
SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 14th October, 2024

Present:	Councillor Bernard Dawson MBE (in the Chair), Councillors Heather Anderson, Zak Khan, Clare Pritchard (Vice Chair), Clare Yates and Mohammed Younis
In Attendance:	Co-optees: Shahed Mahmood and Andy Tatchell
Apologies	Councillor Clare McKenna

191 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

There were no apologies submitted at the meeting and no substitutions.
Councillor Clare McKenna was absent from the meeting.

192 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

No interests or dispensations were declared at the meeting.

193 Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd July 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

194 Chair's Update

The Chair, Councillor Bernard Dawson, updated the Committee on the following items:

- The Committee was informed that Council had approved the appointment of the two new Co-optees, Shahed Mahmood and Andy Tatchell, at the meeting held on 26th September 2024, to cover two Municipal Years 2024-25 & 2025-26. Both new Co-optees were welcomed to the meeting.
- Three items allocated to the agenda had been deferred to future meetings:
 - Town Centre Levelling Up Progress
 - Leisure Transformation Update
 - Huncoat Garden Village

195 Local Plan Monitoring

The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer submitted a report to update Committee on key matters relating to the emerging Local Plan, including an:

- a) Update on the preparation of the emerging Local Plan up to now;
- b) Update on proposed changes to national planning policy;

- c) Update on next steps, including submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination, and;
- d) Update on consequences of not submitting the Local Plan (Sections 5 and 7).

The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer referred to the progress reached in forming the emerging Local Plan and gave details of the process undertaken and the next steps. He also informed the meeting that work was nearing completion on the submission version and pointed out that this was at a critical stage.

The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer also referred to the potential implications of the proposed changes to Government Policy (national plan policy framework), which had recently been submitted to Cabinet for consultation, on the Local Plan should it not be adopted. He explained that the proposed new Government Policy had changed the methodology of calculating the number of properties each authority would need to build. However, Local Authorities who were at an advanced stage of their plan-making process, would not be expected to apply the new standard method to identify housing requirement. Should a housing requirement not be adopted, the new standard method figure of 313 dwellings per year would be the default requirement. The importance of the proposed Huncoat Garden Village development was, therefore, referred to in this respect and Committee was advised that should the development not go ahead the Local Plan would need to be removed and a new Local Plan devised which would increase the number of dwellings per year from 194 to 313. Over a period of 15 years the increase in number would be significant.

The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer thanked the Planning Policy Manager for her work in progressing the proposed Local Plan.

Members submitted the following questions in advance of the meeting:

- A request to provide details of the challenges of progressing the Local Plan.
- What the penalties for not reaching the allocated housing targets were.
- A request to detail each key document of the Local Plan.
- What methods of communications were established in respect of consulting the public on the various documents.

Responses were made as follows:

- Reference was made to the resources committed to producing the emerging plan and it was explained that if the Council was committed to supporting the Plan, it would be taken to the Inspectorate. Devising a new plan would require additional resources, finances and political support to take forward.
- The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer referred to the housing figures set out in the policy and to the housing delivery test and how it could be used to ensure housing numbers were delivered. He also explained that they had raised the issue of delivering such a high number of housing in the borough with the Government but advised that should neighbouring figures be higher, it may be possible to assume some of their housing figure.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that there were no immediate penalties for not delivering the allocated housing numbers, although this was set over 5 years, but the less delivery the more land would need to be found. The Local Plan gave authorities greater control over house building.

- The Chief Planning and Transportation Officer reported that the Local Plan had a suite of documents behind it to support it and provided details of the some documents. He indicated that there was a number of documents to submit to the Inspector included in these. He informed the Committee that the documents submitted with the Plan were evidence and not necessarily policies.
- In respect of methods of communicating with the public, he indicated that the Plan was at a stage where this had already been carried out. He explained that this had been done by publishing notices in the press and notifying people who had made representations in the past and were still on the database.

Members submitted the following comments and questions:

- Should it be decided to continue with the emerging Plan, what was the earliest the Plan could be adopted.
- Hyndburn needed to be able to control its own housing figures by having a Local Plan in place.
- That Hyndburn had lower land values than neighbouring authorities so had challenges when competing to attract developers to the area.
- Hyndburn had many difficult sites because of low land values and consequently a housing type deficit.
- The Huncoat site was very important strategically.
- Problems of having inadequate infrastructure in place to accommodate new buildings.
- Additional medical and educational facilities would be required with an increase in housing.
- A request for information on the definition of affordable housing.
- Policies should address social aspect of planning such as affordability and social housing
- The importance of supporting the prioritisation of brownfield sites for housing developments in an effort to prevent a donut effect. Could the Council include policies that would influence developers to do this before building on green belt land.
- Housing Market Renewal money contributed to the development of housing with money from Government for projects and this was a main way to provide affordable housing.

Responses were given to the comments and questions submitted:

- The Plan could be adopted in 2026, if supported.
- Hyndburn had an emerging Local Plan which was at an advanced stage and therefore allowed, by the Government, to continue to examination under the old NPPF. Should Huncoat Garden Village and the Link Road not be supported the Council would not be able to submit the Local Plan to the Government, housing figures would increase and there may be difficulties in finding sufficient land. Having a Local Plan in place was therefore important, to have control over the authority's own housing figures.
- Definition of 'affordable housing' is provided on a national rather than local basis but there had been successes in delivering affordable housing in the borough.
- The Housing Needs Assessment provided the evidence base for social aspects planning requirements and was an established way of calculating requirements.
- The Council had a policy of using brownfield sites first and had been so successful in doing this, that there were few remaining and so this was now less deliverable than 12 years ago.

Consideration was given to the proposals recommended in the report.

Both Conservative Members, Councillor Zak Khan and Councillor Mohammed Younis, requested that it be placed on record that they supported the development of Huncoat Garden Village, the associated Link Road and the continued development and submission of the emerging Local Plan, in light of the observations made at the meeting with regards to the detriment of not doing so.

Resolved - **That the report be noted.**

196 Appointment of Co-optees

The Scrutiny and Policy Officer submitted a report to inform Members of the two Co-optee appointments formally made by Council to the Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 26th September 2024. The Co-optees appointed were Shahed Mahmood and Andy Tatchell.

Resolved - **That the report be noted.**

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed