



Place Overview  
Committee  
  
6 September 2018  
  
10.00 am

Item  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON  
6 SEPTEMBER 2018  
10.00 AM – 11.37 AM**

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Fildes  
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**Present**

Councillor Gwilym Butler (Chair)  
Councillors Andy Boddington, Julian Dean, Rob Gittins, Simon Harris, Dan Morris,  
William Parr and Harry Taylor

**15 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Milner and Paul Wynn.  
Councillors Clare Aspinall and Gerald Dakin attended as Substitutes for Councillors Milner  
and Wynn respectively.

**16 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any  
matter in which they had a disclosable pecuniary interest and should leave the room prior  
to the commencement of the debate.

**17 Minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

**18 Public Question Time**

Mr Steven Mulloy asked the following question:

All of the development in the West of Shrewsbury that is ultimately related to the NWRR is  
treated in isolation when it comes to environmental impact considerations.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was not required for the proposed 750 homes  
and the hectares of employment land on the SWSUE, and the current EIA for the Oxon  
Link Road disregards the SWSUE and the NWRR. Effectively the developments are  
'sliced n diced' to avoid having to pay and deal with the true environmental impacts.

It has been well documented that there is never any follow up to EIA's to assess the actual environmental impact; mitigation is always based on theoretical assessments, and effectively become lip service to environmental regulations without truly dealing with the environmental consequences of economic development.

The Council's own data shows that 50% of the population use their cars to get to work, but only around 3% use public transport. Strangely, the data is little different for the urban areas than the more rural areas which you would expect to have more reliance on the car.

We are told by the Council's environmental officers that a sustainable place should not be reliant upon the use of the motor vehicle to access essential services, so why are we trying to deal with economic growth by trying to build more highway infrastructure like the NWRR that neither we or the environment can afford when we should be looking at more sustainable options like encouraging more use of public transport?

The Head of Economic Growth responded that due to the complexity of the question more time was required to fully prepare a response and a written answer would be provided in due course.

## **19 Member Question Time**

There were no questions from Members.

## **20 Update on Apprenticeship Levy**

The HR and Development Manager outlined a report on the Apprenticeship Levy 'Upskill Shropshire' (copy attached to signed minutes).

During discussion members asked a number of questions, these included why numbers appeared to be low, what were the deadlines for spending, why there was unevenness of take up across directorates and whether routes into social work were available.

In response to questions from members, the HR and Development Manager explained that although there had been a relatively high level of interest from staff in applications for apprenticeships, the numbers that had converted resulting in funds being drawn down were low. This was due to a number of factors including apprenticeships that had not yet started or not yet approved for delivery, the apprenticeship framework originally applied for no longer being available, being unable to secure a provider on the provider framework and providers not approving cohorts on the digital system. Up to 20% of apprenticeships involved off the job training which was challenging when there were pressures in an organisation. There was also still work to do in dispelling myths around apprenticeships. £800,000 had been committed to date and it was confirmed that from April 2019 the Council would start to lose money on a monthly basis if it was not spent.

In response to further questions, she explained that the take up in Children's Services was lower than other directorates for a variety of reasons, including issues in securing the right provider and persuading providers to deliver on site in Shropshire. The social work degree was expected to be released imminently.

It was also confirmed that when a post became vacant, the HR Business Partner would always look to see if the post could be converted into an apprenticeship.

The HR and Development Manager was thanked for the update.

## **21 Balancing Housing and Economic Growth**

Adrian Cooper, Planning Policy and Strategy Manager, and Maria Howell and Tim Shrosbee, Planning Policy, were welcomed to the meeting.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager reported on the role of the Council in Place Shaping and the need to balance housing and economic growth. He referred to the report before members (copy attached to the signed minutes) and the pressure the Council was under to deliver the numbers to meet the needs of the Housing Delivery Test, but also to ensure the type of housing was delivered which met the needs of the county. If focusing simply on numbers, marketability would be the primary consideration, but the Council was charged with place shaping in a balanced way. It was however, necessary to accept a degree of marketability to deliver numbers, but it was possible to shape outcomes if appropriate evidence was available to demonstrate what was needed.

A Cross Party Housing Delivery Group had been set up by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development to help provide advice on achieving the right balance of employment and housing in the county. A key issue was the need to foster a working population capable of living locally, evidence was available showing that many employers struggling to recruit as people were not able to afford to live here.

