



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR REGENERATION, PLANNING, HOUSING AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Date and time	THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2019 AT 5PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Steve Hastings (Chairman), Michael Beston, Geoff Brodie, Andrew Garratt, John Medland, Chris Quirk, Brian Tyndall
Cabinet Members Present	Cllrs Barry Abraham, John Hobart, Dave Stewart, Ian Ward, Wayne Whittle
Other Members Present	Cllr Julie Jones-Evans, Cllr George Cameron
Officers Present	Chris Ashman, Ashley Curzon, Jim Fawcett, Sarah MacDonald, Paul Thistlewood

20. Minutes

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2018 be confirmed.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

22. Public Question Time

An oral question was asked by Tanja Rebel of Cowes, on whether the committee could look into the fact that she believed people had been denied the ability to ask a question at meetings. The chairman advised that her latest question was more relevant to the overall Scrutiny committee and she should direct her question to that Committee. He also advised that questions had not been allowed as similar questions had been asked in the last 6 months and this was not permitted under the Council's constitution.

Ms Rebel asked what statement would be put in planning policy framework regarding fracking and 5G. She was advised that this was a matter for

planning, but that the council retain control over fracking and to date no applications had been received. Nothing was being done on 5G as this was not currently available on the Island.

23. Visit Isle of Wight

Will Myles, Managing Director of Visit Isle of Wight gave an overview of the 2018 season and proposals for 2019. The figures for 2018 had been launched that day and indicated that visitor number had slightly increased despite the very poor spring weather. The increase in visitor numbers was attributed to the shoulder months. In the 12 month period the visitor spend had increased by 9% to £303 million.

For 2019 there would be a campaign called “Discover the Isle of Wight for...” based around various themes including local history and promoting local produce and there would be other press and PR activity throughout the year.

2018 press and PR activity brought an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of £3,900,000, compared to £2,728,000 in the previous year.

Cllr Garratt asked whether Visit IW would consider using another method such as Barcelona principles for measurement which were used internationally rather than Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) as it was hugely deprecated in the PR industry. Mr Myles explained that AVE had been used for many years and it would be difficult to change however, other suggestions were welcomed.

There would be a report going live on the Visit IW website the following day featuring the 2018 figures and highlighting the 2019 campaign.

Members were updated on the D-Bid and it was explained that this was at mid-stage and various options were being considered.

The Chairman asked whether there was any representation on the board from small businesses and this was confirmed.

The Chairman also asked whether there could be a levy for vehicles on the ferries as a means of generating income and was informed that this was in a pot of ideas for discussion and taking forward. Legislation would be required to implement this.

RESOLVED:

- a) Will Myles be thanked for providing the update.
- b) Councillor Garratt meet with Will Myles to discuss the current method of data collection by Visit Isle of Wight.
- c) Details of the outcomes of the 2018 season together with the 2019 campaign be circulated to members.

24. **Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings**

The first four items on the workplan were covered separately in the Agenda.

It was suggested that the workplan should be updated to remove outdated items, and this was agreed.

Cllr Garratt referred to the proposed workplan item on private streets/unadopted roads. He had discovered a private road with street lights maintained under the PFI contract and hoped that this issue could be included as part of that item.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted and updated the workplan to remove outdated items.

25. **Regeneration Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing and the Director of Regeneration gave an update on how housing projects were moving forward. The Cabinet Member gave an update on progress being made with various sites. The need to build more low cost housing had been identified. Progress was being made quite quickly. It was agreed that the backing and support of the community would be required. The Director explained that the viability of each project would need to be looked at to ensure that it met local needs.

The Director explained that there was an existing partnership with the private sector – Property Services Partnership - assisting with the delivery of schemes.

The Chairman agreed that it was good to see progress with affordable housing being made so quickly. This was supported by the committee and it was believed that it would be beneficial to have an informal briefing so to gain a better understanding of all the issues. With regard to the issue of private rented accommodation there was some concern that the Council was considering providing private rented accommodation on Council land.

The Cabinet Member also stated that the current emergency housing was not fit for purpose and said that this could be covered in the informal briefing.

