

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING CABINET ADVISORY GROUP held on WEDNESDAY 17 AUGUST 2022 at 6.00 pm

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

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

Officers: P Thomas (Director of Planning and Placemaking) J Palmer (Head of Planning), A Turner (Planning Policy Manager), Luke Gledhill (Principal Planning Officer) , G Vincent (Democratic Services Officer).

Others Present: Oliver Mytton (Former deputy director of Public Health and Consultant)

Apologies: Councillor Chris Taylor, H Chipping (SEMLEP) and Youth Cabinet Members.

CAG 10 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members and 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 this meeting followed on from previous CAG Meeting, and that whilst Item 5 & 7 were circulated with the previous agenda, an updated Item 6 had been circulated as part of an Update Paper.

CAG 11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

CAG 12 LOCAL PLAN VISION, OBJECTIVES AND THEMES

This report was introduced by Officer's, who commented that it had been briefly outlined at the previous meeting but would be addressed in detail at the meeting.

The Group were informed that the report proposed a vision and objectives which was built upon completed work and consultations and that it was looking to put it into the context and detail of the local plan. Officers advised that there were 4 main themes: economic & cultural prosperity, high quality homes & neighbourhoods, healthy places, and climate & environmental action. It was stated that these were linked into and based on sustainability objectives and the council plan as well as the priorities identified at past meetings of the CAG.

The Chair then reiterated the purpose of the group, and advised that they were not looking to reinvent the strategy for 2050, but instead wanted advice on the best way to implement it. He then informed the Group that their objective was to protect the unique character of Milton Keynes whilst taking forward the principles established for 2050, and that this would be tested utilising the evidence base.

Other Members of the Group then contributed to the debate, stating that:

- One Member's observation was that a planning inspector might not accept such a long-term plan, and that instead shorter plans might allow for bolder and varied development. A further comment was made, emphasising the importance of providing context to ensure the plan is deliverable. The Chair's response was to inform the Member and the Group that the advice received stated that it was better to build large developments as this

allowed for the delivery of infrastructure. The Chair continued by stating that the Plan sought to avoid speculative development and provide clarity and certainty to communities.

- Members echoed this concern over the length of the plan, and that due to the potential changes, it was impossible to be certain of its suitability. In response the Chair advised that the fundamental need for housing was constant, and that the Plan's primary purpose was to provide this and that the decisions taken when constructing the Plan would impact this.
- Another Member raised two potential issues with the report, namely that water was not mentioned and thus protected by the climate and environment section, and that the economic development section did not mention the variety of employment sites.
- Further comments were heard by a Member who addressed the use of 15 minute neighbourhoods, and suggested that the term should potentially be replaced as the nature of walkable neighbourhoods had changed and that the role of them should be looked at. In response to the comments from Members regarding the role of the 15 minute neighbourhood, the Chair reiterated to the Group that whilst there were various potential reasons for the differing use across the city, the reasoning behind any potential changes would need to be evidential based and that a better framework was needed to address the question of 15 minute neighbourhoods.
- A point was then made by Members regarding the impact of 15 minute neighbourhoods on commercial sustainability, and the negative effect this could have on small businesses, since commercial viability was essential to providing the community with the necessary amenities.
- Members also concurred that the Plan ought to be both flexible and unique, with one emphasising the importance of connectivity also, which the Chair observed was similar to the main themes of the MK Future: Strategy for 2050.

The Chair then summed up, stating that the group was mostly in agreement, and that amendments would be made to address the concerns over the omission of water from the plan and the need for variety of employment prior to the delegated decision being taken.

Officers and the Chair advised that the next steps would be a consultation following a delegated decision, and that further consideration could take place at the delegated decision.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the report.

CAG 13

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES

Officers introduced this item, informing the Group that it was a legal requirement which sets out objectives to assess proposals and policies against. They advised that it was structured by economy, environment and social traditionally, but was now structured by themes. Officers informed the Group that it was currently at a scoping stage, and that it was focused on establishing what the objectives are and how they linked to the local plan themes.