Officers provided a presentation (copy attached to signed minutes) on The Right Home, Right Place initiative which had been designed to gather evidence to inform changes in the Local Plan Review. This had been designed to help engage more productively with Parishes and demonstrate that Shropshire Council was listening and responding to local need. More people were beginning to understand what affordable housing meant (different types and tenures) and that Community Led Schemes were a good way for communities to obtain the homes they wanted and where they wanted them. The additional data gathered was also providing useful to registered providers and housing associations who were finding the additional data useful both in terms of need and new sites to look at. People were starting to use the website as a hub for information.

Following the presentation, Members queried the relationship of this work with Neighbourhood Plans and asked how the Right Home Right Place surveys worked alongside these. One Member said that some parishes had felt this work had cut across what they were doing already.

Officers acknowledged this issue and explained that time pressure in relation to making the most of grants available from Homes England had meant the survey had been conducted earlier than planned in some parishes. The survey would help contribute positively to parish plans. Good information always made it easier to apply a local focus on application of planning policies. The planning system worked on evidence and providing as much evidence as possible was absolutely crucial.

During discussion, Members identified the need to focus on a drive towards smaller entry level housing but heard there was considerable pressure to deliver numbers in the county otherwise they would be imposed on the county. The Council was looking to introduce further tools to achieve the outcomes it wanted, so these could be taken into account in as many planning decisions as possible. A Member referred to a challenge to numbers by CPRE and how these were tied to economic development.

The Head of Economic Growth reported that work underway at the moment included looking into the Council becoming involved in housing delivery itself and intervening in the market where the market was not delivering.

In response to a question it was confirmed that Homepoint data was used in assessing housing need but it was recognised that not everyone would register their need in that way.

A Member referred to the large number of empty houses in Shropshire, some for very long periods of time, and what could be done to address this. There were government initiatives in place to address this and officers reported that the team with responsibility for this could provide more information or attend a meeting if the Committee wished to add this to the work programme.

In summing up the discussion, the Chair referred to lack of opportunity in small market towns for people to downsize in their local area as retirement housing and bungalows were in such short supply. He also commented that it made sense to conduct surveys across Place Plan areas as a parish in isolation did not include a bigger picture. He asked the Portfolio Holder to take away the question that if a housing needs survey showed critical need whether it would become a CIL priority. He also referred to the stigma around social housing and the many different sorts of housing available including modular housing. He also asked how Homepoint gave priority to key workers and the committee heard how at the recent Rural Service Network Conference, three examples were provided by the Chair of the English Housing Association, two of which were from Shropshire.

In conclusion, officers were thanked for the work they were undertaking and for gaining English Housing Association recognition.

The Chair asked if the Committee would be minded to look into this areas discussed in greater depth in order to help advise and ensure activity fell in line with corporate aspirations. It was agreed to insert this into the work programme moving forward.

## **22 Update on 'Twenty's Plenty'**

The Highways, Transport and Environment Manager reminded the Committee of the discussion held at the February meeting on 20s Plenty Schemes. He reported that there had been many requests for information from Town Councils, although not necessarily for implementation. The Council's position remained as it had been in February – in that wherever possible new developments would include as low a speed limit as possible built in. There remained issues in terms of enforcement.

The Chair asked if there was any progress made in providing Planning Committees with the ability to condition 20mph limits on new developments and officers said they would report back on this.

A Member referred to a number of Town Councils which had requested a scheme and asked about progress with these. The Highways and Transport Manager reported that some towns had put forward schemes balanced off against other road safety schemes. Engineering interventions would be expensive, and the police also had a role. He understood the police statement made at the February meeting in relation to enforcement

still stood. The police required major structural inputs to reduce average speeds to a community accepted/enforceable otherwise they would not enforce a 20mph limit.

The Chairman felt that the Road Safety Partnership structure was designed for city areas and not fit for purpose for a county like Shropshire. He explained that the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee was setting up a Task and Finish Group on road safety across the county. It was suggested that the Road Safety Partnership and 20mph be added to this work. The Highways and Transport Manager reported that there was a new methodology of collecting data related to Killed and Seriously on the roads data and it was too early to see trends.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport reported on visits to Town and Parish Councils across the county on this issue.

It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group was the best place to progress these issues.

### **23 Brexit Task and Finish Group**

The Committee agreed to re-open the work of the Brexit Task and Finish Group in the light of the technical notices issued in the event of a hard Brexit.

### **24 Update on North West Relief Road**

Shropshire Council had not been successful in its application for Shrewsbury North West Relief Road funding from the Department of Transport. Despite not being one of the three schemes included, subsequent announcements were expected later in the year and further conversations continued at political and officer level. It continued to be a priority scheme for the Council and the full Outline Business Case was available on the Council's website.

### **25 Work Programme 2018 - 2019**

Members were reminded that the work programme was a live document and could be amended to address circumstances as necessary.

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_