above shops are identified. The Team Leader said the owner could be identified from the land register, but if there is no forwarding address there is no way of knowing where the owner is or how to contact them and Cllr. Carter agreed this had been a problem historically.
6. The Scrutiny Officer would chase up copies of the presentation material from the Shelter conference on Tackling Rogue Landlords.
7. As already discussed, it would be useful for scrutiny to look at criteria for prioritising empties – there were 400 properties and limited resources so there had to be some way of prioritising. The Scrutiny Officer reminded members that Stockton had

developed a score card and recommended a number of properties to focus on and this may be worth looking at.

8. The Terms of Reference would be amended to read 97% of empty properties are “privately owned”, rather than “owned by private landlords”. The activity schedule would be updated to take account of what had been agreed at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the scope of the scrutiny review of empty properties be updated and implemented as agreed in the meeting.

HEISC-8 WORK PROGRAMME AND CHAIR’S UPDATE

Members considered a suggestion from Cllr. Mason that the Committee should look at the introduction of 20mph speed limits outside schools. Members considered a statistics on the number of children injured in road accidents across the borough, and comparisons of accidents involving children outside three schools before and after the introduction of 20mph speed limits and the reasons for the accidents. This no accidents had been caused by speeding vehicles but a number of accidents had been caused by parked cars.

Members agreed that the suggestion should be adopted into the work programme, and incorporated into the review of Car Parking Enforcement as so many of the accidents related to parked cars.

The next meeting on 15th November was noted to consider the consultation process for the local plan Shaping Places.

The meeting ended at 11.25am.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....

Shaping Places Consultation – position statement for 15th November 2013 Scrutiny meeting

Once adopted in 2015, Shaping Places will be the new Local Plan for the borough, setting out the amount, type and location of development in the borough up to 2031.

There are a number of key stages in the process of developing the plan, including consulting on a Strategy & Options document which took place in June and July 2013. The document sought views on the proposed strategy for development which would then be used to inform the Local Plan. This work is currently in progress and there will be a further consultation in Spring 2014 on the contents of the draft plan, including the allocation of sites.

The purpose of this note is respond to a number of points raised by Scrutiny, including:

- Consultation process to date
- Analysis of feedback – how many, who, what did they say, any gaps?
- How the feedback will influence detailed proposals
- The proposed consultation process for the detailed proposals including with partners
- Key risks for the Council
- How the Strategic Housing Market Assessment feeds into the Plan

A subsequent report has also been requested once the detailed options proposals are available. This has been interpreted as the site allocation options which are expected to be available for comment in April 2014. However, given the nature of the above enquires, it is proposed to bring back to Scrutiny in January 2014 the consultation plan for the Spring consultation to ensure it addresses the points raised. It is proposed to do this in January 2014.

Consultation process to date

In accordance with being a Co-operative Council, engagement in the plan making process is on-going and not confined to the two formal 6 week periods before and after the production of the draft local plan. To date this has included:

- Early 2012: public engagement - road shows, competition, on-line forum, press releases and questionnaires gathering views on what people considered the local plan needed to address
- Mid-late 2012: targeted engagement sessions to assist development of the Strategy & Options Document
- Early 2013: pre-consultation targeted engagement sessions, seeking feedback on broad contents of Strategy & Options document, reflecting how earlier comments were being addressed
- 10 June - 26 July 2013: formal consultation on the Strategy & Options document – 2 public open sessions, one-to-one meetings with Parishes and Town Councils, email contact with all 450 members of Telford & Wrekin Councils Community Panel, session with Young Persons Forum, direct contact with 1652 consultees registered on data-base including 1195 letters to statutory consultees, Twitter & Facebook campaign, Radio Shropshire interview, Your Voice article and advertising in public facing Council buildings (leisure centres, community centres, First Points & libraries).

The shaping places website www.telford.gov.uk/shapingplaces is kept up-to-date to ensure people understand the process and opportunities to comment and continue to be involved.

Analysis of feedback – how many, who, what did they say?

In early 2012, 365 responses were received from the general public and organisations. Headline messages received included: *the importance of green space, attracting businesses to create jobs, the need for more independent shops and encouraging more sustainable forms of transport (walking, cycling, public transport).*

Taking into account the issues raised by the public, subsequent targeted engagement involved: Ward Members, Parish & Town Councils, Developers & Agents, Telford Business Board, Local Strategic Partnership, Homes & Communities Agency and Internal T&WC services (Highways, School provision, Housing, Business, Property, Social Care, Environmental Maintenance). Key messages included: *balancing benefits of growth to local economy with protecting open space, maintaining infrastructure and having adequate public transport (Parish/Town Councils), need for broad mix of housing, viable communities and retention of local identity (Ward members), certainty from the plan to allow investment in sites (House builder), knowing the location and amount of future development ensures services can be planned to provide needs (West Mercia Police), opportunities for senior executives to live in borough (Telford Business Board), need for plan needs to reduce inequality between communities (PCT/Health & Wellbeing Board) and help manage land assets (HCA).*

Information gathered informed the contents of the Strategy & Options document. Details were also shared with other service areas to assist their service planning (e.g. public transport).

During the June-July consultation, 1471 comments were received from 158 consultees, including representatives of larger groups/parishes. A full list of consultees, along with their comments is available from the on-line portal at www.telford.gov.uk/shapingplaces. In general, a wide range of consultees responded, including members of the public, parishes, housebuilders, local businesses and statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and English Heritage. It was noted that a number of people that provided verbal feedback at the open sessions did not follow this up in writing. While their comments were recorded and are being taken into account, they have not been included in the response figures and will not constitute a formal representation.

