

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING CABINET ADVISORY GROUP held on WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor Marland (Chair)(Leader of the Council & Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning)

Councillors Ferrans, D Hopkins, Mahendran, Taylor and Trendall. J Race (Community Action).

Officers: P Thomas (Director of Planning and Placemaking) J Palmer (Head of Planning), A Turner (Planning Policy Manager), James Williamson (Monitoring and Implementation Team Leader) , Charlotte Stevens (Principal Planning Officer) , Sabina Kupczyk (Principal Planning Officer) , G Vincent (Democratic Services Officer).

Others Present: D Webber (HYAS Associates)

Apologies: H Chipping (SEMLEP) and Youth Cabinet Members.

CAG 01 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members, particularly the two new members of the Group, Councillor Mahendran and Josan Race, and reminded the Group of the function of the Cabinet Advisory Group. He further advised that the recording of the meeting would be made available on the Council's You Tube channel. The Chair then proceeded to inform the Group that due to the number of items on the Agenda, certain Items would be deferred, and would instead be discussed in the August CAG meeting. Moreover, the Chair stated that moving forward large documents and agendas would be approached differently. A Group Member voiced their support for this, and suggested that parts of the agenda could be provided earlier.

CAG 02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hopkins advised for transparency that he was a member of the board for MKDP.

Diane Webber advised the Group that she was the Chair of the Community Action MK trustees.

CAG 03 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 02 MARCH 2022 be agreed as an accurate record and the Chair to sign them as such.

CAG 04 LOCAL PLAN VISION, OBJECTIVES AND THEMES

The Chair advised that this item would be considered fully at a later meeting, and only an introduction was to be heard at this meeting, moreover he stated that the discussion around objectives and themes would be circulated to the wider council for feedback.

The report was introduced by the Planning Policy Manager, who informed the Group that work was underway, and that they were looking to base the vision on this and the achievements and objectives which had already been set out.

He further advised that whilst there was crossover between Vision objectives and sustainability objectives, this report was focused on broader high-level proposals rather than specifics. Following this, the Officer told the Group that feedback had been received from Councillor Ferrans, and that a statutory consultation, alongside engagement in Walton would be carried out.

This item was then opened for discussion with key points detailed below:

- A Member asked if a local plan inspector would have concerns for such a long-term vision and the Chair commented that it would effectively be a 14 year plan, as plans were already in place till 2036, and that it would not be in great detail at this stage. It was also stated that it would give communities involved an idea of the timeline involved.
- A Member asked what would happen if a site is allocated for 2040's but is not developed earlier and stated that it was difficult to defend those decisions. And to anticipate 25 years in advance, the Member then queried if it's possible to adjust as they go along. Officers responded that it's possible to phase the plan, but would need to work through how this would be dealt with and allocated. . The Chair informed the Member that it's possible to defend the sites which have not been allocated and are out of plan, however that due to other requirements such as infrastructure, it is hard to justify developments without an accurate evidence base.
- A Member then raised the concept of 15 minute neighbourhoods, and the lack of a specific definition in the plan, and asked for clarity on what it means, and what size of neighbourhood is considered viable for this. They were informed by Officers that work needed to be done with Neil Sainsbury and his team and on the specific details of the plan. The Chair commented on the initial intention of the walkable grids, noting the issues they had with communities and that this needed to be worked through.
- A Member inquired about the lack of services in some areas, and asked how this would be assessed. An Officer replied saying that 15 minute neighbourhoods are defined and that was taken into consideration when establishing the evidence base, as was the constraints of infrastructure, and the issue was being looked into, and that it was hoped that the plan could establish a truly accurate 15 min neighbourhood.
- Building upon this, a Member asked about the commercial viability of retail units within 15 minute neighbourhoods to check if they create a large enough catchment to be viable, stating the need to avoid empty shops. They were then told by Officers that a study would be conducted to consider questions such as that, and that it was a complex question that will be looked into later in the year.
- The Chair commented on the above points, stating that flexibility and timeframes were key, and the group needed to consider how much they can influence it, he also stated that business models change and that it was difficult to plan for the economic model of the future.
- A comment was made that the 15 minute neighbourhoods needed to be safe, and this was echoed by another Member, who also commented that the formatting of the objectives could be improved, and that the questions overlapped. Officers stated that this would be taken away and considered.

