



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025

## **TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 6.30 p.m.**

### **Present:**

Councillor Mill (in the Chair)  
Councillors Crofts, Hasthorpe, Holland, Humphrey, Lindley and Wilson

### **Officers in attendance:**

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Chris Fairbrother (Head of Estates and Asset Strategy)
- Jonathan Ford (Senior Transport Officer) (Equans)
- Helen Johnson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Martin Lear (Head of Transport) (Equans)
- Guy Lonsdale (Assistant Director Finance)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy, Strategy and Resources)
- Phillip Quinn Contract Performance Manager (Equans)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)

### **Also in attendance:**

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport)
- Cllr Harness (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)

There was one member of the public in attendance.

## **SPTISH.51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Pettigrew.

## **SPTISH.52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

## **SPTISH.53 MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

## **SPTISH.54 QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

## **SPTISH.55 FORWARD PLAN**

The panel received the current forward plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

## **SPTISH.56 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY**

The panel received the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations previously made by this scrutiny panel which had been updated for reference at this meeting.

At item SPE.37, Local Plan Review - Scoping and Issues, the Leader suggested that this item now required updating. Officers confirmed an update would be given to panel members.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That an update be provided to members of this panel on the Local Plan Review.

## **SPTISH.57 EQUANS PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3**

The panel considered a report from EQUANS containing a summary of performance against key performance indicators for the period July to September 2024.

Ms Borgstrom gave a brief introduction and verified that items contained within the report were on target, however, some items were out of their control.

Members welcomed the significant increase in home improvement expenditure for the period July to September 2024, however sought more context from officers regarding the jump in figures. Officers advised an update would be given to members on the reasons for the increase in expenditure for this period.

In response to members questions on how often Section 215 notices were served, and the number of prosecutions which had taken place, it was agreed that members would be provided with an update from officers. Members felt that this type of enforcement would be an effective deterrent.

On the issue of engagement with owners of empty properties, members showed concern at the low numbers and sought clarification on what engagement had taken place with those contacted. Officers advised they would report back to members on the engagement undertaken with property owners but reiterated that many empty properties were difficult to bring back into use and unfortunately each case was very time consuming. Officers advised there had been a significant number of probate properties brought back into use. The Chair requested that owner engagement should be brought back to the next meeting to enable scrutiny of the response by officers.

Ms Borgstrom advised members there were numerous reasons for changes to long term planning capital project schemes which included emergency situations, supplemented schemes due to demand, scheduling issues and making sure projects carried out were meaningful and would not conflict with other schemes. Officers would provide more context around these.

In response to members concern around the lack of data on planning enforcement within the report, Ms Borgstrom advised members that this area had been brought up as part of the Equans Review and assurance had been given to the Equans working group that a review of the planning enforcement officer's role had taken place, allowing greater officer flexibility once the Equans contract expired. Ms Borgstrom added that there would be new KPI's and better reporting once the transition had been completed, however a breakdown of the actual numbers of enforcement cases and more context on cases not agreed

within timelines or without a positive outcome would be circulated to members. Councillor Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) added that there had been some concerns around planning enforcement capacity due to staff sickness and this would be addressed at the next partnership board meeting. Ms Robinson responded to members questions on enforcement gaps within the report and confirmed that Equans did not manage all assets, and the report only included details of the assets they managed.

Members requested a more detailed explanation of what Equans intervention involved when securing planning permission as it was felt the report lacked details. Members also sought details on the development management process. Ms Borgstrom clarified what the development management process was, adding that planning officers gave applicants advice either prior to or during the planning process. Members added that the number of cases seemed low and requested a more detailed breakdown of numbers involved.

In response to members request for information on cancelled penalty charge notices (PCNs). Officers confirmed that compared to the national average the 12% figure was relatively low, and reasons for cancellation of notices included lack of evidence however, the figures included all PCNs not just those issued as a result of CCTV evidence.

Ms Borgstrom advised members that Equans have approximately 300 staff and the Equans performance report covered 10 technical areas and requested that if members required specific information on the report, questions could be sent in advance of the panel meeting to enable relevant officers to attend. She added that information management reporting would alter once the Equans transition was complete.

Members enquired if the Equans property management survey results which formed part of the tenant engagement activities had been disseminated to relevant officers and if so, had there been any areas of concern. Ms Robinson advised that the survey results had been retained by Equans. It was hoped that the survey results would be made available at the next meeting and any red flags addressed, although this was to be confirmed.

#### RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That additional information be provided to members on the following:
  - Reasons for increase in home improvement expenditure and further context provided around the figures.
  - Number of Section 215 notices and prosecution cases.
  - Clarification on what type of engagement had taken place with owners of empty homes, with the relevant officer invited to attend the next meeting of this panel.

- Detailed breakdown of the numbers of planning enforcement cases including cases which were not within agreed timelines or those without a positive outcome.
- Explanation of what Equans Intervention involved and a detailed breakdown of the number of cases involved.
- That tenant survey results be provided and any red flags addressed.