Key messages from the consultation include:

Vision: Overall support but a need to better evidence the 200,000 population projection, more emphasis on green infrastructure (including ecological considerations) and on tourism and culture

Scale of growth: general support for proposed growth but with need to justify option 3 (26,500) with appropriate evidence. Questions were also raised regarding the achievability of this scale of growth and its potential impact on green spaces. Communities potentially affected by development including those in the fringe (such as Eyton and Wappenshall) raised concerns for the scale of growth. Comments also suggested that option 3 lacked an economic dimension. Also developers challenged the delivery of committed development – proposing that not all existing commitments will come forward and be delivered and therefore the need to consider SHLAA sites to address this shortfall.

Spatial distribution : broad support given for option 3. Comments confirmed the importance of the careful strategic phasing of development to ensure that delivery of existing urban sites and achievement of priorities are not jeopardised by the development of greenfield sites in the urban fringe.

Policy: general support for a more flexible, criteria based policy approach to most topic areas. Comments reinforced the identified need to strengthen business development opportunities in centres and villages, utilising brownfield land and providing a mix of housing which meets a range of local needs.

Gaps?

Through-out the process, the councils Community Engagement Team, PR and Equalities Officer have been involved and, in accordance with the Cabinet approved Statement of Community Involvement, methods employed to reach all members of the community.

The value of on-going engagement is that there is always scope to learn from earlier experiences and build upon the positives. For example, the Young Persons Forum session was particularly encouraging and further involvement of schools is welcomed. During plan preparation, the Environment & Planning Policy Team have accommodated around 10 work experience students and seen the benefit of involving young people who's future will be influenced by the plan.

It is appreciated that the very nature of the Local Plan may mean that it is difficult to digest by a non-technical audience. While every effort was made to make the Strategy & Options document user friendly, the challenge was to balance this with the need to meet the statutory requirements and get the plan to the next stage, the ultimate goal being to have an adopted plan in 2015. A summary leaflet was also produced.

The team are open to suggestions and will continue to engage with community advisors to ensure information continues to be accessible.

How the feedback will influence detailed proposals

These comments are now being considered in the preparation of the draft plan, along with the findings from evidence studies and the sustainability appraisal. The Council also has to ensure the plan is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and supported by evidence to ensure it is found sound at the Examination stage.

While each comment received has been acknowledged, it has not been possible to respond to each point raised. However, should anyone wish to receive feedback on a specific comment then they can make contact with the team. Likewise, the team are always willing to attend meetings. Since the close of the consultation, talks have been given to a number of community groups.

A Statement of Public Participation will also accompany the draft Local Plan which will provide details of the consultation, comments received and how they have been taken into consideration in the plan.

The proposed consultation process for the detailed proposals including with partners

Work is currently underway in producing the draft Local Plan. A report will be taken to Cabinet in December 2013 to provide an update on the approach to the plan, taking into account the comments received. This will also include information on the approach to Site Allocations which will be consulted on in the Spring 2014.

In terms of the proposed consultation process, it is planned to continue the approach currently taken, engaging with the wide range of partners previously referred to and taking on board suggested improvements. As the next stage will involve details of potential site allocations, it is considered that this may attract more interest as people will be able to relate to it better compared to broad locations which were included in the Strategy & Options document.

It is proposed to bring the consultation plan for the Spring consultation to Scrutiny in January 2014 to ensure it addresses the points raised during this Scrutiny review.

Key risks for the Council

Ensuring the plan is produced in accordance with the statutory consultation process, reduces the risk of non-conformity with the regulations. The approach taken has gone over and above this to ensure engagement is on-going and in accordance with being a Co-operative Council. Engagement with relevant community engagement professionals also ensures that the process is inclusive and accords with equality requirements.

How the Strategic Housing Market Assessment feeds into the plan

The NPPF requires the Council to “...plan for housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community”. The plan should “...identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required”.

To establish this level of need or requirement over the plan period up to 2031, the Council commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to update the one which had been completed in 2010. The SHMA:

- Estimates future population and household size and profile by age and type
- Analyses past and current housing market trends and factors which affect demand and supply
- Indicates the type of housing required e.g. affordable (social and affordable rent), intermediate (shared ownership) and Market (owner occupier), taking into account the needs of particular groups such as families, young people, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, etc.

Completing a SHMA takes time due to the amount of data that needs analysing. It is envisaged that it will be complete by the end of the year so that the findings can inform the emerging Local Plan.

The Strategy & Options document was able to draw on the 2010 study and sought comments on the general approach to housing policy rather than specific figures. For example, people were asked if they agreed with the proposed approach to include a policy for mixed housing or separate affordable housing targets rather than a single borough-wide one. The draft Local Plan will seek comments on actual draft policies which will have been informed by the SHMA. This will include affordable housing percentages.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this note has been to explain to Scrutiny the nature of the Shaping places consultation process to date and how the feedback will influence future proposals. As a Co-operative Council, engagement in the plan making process has been ongoing with a number of opportunities for the community to get involved. While response rates have been positive, it is recognised that due to the nature of Local Plan material, it is not always accessible to a non-technical audience and steps have and will continue to be made to improve response rates, taking advice from the community engagement team.

It is considered that the next stage in Spring 2014, involving actual site proposals may help people to relate to the plan and encourage their participation. A consultation plan will be brought to Scrutiny in January 2014 to assist this process.

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