



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 12th December 2024

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

10th September 2024 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Mill (in the Chair)

Councillors Cairns (substitute for Pettigrew), Crofts, Hasthorpe, Holland, Humphrey, Lindley and Wilson

Officers in attendance:

- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy, Strategy and Resources)
- Sharon Wroot (Director of Finance, Resources and Operations)
- Ian King (Space Planner) (Equans)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director) (Equans)
- David Baker (Business Contract Manager) (Equans)
- Lani Lamming (Equans)
- Martin Lear (Head of Transport) (Equans)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director of Regeneration)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management Team Regeneration)
- Paul Evans (Assistant Director Infrastructure)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)
- Helen Johnson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport)
- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor K. Swinburn

There was one member of the public in attendance.

SPTISH.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

SPTISH.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

SPTISH.21 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 16th July 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

SPTISH.22 QUESTION TIME

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

SPTISH.23 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.24 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

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

At SPTISH.12, 2024 Council Plan Year End Performance and Provisional Finance Outturn Report, it was noted that further information on the reasons for variance in the Housing, Highways and Transport capital budget had been circulated to panel members by email on 4th September 2024.

At SPTISH.12, 2024 Council Plan Year End Performance and Provisional Finance Outturn Report (Affordable Housing Performance Target), Mr Evans confirmed that an update would be given once the information was available.

At SPTISH.13, Regeneration Partnership Performance Report. (Top Town Market) - Ms Wroot sought clarification of the specific information required by the panel in order to avoid duplication with the Economy,

Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel. The panel confirmed that their concerns related to the current market rather than the market move that formed part of town centre regeneration plans. Ms Robinson reiterated that she was in contact with market stall representatives and keeping them updated.

At SPTISH.13, Regeneration Partnership Performance Report (new homes figures), Mr Evans advised that an update would be forwarded to members once available.

At SPTISH.15, Local Transport Plan - Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) advised members that funding for the cycle path at the Kiln Lane works was not available to enable works to be carried out simultaneously.

RESOLVED - That the report and updates be noted.

SPTISH.25 COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE REPORT – QUARTER ONE 2024/25

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the Council's finance and resources position at the end of quarter one. This report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 21st August 2024 and subsequently referred to all scrutiny panels for further consideration.

The panel sought information on the projected £3.2m revenue budget overspend. Ms Wroot advised this was predominantly due to longstanding issues within children's services and that restorative work was ongoing to help minimise this.

The Chair requested the Corporation Road Bridge Project be removed as the top item in the overview of achievements within the Housing, Highways and Transport section of the report. Ms Wroot advised the report header was incorrectly worded and would be retitled overview of priorities and achievements.

The Chair noted sizeable budget variances within both the corporate and revenue budgets and sought clarification on significant movement of funds within the Housing, Highway and Transport Schemes. Ms Wroot advised the £1.4m corporate budget underspend was due to slippage in the capital programme and interest rates on investments remaining high. There was a forecasted decline in net commercial income due to pressures within commercial estates. Mr Thorpe confirmed budget movement was in part due to the availability of external funding. He also confirmed that the Sustainable Warmth Scheme had been closed due to a lack of eligible properties.

The Chair sought assurances that the increased level of borrowing was not cause for concern. Ms Wroot confirmed that the council finances

were safely within permitted borrowing limits and there was no cause for concern.

The panel sought clarification of the challenges devolution would have on the council's finances. Ms Wroot gave a brief update confirming perceived future challenges.

Members felt that some indicators could benefit from additional contextual information, for example, for the number of workless households, this could be expressed as a percentage of the total number of households in North East Lincolnshire.

Members showed concern for the reduction in footfall in the Town Centre and asked officers if they believed this was due to extensive roadworks. Officers advised although footfall was monitored, there was insufficient information to draw conclusions on this specific query.

Councillor S. Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) added he did not believe bus passenger numbers were a factor in the low footfall as they had seen an increase in passengers.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTISH.26 EQUANS PERFORMANCE REPORT

The panel received a report from EQUANS containing a summary of performance against key performance indicators for the period April to June 2024.

The panel raised the following issues:

- Section 19 investigations and trigger points
- Market Hall trader movement trends
- Market stall provision
- Business Centres
- Housing complaints

Mr Thorpe confirmed section 19 investigations involved finding solutions to resident's flooding incidents and trigger points were classed as major flood events which impact residents.

Mr Thorpe updated members on the trend of movement of market hall traders and confirmed that over the last five years there had been a decline in the number of longstanding traders and that new traders did not appear to have long term aspirations. Mr Thorpe advised that they were still receiving enquires from new traders.

Mr Jaines-White confirmed that the new market stall development was not like for like and current stall holders would not be guaranteed

provision in the new development. Ms Wroot confirmed that due diligence was being carried out with the inclusion of external advisors and officers were in constant contact with market traders.

Mr Thorpe confirmed that Business Centre occupancy levels had remained steady and provided an update on the challenges to attract new business.

On the issue of Housing complaints, Mr Thorpe advised that the number complaints were affected by seasonal fluctuations. He advised that they were actively encouraging landlords to provide remedial resolutions to minimise enforcement action.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTISH.27 REDEVELOPMENT OF TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKS

The panel considered a report on the proposed demolition and redevelopment of Abbey Walk Car Park (AWCP) and the redevelopment of Burgess Street Car Park (BSCP) in Grimsby.

