

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell and Councillor Neil Murray

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Rosanne Kirk

24. Confirmation of Minutes - 21 September 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 be confirmed.

25. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

26. Planning White Paper

Purpose of Report

To update the Executive on the content of the recent White Paper consultation from central government on reforming the planning system.

Decision

That the conclusions of the report and the suggested response to each question of the White Paper consultation document in relation to planning reform be endorsed.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The focus of the White paper centred on increasing the availability of new homes. It was widely accepted that there was a shortage of available housing in the United Kingdom and there had been a number of attempts in recent years to firstly cite the planning system as the main reason for this shortage, and then to make numerous alterations to both the policy framework and development management procedures in an attempt to address the perceived problem. Despite this context of almost perpetual alteration to the system, authorities across the country approved the overwhelming majority of planning applications and in most cases could do little more to assist in the delivery of more housing.

It was reported that there are currently between 800,000 and one million houses that had been granted planning permission across the country but had not been built out, yet the White Paper consultation proposed radical change to the land use planning system as the means to address what was largely an economic problem.

The White Paper outlined that, broadly speaking, the planning system should move to one of zoning as happens in some other countries. To this end it

proposed the following three categories would apply to all land within a district boundary as part of the local plan allocation process:

- Growth – applications for new homes, hospitals, schools, shops and offices in areas “suitable for substantial development” in growth zones would be given automatic outline planning permission. Developers would, however, still need to secure reserved matters permission in accordance with locally developed design codes and “site-specific technical issues”;
- Renewal – proposals in urban areas, such as densification and infill, on brownfield sites and relating to “small sites within or on the edge of villages” would be given “permission in principle”;
- Protection - development would not be permitted in protected areas such as the Green Belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

The report outlined the implications of proposed changes to the planning system in respect of the Local Plan, the role of councillors and development management, public engagement, Section 106 Agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy, housing targets, design, enforcement and delivering change.

A summary of the questions posed as part of the consultation, together with suggested responses to each question, was appended to the report.

The consultation was open until 29 October 2020 and, subject to the outcome of the consultation, the government would seek to bring legislation and policy changes to implement its reforms, acknowledging that not all aspects of the system would be comprehensively covered, with the detail of some proposals still requiring further development. Proposals would require primary legislation followed by secondary legislation and an updating of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe was disappointed with the content of the White Paper which he felt wrongly placed blame on what it referred to as a complex planning system acting as a barrier to the development of new homes. He acknowledged that the planning system as it currently stood was not perfect, but was of the opinion that the White Paper was seeking to address the wrong issue and had not itself acknowledged or addressed a market failure to deliver housing.

Councillor Neil Murray agreed with the proposed responses to the consultation document and felt that the proposals set out in the White Paper would make the planning system worse and represented a backwards step. The current system worked in Lincoln and in other parts of the country very well, with adequate overview of applications and public participation as part of the process. He highlighted that the most common issue he was contacted about from residents in his capacity as a councillor related to concerns or queries in respect of planning applications. He felt that the proposed reform set out in the White Paper would take away an invaluable mechanism whereby local councillors could represent residents and allow them to have a genuine say in applications.

Councillor Donald Nannestad outlined his concerns that the proposals set out in the White Paper would have a serious negative impact on affordable housing. He also agreed with Councillor Murray’s comments in that the proposals would actually result in people not being able to have their say in respect of applications. There was also no reference to nature, wildlife and green or accessible space as part of the White Paper which could cause detrimental long-term issues.

Councillor Chris Burke concurred with the comments already made and highlighted that the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee in considering the White Paper had condemned the proposals collectively.

Councillor Bob Bushell agreed with the comments already made and highlighted the significant opposition to what was being proposed, referencing the Chair of the Royal Institute of British Architects in particular who had voiced their own concerns of the damage the proposals could cause to constituencies across the country.

27. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

These items were considered in private as they were likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider these items in private.

28. Usher Gallery and Associated Collections

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with progress made in negotiations over the last twelve months with Lincolnshire County Council and a range of stakeholders in an endeavour to ensure the future operation of the Usher Gallery as an art gallery.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered and rejected were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

Reasons for the decision were set out in the report.

29. Update on Position of Lincoln Arts Trust Ltd

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider in more detail the financial position of the Lincoln Arts Trust Ltd further to its previous decision on 26 August 2020 not to renew the service level agreement, which was due to expire on 31 March 2020.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report, and the additional recommendation published as a supplement to the agenda, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered and rejected were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

Reasons for the decision were set out in the report.

30. Investment Property: Options for Alternative Lease Arrangements

Purpose of Report

To inform the Executive of investigations made to secure improved investment value and income.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered and rejected were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

Reasons for the decision were set out in the report.