Members welcomed the report and were pleased to see progress being made quickly. They enquired as to whether critical pathways were produced for each project, and what were the issues that could delay them. The Director confirmed this and offered to provide the information to Members. He confirmed that in order to set up a company to take forward projects, the research, set-up and financial stages could take some time. The Cabinet Member explained that each site would bring its own challenges but that they would identify which schemes would be quickest to implement so that outcomes could be seen.

Members were interested in whether the IW Council could consider making loans to help people get mortgages. The Cabinet Member agreed to make enquiries with relevant officers. The Director explained the difference between the roles of the housing partnership group and the Housing Associations and how the council was working with them.

Members enquired as to the nature of the proposed housing campaign, what activities would be happening, where best practice been identified and how the public would be involved. The Cabinet Member confirmed that it would be encouraged through the Local Plan review. Town and Parish Councils were being given more time to respond. The consultation had been extended and this would be followed by more contact with them. It was agreed that it was critical to get them on board and work more efficiently with them through the Planning process. He was looking at what other Councils had done.

The Director confirmed that there would be community-led housing projects, with a proactive approach. He offered to share some examples outside the meeting. It was proposed to target efforts around different sectors such as independent living and promote the benefits of each, with a case-study type approach.

With regard to other regeneration projects the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Business Development reported that £30 million would be committed from the proposed capital budget in the coming year. He also announced that there had been a £0.75 million commitment from Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to enable public buildings to form fibre hubs in the south and west of the Isle of Wight to complement Wight Fibre in the east. It would make the Isle of Wight one of the first in the UK to have 100% coverage, which would be good for rural areas and for business growth.

The Cabinet Member also reported that he was setting up a working group in Ryde with the Town Council, Business Association which community groups could feed into. They would be considering proposals for the government's competitive Future High Streets fund. A panel would be set up to provide advice on the proposals to ensure the best chance of success. He explained that only one bid could go forward.

Cllr Jones-Evans asked whether the criteria had been released for assessing bids for the Future High Streets fund as she had been unable to find it and in particular the scoring sheet. The Director of Regeneration confirmed that he would provide her with the information she required.

The Committee Members were keen to have sight of the regeneration programme spreadsheet in good time before the next meeting so they could read it more fully and formulate questions. The Director of Regeneration indicated that it was a working document and that he wanted to be able to provide the most up to date information but accepted that Members would like it 2-3 days before the meeting, with a verbal update if necessary on the day.

RESOLVED:

- a) The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing be requested to arrange a member briefing on the progress with the establishment of a Housing Delivery Company and the projected benefits of this.
- b) The Director of Regeneration be requested to make the progress report on the delivery of the regeneration programme available earlier and provide an update where necessary at the meeting.

26. Environmental Action Plan

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Heritage presented his report, following a commitment made in June 2018 at the Environmental Conference.

The Council were committed to doing more and have been working through suggestions made at the Conference. It would be taking forward a programme of policy development aiming to tackle two issues per year, starting with green travel plan and plastics free policy, and would also put in place planning policy to ensure the regeneration programme incorporated environmental issues.

There was a need to start making a difference in 2019 and it was proposed to support the take up of electric vehicles and provide financial support for the Chamber of Commerce's Green Impact programme. The Council would adopt a 'walking and cycling' approach to new road developments.

It was identified that a more strategic approach was required with Visit IW and Natural Enterprise. If the Biosphere Reserve status was approved, AONB would lead on a separate action plan.

The Cabinet Member said that he would welcome comments and advice from the Committee on how projects could best be delivered.

Members welcomed the report and were pleased to see lots of ideas but queried how they would move forward, whether any of them could be revenue-generating and whether they could be prioritised in any regeneration work.

The Cabinet Member stated that he would be working with local Universities and the Higher Education sector. He reported that the Council was already working with SSE to upgrade electrical connections with the mainland. Investment in marine turbines was currently on hold, until the government came forward in support with grant money, but was still in a position to move forward whenever that happened.

A further suggestion was to bring in more electric vehicle charging points, along with incentives such as offering free parking for a year or other incentives for electric vehicles. The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure agreed that this may be possible.

The Leader stated that there was a challenge with investment funding with the government setting very high standards. However, it was confirmed that there were local sources of investment funds for good commercial cases.

Officers explained that the Council was trying to show that there was a lot which could be done without additional resources, e.g. the implementation of 20 mph quiet lanes in some areas would demonstrate that the Council was doing something.