Mr Evans provided a brief update and addressed the proposals for the decommissioning of AWCP and refurbishment of BSCP. Mr Evans responded to questions in relation to the reduction in parking spaces.

Ms Wroot assured members that all major capital projects were subject to the completion of a full business case. The decommissioning of AWCP and replacing it with a smaller provision and upgrading the BSCP would deliver on the demand for parking. Mr Evans referred to the legal obligation to provide appropriate parking spaces and reiterated that parking provision formed part of the council's ambitious master plan for town centre regeneration.

In response to queries around the need for parking in the town centre, Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council) confirmed that demand was much greater in the week, with car parks often at capacity, and endorsed the need for a parking survey as part of the business case.

Mr Evans confirmed that the costings for the project did not include the refurbishment of BSCP and advised additional funding would be in the region of £100,000.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations within the report now submitted be supported.

SPTISH.28 GRIMSBY TOWN TRANSPORT HUB DESIGN

The panel considered a report that provided feedback from stakeholder engagement and consultation undertaken during the design stage for the Transport Hub Project and presenting final concept designs.

Mr Evans confirmed that there would be a phased approach to the development of the Transport Hub. Phase one would involve external consultants being brought in to create outline design options and a full feasibility study involving consultation with stakeholders. Mr Evans confirmed that he would return to scrutiny once designs were available.

Expectation to align the demolition of both the AWCP and the access route to the new hub would help reduce costs and disruption. The removal of waste was a concern and Mr Evans was looking at all possible options.

The panel sought assurances regarding project funding as initial funds formed part of the devolution agreement. Mr Evans confirmed that the funding would shortly be received to enable the completion of phase one.

A panel member sought clarification on the future accessibility routes to the train station, as it was felt that there was need for a safer direct route from the new proposed transport hub. Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport) agreed this needed to be addressed and that network rail were keen for this to be investigated. Mr Evans advised this would form part of Phase 2.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations within the report now submitted be supported.

SPTISH.29 RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The panel considered a report that set out the key changes proposed by the Government to national planning policy and highlighting the implications for the local plan review.

Mr Jaines-White provided members with a short introduction. The panel were then invited to comment on the proposals and raised the following issues:

- The cumulative impact of any failure to meet the required five-year land supply – it was felt that the supply of land was out of the Council's control and there was limited land available within what is a relatively small Borough with a significant proportion allocated to

industry.

- The complexity of the consultation response document and the limited timescale for responses.
- Concerns were raised over the methodology used to calculate housing targets.
- No consideration had been given to the supporting infrastructure required for delivery of these targets.
- Concerns were raised that this would result in a decrease in affordable housing.
- The number of empty homes in North East Lincolnshire that could be included within the housing targets needed to be clarified along with the viability of bringing them back into use. Alternative options including demolition may need to be considered.
- The impact on greenfield development as it was felt some developers were more interested in gaps between villages than urban areas.
- Homelessness figures for North East Lincolnshire should be presented as evidence for the local housing requirement.
- Our ambition for economic growth and for our town centres should be the main driver for housing growth rather than imposed targets.
- Consideration should be given to the shortage of one bedroomed accommodation in North East Lincolnshire.

The panel supported the need for our growth plans to be ambitious but, in general, felt that the housing targets for North East Lincolnshire included as part of the consultation were too high. The panel asked that its comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration as part of the council's formal response to the consultation.

RESOLVED – That a Scrutiny Recommends paper be forwarded to Cabinet with the above comments.

SPTISH.30 NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE CONCESSIONARY FARES SURVEY

The panel considered a report setting out the findings of a concessionary fares survey.

The panel was keen to further explore bus usage and the impact of the national standard fare as well as the local subsidy of off-peak services.

As part of that, the panel requested a breakdown of bus usage at evenings and weekends.

RESOLVED –

1. That the findings of the Concessionary Fares survey be noted.
2. That the recommendations as set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.13 of the report now submitted, be endorsed.
3. That a breakdown of the number of passengers using buses at evenings and weekends be circulated to members of this panel.

SPTISH.31 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER NEGOTIATED STOPPING AGREEMENT UPDATE

The panel considered a briefing paper providing an update on the Gypsy and Traveller Negotiated Stopping Agreement.

Ms Robinson gave a brief update advising members that the number of Gypsy and Travellers to the region was still low and that there had been no successful negotiated stopping agreements to date as travellers had either refused to engage or already moved on

Ms Robinson advised members that welfare visits and waste disposal bins had been provided at each visit however, the waste left behind was considerable. Members enquired if there was an adequate supply of bins or if a skip would be more cost effective. Ms Robinson agreed to seek advice from colleagues in the waste team and update the panel accordingly.

RESOLVED –

1. That the briefing note be noted.
2. That an update be provided to members of this panel on the supply and adequacy of waste bins during traveller visits.

SPTISH.32 URGENT OFFICER DECISION NOTICES

The panel considered the process for dealing with urgent officer decisions.

Mr Windley updated the panel on the types of officer decisions. He advised that urgent officer decisions notices were only permitted in exceptional circumstances and required the agreement of the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED – That the explanation be noted.

SPTISH.33 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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

SPTISH.34 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 8.54 pm.