- One Member, referencing a recent example asked if there's provision to dictate what stores must provide if they replace an existing service. Officers advised the Group that they can't dictate provision like that, as the NPPF had changed and made it extremely difficult. On this point, the Chair advised that the market would assess the needs, and that if the land was not owned by MK Council they could not influence it, he then reiterated the need to be flexible when dealing with future developments. . Moreover, it was stated that planning new communities differ to existing estates, and that it would not form part of the community plan.
- The Western expansion area was raised by a Member, who commented on the necessity of owning a car to access essentials which hindered the growth of communities . The Group were subsequently advised the by the Chair that there is a shop within walking distance of Fairfield's, and emphasised the importance for new residents and communities to know of other areas and provision. The Chair then informed the Group that lessons learnt from other developments should be taken forward, but no need to reinvent the wheel.
- Following this, the need to provide basic infrastructure such as shops when creating communities was emphasised by a Group Member. The Chair acknowledged this, stating that some things such as schools and health centres which are open prior to development finishing are taken for granted. He then proceeded to highlight the difference between promises made but not delivered, and emphasised that it cannot have only houses there first, as it establishes the wrong behaviour, building upon this, the Chair brought up the importance of phasing and strategic phasing, and agreed that it was a helpful discussion to have.
- Finally, a Member commented on the need to avoid price inequality and the need to be aware of changing retail patterns.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed the report and agreed that the report in full would be considered at the August meeting of the CAG.

CAG 05 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES

RESOLVED –

This item was deferred to the August meeting of the CAG.

CAG 06 PAPER ON THE HEALTH THEME

RESOLVED –

This item was deferred to the August meeting of the CAG.

CAG 07 DRAFT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The report was presented by Officers, who stated that they had been working closely with the Communications team.

The presenting Officer provided an overview, highlighting that the briefing paper set out 3 key proposals and that its overall aim was to set a consistent approach. Officers then advised the Group that it was a working document, and that [Appendix 3](#) contained a detailed timeline of actions. Officers proceeded to give details of the proposed public engagement, stating that they were looking to start awareness

raising in September and that this would lead into a consultation on objectives. The Group were advised that a short consultation period of 4-6 weeks was proposed, and that this was not a formal process. Following this, Officers informed the Group of the proposed greater use of digital methods, in conjunction with traditional methods, as these were more appealing to young, disabled, and time poor people. It was stated that they were hoping to achieve a microsite for the local plan, which could host information and would be easy to find, they finished by raising the matter of dedicated branding for the local plan.

Feedback was then received from the Group, one Member stated that they fully support all mediums, but compounded the need to keep using traditional means. Moreover, the need to be aware of other ongoing consultations and potential crossovers, and that these circumstances needed to be considered. Following this, the possibility of using the branding provided by the Youth Cabinet was mentioned. The Chair's response was to state that they should not overcomplicate it, and that the Youth Cabinet not wholly representative of the large number of young people. In response to these comments, Officers acknowledged the issues with other ongoing consultations, and that whilst the Youth Cabinet was a useful sounding board, it was challenging to engage young people universally.

Another Member stated that it was generally good, but raised concerns over the public engagement process, particularly the 4-week consultation period as well as a lack of exhibitions. The Member provided further feedback on the website, recommending the inclusion of a chat facility, whilst also commenting that the procurement process might have been too quick, before proceeding to request a glossary of the technical evidence listed.

Members of the Group voiced their agreement and concern regarding a 4-week consultation process, and it was agreed that a 6-week process would be both more achievable and fairer, and would accommodate Parish Council meeting cycles. In response Officers advised Members that by utilising weighted consultations, it would allow them to get the message across.

The Chair then summed up, stating that it was a good report and that constructive comments had been received.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the report.

CAG 08

HIGHLIGHT REPORT AND KEY EVIDENCE BASE UPDATES

This Item was introduced by the Planning Policy Manager who summarised the report for the Group, and noted that several studies were ongoing at the time of the meeting, with 9 underway, 6 being scoped and more to begin in due course.