The Chair then began the debate by recommending a change to objective 1, to ensure that the need to retain unique character but also be sustainable was prominent. He then proceeded to praise officers for the work done, and stated that it was comprehensive but needed to tie into wording which had just been discussed to ensure the usage of consistent terminology and principles throughout the Plan.

A Member informed the Group that they had various observations, suggesting that the section relating to the viability of the MRT was dependent on the usage of those outside the city centre, and that it ought to be under objective 3 rather than 10. The Chair acknowledged this point, stating that it was more dependent on those outside the city centre, he proceeded to raise the possibility of utilising existing infrastructure in conjunction with the MRT.

It was further suggested that the point relating to multiple deprivation should be rephrased to reflect expectations rather than the ideal. This point was taken under consideration by both Officers and the Chair, who stated that causes of deprivation could only be influenced slightly by the planning system, but confirmed that it would be reflected upon.

The Chair proceeded to highlight the importance of ensuring that transport from new developments would enable people to access the city centre.

The Chair advised that following the approval of the report by the CAG, the report would move towards being approved by delegated decision.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the Report.

CAG 14

PAPER ON THE HEALTH THEME

Oliver Mytton, former deputy director for Public Health was introduced by the Chair to the Group. Officers alongside Oliver then proceeded to introduce the report, they advised that paper had been prepared as the beginning of a living document which would address the themes raised earlier and would be brought back to the Group.

The Group were advised that there were numerous factors which affect health which could be influenced through the planning system. Obesity & physical activity, mental health and health inequalities were identified as the three most pressing problems, which could begin to be addressed in this meeting. The importance of health, and establishing its relationship to the planning process was highlighted.

Officers commented that work had been done to help identify how the plan was responding to health challenges, and the potential evidence base for this.

Officers further emphasised the importance of having clear objectives, as well as advised the group that there would be a detailed health assessment carried out by the Public Health team. They advised that they were looking to include health matters as part of the site selection and assessment criteria. Officers subsequently informed the Group that this would be highlighted and depicted in a health topic paper, which was working to determine what evidence would need to be commissioned to evaluate what needs to be done, in particular to reduce health inequalities. Officers suggested that a separate study be conducted through the local plan to address health inequality in neighbourhoods both as part of the plan and across the council.

Following this, the Chair opened the item for debate:

One Member asked if Officers were aware of what impacted the use of underpasses, and could potentially discourage their use whilst also establishing the grid roads as barriers. Officers and the Chair responded, stating that whilst there was evidence that busy roads or railways restricted movement and the growth of communities, the health inequality could not be solely attributed to this, and that the potential reasons and causes would need to be established through an evidence base.

A Member then commented on the need to plan for a number of factors, including noise levels, safety, clean air, reduced stress and access to health, education, and community facilities, as well as highlighting the need for the provision of bungalows and the issues of homeworking. In response, the Chair commented that recent developments had received their infrastructure early, and that instead there was a need to ensure that existing communities without developments did not get forgotten.

A number of matters were raised, including healthy meals, access to health facilities, and affordable housing, which were addressed by stating that income had the largest impact on health and that alternative affordable housing such as HMO's were required to help provide for this.

Group Members commented on the health gap for minority communities, and queried if there were studies or solutions for this. In response, the Chair and Officers advised that this was a priority for Public Health, and would be addressed more by them. The Chair continued by stating that the shifting demographics must be considered when addressing this issue and it needed to be looked at through determinants and an evidential base.

Following this, the next steps were discussed, with the possibility of a dedicated meeting focused on identifying the emergent themes raised, Officers then acknowledged that the matter could not be completely resolved by Planning.

Officers then informed the Group that there was a need to articulate the evidence in an understandable format, and that there would be topic papers on various other topics established in a work programme.

Officers sought feedback from Members of the group that the theme based approach was effective, and it was stated by Group Members that it was, with one

Member suggesting that specific areas still be looked at separately, to ensure suitability.

The Chair summed up, highlighting the advantages of a broad approach to the plan and the intersecting themes, before proceeding to voice his support for the approach and work of the Officers.

RESOLVED –

The Group discussed and noted the Report.

MEETING CLOSED AT 19:58