

Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee



Date	10 April 2008
Venue	Lowther Pavilion , Lytham
Committee members	Councillor John Bennett (Chairman) Councillor William Thompson (Vice-Chairman) Ben Aitken, Maxine Chew, Kevin Eastham, Trevor Fiddler, Lyndsay Greening, Elizabeth Oades
Other Councillors	Fabian Craig-Wilson
Officers	Ian Curtis, Paul Walker, Tony Donnelly, Lyndsey Lacey
Members of the Public	Peter Liversidge, Fred Moor, Barbara Moor

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 February 2008 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Kevin Eastham for Councillor Michael Cornah

Councillor Elizabeth Oades for Councillor Keith Beckett

4. Exclusion of the public

It was RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting for part of the consideration of item 5 in accordance with paragraph 5 of the provisions of Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

5. Consultation on Interim Housing Policy

Tony Donnelly (Head of Planning (Policy)) provided the committee with an overview of recent experiences with regard to the public consultation exercise undertaken regarding the proposed interim housing policy. Details with respect to this matter were set out in the report.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that when considering the consultation responses, the committee be provided with available information on the veracity of each response and give each response appropriate weight accordingly.

6. Draft North West Regional Spatial Strategy

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider the content of the Secretary of State for Communities Proposed Changes to the draft North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West of England.

Tony Donnelly (Head of Planning (Policy)) presented the report and in doing so, he made reference to the fact that the Secretary of State had now considered an Independent Panel report following a public examination (at which FBC officers participated) and had published proposed changes to the draft Strategy for further consultation. The consultation would last until 23 May 2008.

The report highlighted the Secretary of State's decisions on each of the Panel's recommendations and the reasons for those decisions. The report also set out the full text of the revised Draft Regional Spatial Strategy incorporating all the Proposed Changes and the reasons for them.

It was reported that the Secretary of State had proposed that the structure of RSS remained unchanged, but that further maps and diagrams should be included as appropriate. An index of chapters and policies in modified RSS was included in an appendix attached to the report. The general approach to the Secretary of State's proposed changes had been to accept as many as possible of the Panel report's recommendations, with some minor modifications. Selected policies with a specific or direct relevance to Fylde Borough had been highlighted for comment in the report.

Members commented upon paragraph 22 which suggested that development in the Central Lancashire City Region should be located in Preston, Blackburn, Blackpool and Burley and for this purpose; Blackpool was part of an urban area that included Fleetwood, Thornton, Cleveleys and Lytham St Annes. There was a general view that Lytham St Annes should not be linked to Blackpool as both towns were distinctly dissimilar.

It was also suggested by members that they would like to see Lytham St Annes identified as a Key Service Area.

Councillor Fiddler expressed his surprise that the Regional Town Planning Group had not been involved in this process.

Councillor Thompson sought clarification on paragraphs 11 and 18 of the report. Mr Donnelley addressed both matters.

Councillor Oades sought advice on paragraph 13 of the report which sought to remove the ceiling to housing figures. She enquired what effect that this would have on Fylde. Mr Donnelly responded and explained that whereas in the current RSS the housing figures were expressed as maximum figures (i.e. Councils should not exceed them), the draft RSS did not express the figures as maxima. This gave the Council the discretion to exceed the figures if they so wished. Likewise in appeal situations, it would also give the Secretary of State and Inspectors the discretion to exceed the figures.

Councillor Fiddler suggested that it would be timely for the committee to consider a review of the conclusions Employment Land Impact study (Grimley Report)

Following a lengthy and detailed discussion the Committee RESOLVED:

1. To note the content of the report including the initial observations of officers.
2. To request the Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Development, to meet with senior officers from Blackpool and Wyre councils to identify the shared concerns of the three authorities based on the initial observations of officers contained in the report and the additional observations of the committee as detailed below:

Key Service Centres

- Would like clarification on the issue of whether Lytham St Annes could be designated as a named Key Service Centre in view of its linkage to the definition of a wider 'Blackpool'. The draft RSS was not clear on this significant issue. The Committee opposed the concept of subsuming Lytham St Annes within the definition of a wider Blackpool.
3. To authorise the preparation of a combined response of the three authorities where there were common views, and their submission to Government Office North West.
 4. To include a review of the Employment Land Study (Grimley report) for consideration at a future meeting of the committee.

7. Caravans- various issues

Tony Donnelly (Head of Planning (Policy)) presented an updated report on the current issues around the use of caravans as permanent living accommodation.

The report made reference to previous reports on the subject, matters appertaining to licensing and council tax issues and information on the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism report (July 2007). Details of a recent informal joint meeting of members and officers was also set out in the report.

Mr Donnelly indicated that new information had become available from the recent housing stock condition survey. He explained that the survey also looked at caravan sites and of the 24 sites in Fylde, 11 (46%) had been assessed as being used to some degree for residential purposes.

Councillor Chew enquired whether or not the situation could be managed by the site licence. Mr Donnelly explained the position.

Following a detailed debate on the matter the Committee RESOLVED:

1. To endorse the following recommendations of the informal meeting of members and officers that took place on 20 March:

- To ask officers to consult with other Lancashire authorities to ascertain whether they had identified similar issues, and if so, how they were dealing with the matters.
- To arrange for one to one meetings with site owners to be undertaken to discuss relevant issues, particularly when planning applications are submitted to extend the season;
- To undertake enforcement action should in respect of sites where there was evidence that planning conditions are being breached; and
- To ask Environmental Health officers to research whether there was a means whereby site owners could be charged for enforcement proceedings.

2. To ask the Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Development, to write to the Member of Parliament for Fylde and the Local Government Association in an attempt to raise an awareness of the problems in Fylde and beyond and seek their support for the introduction of a suitable static and touring caravan policy.

3. To ask the Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Development, to produce an options report for consideration at the next appropriate meeting detailing all the issues to be considered in preparing a suitable Policy.

4. That in connection with 3 above, an invitation be sent to representatives of the Valuation Office and the licensing, tourism and rating sections of the council to attend the meeting and brief members on issues appertaining to their areas of responsibility.

5. In the interim, to ask the Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Development, to obtain evidence substantiating the need for static touring caravan sites in the borough.

8. Housing Needs and Demand Study

Tony Donnelly (Head of Planning (Policy)) presented on the 2007 update of the Housing Needs and Demand Study which had been undertaken by Fordham Research.

The main conclusions of the final report were set out on the agenda. It provided a robust estimate of the need for affordable housing in the context of changes that had occurred since the time of the first survey.

The Committee RESOLVED:

1. To ask to the Portfolio Holder to adopt the survey for Development Control purposes.
2. To ask the Executive Manager (Consumer Well being and Protection) to arrange for an analysis of the current housing waiting list to identify the proportions of those applicants who currently live within the borough, and those that live outside the borough.
