

DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Reay (Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnett, Cheeseman, Clayton, Penny Cole, P. Darrington, Fothergill, Pett, Roy and Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. McGregor and Thornton

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Perry Cole and Hunter were also present.

29. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee held on 1 December 2022, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30. Declarations of interest

There were none.

31. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

32. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman on behalf of the Portfolio Holder gave the update on services within the Portfolio. Development Management performance remained really strong with 97% of Major applications, 87% of Minor applications, and 92% of all other applications being determined within target times, demonstrating how well customers were served. When decisions were challenged at appeal, 72% were dismissed which showed overwhelmingly that the council could be confident in its decision making.

Since the publication of the agenda, even more Government consultations had been launched. This included one on planning fees and performance. Should a more robust performance regime be introduced, the Council was very well placed to report on the ongoing successes of the service. Whilst a revised fee structure would not result in a cost neutral development management function, proposed increases of 35% on major applications and 25% on all other applications were welcomed. Other proposals include a 'double fee' for retrospective applications, and removing the 'free second go'. The consultation runs until 25 April 2023.

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Finally, Building Control continued to perform very well, with a strong market share being maintained, which was excellent news.

33. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

34. Local Plan Consultation Update

The Senior Planning Officer (Policy) presented the report which provided an overview of the Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation, which ran from 16 November 2022 until 11 January 2023, as well as presenting the findings from initial high-level analysis of the consultation responses.

Members were advised that a total of 598 responses were received, and this included responses to the full survey, short survey and responses from Schools. The response rate was comparable with Neighbouring Authorities at the same stage. It was anticipated that there would be a greater response to the second Regulation 18 in Autumn 2023 which would consider sites across the District and potential Green Belt sites. It was highlighted to Members that initial analysis had indicated that 83% of respondents who answered the question had said that the right strategic issues had been identified, and further initial findings were detailed within paragraph 24 of the report.

In response to questions Members were advised that in regards to the last Local Plan, the Regulation 18 consultation was sent to every household within the District and would provide the exact figure. Discussion took place on the density figures.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

35. Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which provided an update on Strategic Planning activities, including the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and the national planning policy consultation.

Members were advised that there were a number of towns and parishes who were at various stages of developing Neighbourhood Plans. There were 13 'designated areas' which was the first stage of producing a neighbourhood plan. The Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan was the most advanced, and had been subject to examination and Cabinet had recommended it proceed to referendum on 4 May 2023. If more than 50% of voters support the plan then it would go to Council and be 'made' (approved.) Swanley Town Neighbourhood Plan was at an earlier stage of preparation and was supported by Locality, a non-profit organisation which supported community development. The Plan had recently been issued for Regulation 14 Consultation.

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In regards to National Planning Policy Members were advised that a consultation on 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (LURB): reforms to national planning policy was published in December and the Portfolio Holder responded to the 58 questions. The response was published on the Council's website. A response to the consultation was expected by spring 2023. The Planning Policy Team Leader advised that the consultation covered a wide range of issues including Housing, Green Belt, Development Management, and Plan making and Transition. She advised that that Plans needed to be submitted before 30 June 2025 to be examined under the existing system and the examination would need to conclude by 31 December 2026. The Council's current LDS outlined submission in Summer 2024 and would be examined under the existing system.

Further updates included securing further funding from the Capability Fund 2023 via, KCC for the development of a Swanley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and feasibility studies for two routes in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP route 1 and 6, Otford to Sevenoaks and Otford to Sevenoaks via Wildernesse. The Conservation and Design team were progressing with current Conservation Area reviews and would report back at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members discussed the report and asked questions of clarification. Members were advised that once a Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' it became part of the planning framework and would have the same weighting to the Local Plan. A further update on the status of other Neighbourhood Plans would be brought to a future meeting. In response to further questions Members were advised that evidence base research and consultation on neighbourhood plans should not be postponed as, even with a new system after June 2025, any plans made before then would still be supported until it became necessary for the plans to be replaced which would be every 5 years.

Members thanked the Planning Officers for their comprehensive reports.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

36. Work plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions:

6 July 2023

- Local Plan Update, including progress on Neighbourhood Plans
- National Planning Update
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Building Control update

31 October 2023

- Regulation 18 Consultation

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.50 PM

CHAIRMAN