Members expressed a desire to see quantifiable outcomes at a later stage to show what the Council was trying to achieve and measure itself against, and to identify any barriers to achieving them. They welcomed lots of ideas but would like to see the strategic side of things with some key performance indicators in any future report.

It was explained to members that the idea had been to distill ideas which had been provided and it was accepted that there was a need to do further work on these.

Cllr Jones-Evans reported on the Green Impact scheme. She thanked the Council for financial support and reported that 60 local businesses had signed up to the scheme and 450 actions had been taken to date by those businesses, such as reducing waste etc. She offered to give a further presentation at a future date if required. The Chairman thanked Cllr Jones-Evans for the update and for her involvement. It was agreed that it was a good report, and something to go forward with. He asked if the Committee could have an update in 6 months' time.

RESOLVED:

- a) The Environmental Action Plan be welcomed and the proposals contained within it be fully supported.
- b) An update on initial progress with the Action Plan be submitted to the Committee in six month's time.

27. Grass Verge Ecosystem – Dorset

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Heritage reported on his visit with the Chairman to Dorset to look at their implementation of a grass verge ecosystem. The committee were encouraged by the report and how the system encourages wildlife whilst making savings for the council. It was also suggested that having 'heritage' verges in some areas would help with the Biosphere designation and could increase the AONB and SSSI areas.

The Cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure indicated that the visit was very timely as the PFI contract was being reviewed and that this could be considered as part of the review and may be able to save money for the Council.

Officers pointed out that the IW Council is in a contractual arrangement with Island Roads and they would need to be involved in any conversations relating to the matter.

RESOLVED:

The report of the Chairman and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Heritage be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure and he be requested to discuss the adoption of a grass verge ecosystem as operated in Dorset.

28. IW Records Office – progress report

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Heritage updated the Committee on the progress being made to relocate the records office to Westridge and said that a survey was currently being undertaken and that he would update the Committee further as things progressed.

It was explained that work was being done with National Archives to explore the feasibility of the site for the storage of records but there would be a substantial capital cost to this. The committee were concerned that the alternative would be that the records would have to go off the Island to be stored and that this would be undesirable.

It was also reported that the Chairman of the Council had commented following a recent visit to another council, where their artefacts were displayed, that she would like to see the same on the Island, rather than them being hidden away.

The Leader explained that it was hoped that, if the site was deemed suitable, the storage of the records and display of artefacts could be part of a larger heritage centre to which the public would have access. There could also be certain commercial opportunities for the council. Officers would therefore be encouraged to give the matter priority.

The Committee expressed a wish to visit the site and see it for themselves.

RESOLVED:

- a) The current position be noted
- b) A site visit be arranged for the committee to view the proposed site of the new record office and the artefacts stored at Cothey Bottom.

29. Islandline

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure reported that there was no further update from the Department for Transport (DfT) but that the matter was still in hand. He had been advised by the DfT not to expect a decision before the end of the financial year.

Cllr Ward stated that Network Rail were to invest £25million in upgrading Ryde Pier.

There has been some discussion with the IW Steam Railway regarding extending to Ryde St John's, however nothing would happen until the DfT had made their decision.

The Chairman reported that he had seen Chris Garnett at a recent event and had indicated that he would like to invite him to come along to the next meeting of the Committee in May, to which he had agreed.

RESOLVED:

- a) It was noted that no decision had been made by the Department of Transport on the submission made by South Western Trains on proposed infrastructure improvements.
- b) Mr Chris Garnett be invited to attend the meeting of the committee on 2 May 2019 to give an overview of progress with the work of the Transport Infrastructure Task Group

30. Cabinet Members Update

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure reported that the Contract Management team were currently understaffed and this had impacted upon the ability to effectively monitor the delivery of the contract.

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure also advised that officers were still looking at the delivery and monitoring arrangements for proposed highway PFI savings.

31. Committee's Work Plan

Members noted the Forward Plan for the period February to May 2019.

Members indicated that they would like the new senior officer responsible for housing to give an update to the Committee of the current figures regarding housing lists on the IW, with specific details of problem areas.

RESOLVED:

- a) There would be an item on the agenda for the 2 May 2019 relating to the speed limit policy.

- b) A report was requested on current data on the housing waiting list and associated matters.

32. **Members' Question Time**

There were no Members' questions.

CHAIRMAN