## **SPTISH.58 DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The panel considered a report setting out a draft Asset Management Framework that had been developed to replace an out of date Corporate Asset Management Plan.

Ms Robinson gave a brief introduction to the Draft Asset Management Framework advising the panel that although there were no legal requirements for this plan, it was good practice. Members' comments and observations would be fed into the final report.

Members felt the plan was very businesslike and would benefit from social values being entwined throughout the plan including the asset management aims and that it would be helpful for the plan to be more transparent around community values. Officers reiterated that the report was still in its early stages and was aligned with the Council Plan. More information was available on the asset management strategy table and would give members an in-depth explanation of expected outcomes and actions of each aim. The table would be circulated to panel members after the meeting.

Members thought there needed to be reference to the housing and economic development needs assessment within the plan. Additionally, members sought assurances that each major council asset should have its own plan to reduce the risk of deterioration, examples included Corporation Bridge and Victoria Mills. Officers advised that operational property assets were covered under planned preventative maintenance with condition surveys currently being carried out by Equans on a five year rolling programme. Each asset which required maintenance would have its own plan on completion of the condition survey and identified issues would be addressed and actioned as and when required.

Ms Robinson clarified to members that the draft asset management framework was purely based on property, and she was happy to include an introductory paragraph to clarify the scope of the policy.

Members found the report to be very useful and was enthused about next steps adding that they would like to see more documents attached to the framework. Officers advised they would take this on board.

## RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following scrutiny recommendations be considered by officers:
  - A formal introductory scoping paragraph be added to the report.
  - Social values be included in the report aims.
  - The housing and economic development needs assessment plan be referenced within the framework.
  - Inclusion of more documents including relevant links.

## **SPTISH.59 ALEXANDRA DOCK REGENERATION PLANS**

The panel received a presentation on the Alexandra Dock Regeneration Plans.

Ms Borgstrom gave members a brief introduction into the proposed Alexandra Dock regeneration plans which formed part of a long-term Masterplan reiterating that feedback was welcome, but confirmed the item was an update only and did not currently form part of pre-decision scrutiny.

Mr Dowson provided members with a presentation on progress made and plans around Alexandra Dock regeneration advising that they were working closely with Homes England, a government agency whose involvement included feasibility studies, planning and financial support and that a long term phased approach to the development would be taken and reviewed at each stage. Although no decisions had been made, a commitment to look at long term land usage within the scheme would be considered at times of natural progression.

Members sought assurances on the feasibility of affordable housing within Phase 1A and the best use of land and long-term aspiration including commercial units. Members also sought reassurances around highways, transport links and infrastructure as there were concerns over the potential impact on town centre traffic. It was felt that a comprehensive traffic assessment should be completed, to include potential access routes to and from the development. There was concern around suitable medical infrastructure within the development, however, the inclusion of the new medical unit in Freshney Place was welcomed.

Work to date on the development included investigative works being carried out supported by Homes England and the procurement of a development partner, Keepmoat, who had been appointed to develop 130 homes with an anticipated commencement date of mid 2025. It was proposed that there would be a mixture of apartments and 1-to-4-bedroom properties, however, this would be subject to potential change and planning approval. The council would have a certain level of

control over the heritage aspects on the property development. Councillor Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) advised the panel that he had visited Keepmoat developments and had been impressed by what he had seen.

Ms Borgstrom responded to members questions regarding restricting buy to let properties within the development and advised that it would be difficult to control but assured members that it was not intended to focus on this type of development. She advised that another bid had been unsuccessful due to its focus on this type of development.

In response to a member's question regarding commercial leasehold properties within the development, officers confirmed that Keepmoat were not long-term stockholders, and any commercial unit leaseholder development opportunities could fall under the council, although no decisions had been made on this.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

## **SPTISH.60 NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME**

The panel considered a report on the adoption of the North East Lincolnshire Council Concessionary Fares Scheme.

Mr Ford gave the panel a brief introduction to the North East Lincolnshire Council concessionary fare scheme highlighting the council's statutory duty to provide free bus travel for eligible pass holders and proposed reimbursements arrangements to operators for 2025/26.

In response to members questions on the potential insufficient funding for the pre 9.30 a.m. concessionary fare travel for 2025/26, officers advised that they were entering into negotiations with transport operators for pre and post 9.30 a.m. travel. However, due to uncertainty around the national funding allocation continuing, non-statutory services could not be guaranteed. Officers confirmed that they were joining the Greater Lincolnshire transport authority which would change their negotiating power. Officers advised members if current costs remained then they hoped to retain the pre 9.30 a.m. travel concessions. Councillor Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) advised that the pre 9.30 a.m. fares had proved to be a success, and he hoped once an adequate settlement was forthcoming then the scheme would continue.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

## **SPTISH.61 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

There were no questions for the portfolio holder at this meeting.

## **SPTISH.62 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS**

There were no formal requests from Members of this panel to call in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.