

Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **4 November 2022**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Heyes, Ledger, Spain, Sparks, Walder and Wright.

Also Present:

Cllr Michael

In attendance:

Spatial Planning Manager; Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure; Placemaking Team Leader – Spatial Planning; Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure; Policy Planner – Plan Making; Planning Officer – Plan Making; S106 Agreements Monitoring Officer; S106 Monitoring Support Officer; Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development; Member Services Officer.

1 Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1. Apologies had been received from Cllrs Bell and Harman, and from the Director of Place, Space and Leisure.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1

Cllr Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a member of Sevington Parish Council. Made a Voluntary Announcement that he attends KALC meetings on their behalf.	Item 6
Cllr Blanford	Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was the ABC representative for the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee. Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was a member of WKPS.	Item 7
Cllr Ledger	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a member of Shadoxhurst Parish Council, chairs their Planning Sub-Committee, and attends KALC meetings on their behalf and was part of a team that wrote the document.	Item 6
Cllr Spain	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a member of the Committee of the Friends of Bybrook Nature Reserve.	Item 6
Cllr Walder	Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was a founding member of the Tenterden Wildlife group.	

3. Notes of the last Meeting

3.1 The Notes of the meetings of 24 June 2022 and 16 September 2022 were received and noted.

4. Infrastructure and Developer Contributions SPD Update

- 4.1 The Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure introduced the report, outlining recent history of the Section 106 review. A presentation then followed, detailing the recommendations of the Mid-Kent Audit in December 2021, and the progress of action points which stemmed from the review. Two actions were outstanding but on track to be completed by the end of the year. Three actions had been deferred, as the anticipated functionality of the new planning software required improvement to deliver them; Mid-Kent Audit were aware and had agreed to an extension until the Spring of 2023. A report would be prepared for the Audit Committee on 29 November. In addition, the Overview & Scrutiny Task Group recommendations were progressing simultaneously. The process mapping had been completed. Workshops and informational documentation were being prepared, to be delivered to parish councils. Member training was to be undertaken after the election in May 2023. Heads of Terms were being reviewed and additional items were under consideration for inclusion. Some outcomes and decisions were dependent on the approval of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill now in progression through Parliament. He outlined the next steps to complete the remaining actions, review the Kent Minerals and Waste consultation, review and engage with Kent County Council regarding their Section 106 guidance commencing in December, prepare and submit an Infrastructure Funding Statement to Task Group at the February 2023 meeting, and look to produce a draft SPD in the summer of 2023.
- 4.2 A Member asked that unparished areas be included in consultations and workshops; this was agreed.
- 4.3 The Chairman posed a question regarding Community Infrastructure Levy and whether the funds were directed appropriately to local need; he was reassured that safeguards existed through the involvement of an independent examiner at the time of any CIL creation. The Government is reviewing S106 and CIL and may introduce an Infrastructure Levy.
- 4.4 A Member asked if there was a formula to define amounts of funding for local community investment. He felt greater local consultation should take place, and questioned the delivery of S106 funding which is tied to occupational trigger points. This led to a wider debate regarding potential non-compliance by developers, and mechanisms which could be applied or adopted to provide increased assurance of delivery. Members were asked to advise officers if they are concerned that trigger points are being reached and payments are not being made.
- 4.5 A Member asked if, in the current financial situation, we would ask developers for increased funding, or divide the agreed funding into smaller pots. The Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure confirmed that in the current financial climate the next few years were likely to be challenging, and this could potentially impact the amount of S106 money available.

- 4.6 A Member was surprised by KCC's request for an uplift to the borough councils' infrastructure contributions and confirmed her support for ABC to challenge that. She offered to assist in supporting the training of parish and town councils and community forums to help them understand Section 106.

Resolved:

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group noted the updates in the presentation.

5. Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and Other Planning Reforms Update

- 5.1 The Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure referred to the report, with further information that, due to very recent government re-shuffles, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove intended to resume the progress of the Bill as he had left it in July 2023, following his reinstatement as Secretary of State for Levelling Up and Regeneration. It was believed this would mean a swifter conclusion than anticipated on the NPPF amendments. The Growth Plan, published in September, had intended to remove the barriers and make way for a new Planning Infrastructure Bill, but it was noted that the future of these initiatives including plans to create Investment Zones was now uncertain.
- 5.2 A Member questioned whether ABC had been consulted when KCC had put forward the Newtown Works and the Brompton site to be part of the Investment Zones programme. Whilst she supported this, there were other sites included where the acceleration and removal of environmental policies would be detrimental. As submission deadlines had been very tight, ABC had been able to propose these developments, but not had the opportunity to comment on other districts' submissions.

Resolved:

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group noted the contents of the report.

6. Defining the Boundaries KALC (December 2020)

- 6.1 The Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure thanked a Member for providing a copy of the report. Whilst ABC had not made a response to it at the time, the opportunity to do so now was welcomed.
- 6.2 A Member suggested KALC take the lead to approach other partners such as PROW and the AONBs, to gather opinion. Two parish councils did not have representatives on KALC, but there was other linkage to ensure inclusion.

- 6.3. It was agreed the Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure could formally share the responses with KALC.

Resolved:

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group noted the contents of the report and agreed the responses at Appendix 1 to form the basis of an ongoing dialogue in preparation of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 review process with local councils and community forums; the responses also to be formally shared with KALC.

7. Update on High Weald and Kent Downs AONB Management Plans, Projects and Issues for 2022

- 7.1 The two Policy Planners – Plan Making and Infrastructure explained they were ABC's officer representatives to the High Weald AONB and the Kent Downs AONB respectively. They attended Joint Advisory Committee and Officer Steering Group meetings. The High Weald AONB were reviewing their Management Plan, proposing two new components.
- 7.2 Members were informed the current EU funding for the Kent Downs AONB unit was to cease in March 2023, and local authorities were being asked to increase their contributions on the High W.
- 7.3 It was agreed 6-monthly updates to the Task Group would be useful.
- 7.4 It was confirmed that funds available via the Government's Shared Prosperity fund would be apportioned by KCC, following approval by the Government.

Resolved:

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group noted the contents of this Report.

8. Member Tracker

- 8.1 The Member Tracker was discussed. It was noted that several high priority matters would be engaging the time of Strategic Planners in the coming months.
- 8.2 The Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure was asked to circulate the current Solar Guidance note.

Resolved:

The contents of the Tracker were noted.

9. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting had been arranged for 16 December 2022, at 10am, via Teams.

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact
membersservices@ashford.gov.uk

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