A Member asked if there would be consultation for these documents, which could potentially help point out mistakes, but was advised by the presenting Officer that they usually wouldn't consult at this stage, but would instead have a programme and be shared with stakeholder groups such as the CAG for comments. It was emphasised that Councillors were primarily involved in the inception stage and at the end to gauge its achievements.

Following this, a Member requested to view the Bletchley consultation, stating that it was essential that it be shared. Officers informed both them and the Group that a draft was now ready, and it had already had a consultation with Parish Councils, Officers added to this, commenting that there would be wider engagement, which would be a full consultation in a draft report.

Subsequently, Officers stated that a physical assessment has been completed, and that stakeholder feedback had been gathered, before advising the Group that a consultation for parishes to consider it would be undertaken.

Officers then proceeded to introduce the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, which considered the need of both permanent and transient residents. It was noted by Officers that there had been a recent increase in unauthorised encampments, and they acknowledged the concerns. It was further stated by Officers that the report was based on older data but that they were willing to revisit it with updated information, it was also acknowledged by Officers that it was not a solution for current issues, but a plan for the future.

Members then made the following comments on the report:

- The Chair inquired about the number of pitches, and was told by the presenting Officer that some sort of solution would need to be provided, with 9 pitches being necessary, and by providing 20 brick and mortar dwellings it would help in the future.
- The Chair proceeded to comment on the necessity of a plan to 2050 rather than 2040, and was told by Officers that there was a review process in place, this would be taken on board.
- A Member commented that Brick and mortar provision was not always suitable, and suggested the provision of mobile facilities to help mitigate waste at the site.
- It was noted by both a Member and the Chair that following development of existing areas, there would be less sites suitable for large groups.

Officers then introduced the landscape assessment, stating that they would be publishing the study, as well as compiling information on local landscaping to help evaluate the current effectiveness of policy.

The Chair commented that it was a good paper, and would be noted.

An update was then provided on the land availability assessment, and it was stated that there had been two significant developments, firstly that a consultation on the draft methodology document had occurred, which had not highlighted any issues.

The Group were advised that the call for sites had been conducted from January to April, with 121 sites submitted. Officers clarified that a further 460 sites had been identified, and that it was an ongoing process, so this was subject to change.

Officers informed the Group that the next stage was mapping the sites and conducting an initial assessment, with the stage 1 assessment hoping to be reported back to CAG in July, and the detailed stage 2 assessment would begin in August and be presented in the New Year.

Members then commented on the Report:

- A Member raised concerns that due to the Parish Councils not meeting in August, feedback would be missed, but was reassured by Officers and the Chair that it was not a formal consultation, and would continue until the new year, allowing Parish Councils to advise on the suitability for sites.
- Another point was raised by Member's, querying whether there would be sequential testing for every proposed site. In response, Officers informed the Member that the stage 1 assessment would eliminate any sites in flood zones 2 or 3, and that the remaining sites would be looked at closely in the stage 2 assessment. It was further stated by Officers that if sites were selected, a sequential assessment would be conducted and that it might be helpful to create a document depicting the criteria for site selection.
- A Member commented that the process of site selection needed to be robust and fair, and sought assurances from officers that no areas would be favoured over another. The Chair responded to this, emphasising the advisory nature of the CAG, and stating that the process was transparent and fair, with the meetings of CAG being recorded, minute and held publicly.

Officers then stated that it was a never-ending process, with sites being submitted at any time. Looking into tools to make lives easier, and advises of the contribution of the public submitting sites at other authorities.,

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the report.

CAG 09

PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW REPORT

At the start of this item, the Chair stated that the report had been to both Planning and Scrutiny committees, and asked for contributions or comments.

A Member commented that it would be good to be more considerate of Plan MK and the Carbon Neutral Plan, but acknowledged it was difficult to stick to those targets.

The Chair then also commented on the report, stating that whilst it was good that Planning Policy was well received, he had hoped that the report would be different and would have been focused on development management, he also told the Group that discussions were underway to integrate the various plans and strategies.

Officers reiterated this, informing the Group that aligning the council plan with the 2050 strategy was a good recommendation, and would benefit the Council.

The Chair then proceeded to request 6 monthly updates on the Planning Academy, and praised the work that had occurred so far.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the report.

MEETING CLOSED AT 19:58