

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND STRATEGIC TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Economic Growth and Strategic Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF** on **Tuesday 13 December 2016** at **10.00 a.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor A. Sambrook
(in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Cairns, H.
Nisbet, K.

Riddle, J.
Wallace, A.

OFFICERS

Bowers, H.
Ketley, M.
Murphy, J.
Nicholson, S.

Democratic Services Officer
Head of Planning Services
Principal Planning Officer
Scrutiny Officer

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Castle, Douglas, Grimshaw, Horncastle and Tebbutt.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Economic Growth and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 November, 2016, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

34. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The published Forward Plan for December 2016 to March 2017 (attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix A**) was presented.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY CABINET

35. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LOCAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

Rent Setting Policy

Members were asked to note the extract of Minutes from the meeting of Cabinet on 6 December 2016 in relation to the above report which had previously been considered by this Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET

36. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ECONOMY

(a) Planning Protocol on the Pre-Application Advice Process and Planning Applications Validation Checklist

The report (**attached as Appendix B to the signed minutes**) sought the approval of a new planning protocol relating to the Pre-Application Advice Process and also proposed changes to the Planning Application Validation Checklist.

Mark Ketley, Head of Planning Services introduced the report to the committee and advised that there were two elements to the report; the new Pre-Application Advice Protocol and the revised Planning Application Validation Checklist.

Previous revisions to the Pre-Application Advice Protocol had been approved by Cabinet in September 2015. Since then the pre-application process had been kept under review and it had been considered beneficial for additional changes to be made to address some concerns raised by developers and agents. The amended protocol set out a number of proposed changes to the current pre-application advice and also offered a more detailed element of technical specialist input, e.g., highways and public protection, and the re-introduction of a domestic/small scale development 'Do I need planning permission?' service.

The revisions to the Planning Application Validation Checklist were necessary to reflect changes in recent statutory and policy requirements, and also to bring fees more in line with other North East Councils.

The Planning Application Validation Checklist dictated what was to be submitted with a planning application and the current validation checklist needed to be updated to reflect the NPPF and National Policy Guidance and more recently the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy. A revised

validation checklist had been prepared for a 6 week consultation which would end on 25 January 2017, prior to being adopted by the Council.

Judith Murphy, Principal Planning Officer added that the timeframe for responses from developers had been extended in order to give a complete comprehensive response before being submitted for consideration.

Members commented on the equality of the fee structure; individual self-build plots on large developments and if applicants were informed of the consultee responses. The Head of Planning Services took on board the comments regarding the fee structure and stated that it was up to the individual whether pre-application advice was taken. Applicants would be informed of internal consultee responses to ensure that information was provided at the earliest possible stage. The Principal Planning Officer added that the policy was all encompassing and if minimal information was received, further information could be provided at a later date. Members were further advised that an officer would be available at any time for an informal discussion or verbal advice.

A member requested that reference be made to 'dark skies' in Note 20, in the first paragraph relating to Lighting on page 45.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee recommended that:-

1. The new Pre-Application Advice Protocol be approved, and
2. The revised Planning Application Validation Checklist be approved and authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to make any necessary amendments to the document following expiry of the formal consultation period on 25 January 2017.

(b) Commuted Sum (section 106 Agreements) Developer Fund for Affordable Housing Protocol

The report (**attached as Appendix C**) sought approval for the publication and implementation of a Commuted Sums (Section 106 Agreements) - Developer Fund for Affordable Housing Protocol which would be used to determine and secure off-site affordable housing contributions and provide a framework for the future allocation and use of commuted sums.

The Head of Planning Services introduced the report to the Committee and advised of the sums available to be allocated. The report and the accompanying documents proposed a framework as to how the commuted sums could be allocated for potential use.

Applications could be made by parish and town councils and other not for profit organisations and would be considered by a cross-service officer panel who would allocate the funds. It was proposed that the panel would consist of the Head of Housing, Head of Planning Services, S106 Officer, an Affordable

Housing Officer and Strategic Estates Officer. Members were asked for their thoughts on the structure. After some discussion it was considered that the panel should consist of five officers, the Cabinet member and a member from each political group. The Ward Member should also be invited to the panel in order to put forward the application but not take part in the decision process.

It was suggested that information be promoted on the Council's website that funds were available for certain areas.

RESOLVED that Cabinet

1. Approves the draft Commuted Sums (Section 106 Agreements) - Developer Fund for Affordable Housing Protocol;
2. Approves the measures set out within the draft Protocol by which commuted sums for affordable housing purposes are to be allocated;
3. Approves the draft Housing Developer Fund application form for use with immediate effect; and
4. Approves the proposed membership of the Housing Developer Fund evaluation panel and delegates authority to the panel to make recommendations for approval of successful applications to facilitate further affordable housing delivery across the County.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ECONOMY

37. Housing and Planning Act: Implications for Northumberland

The report (**attached as Appendix D**) provided members with an update on the implications of the Housing and Planning Act (2016) for Northumberland.

The Head of Planning Services informed members that the Act had introduced a number of changes which would have implications for, amongst other things, the provision of new housing in relation to starter homes, self-build and custom house building and welcomed questions from members.

Members commented on the implications for self-builders, self-build legislation and sought clarification on the types of self-build. It was advised that there was a self-build customer register on the Council's website and any self-build scheme submitted would be fully appraised and assessed.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

38. Economic Growth and Strategic Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee's work programme was attached as **Appendix E** to the signed minutes

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

The following report was for information only and could be accessed through Northumberland County Council's Website. If a member of the Committee would like further explanation of the report, or had questions they wished to put to the relevant Cabinet Member, he/she should contact Democratic Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements could be made.

39. POLICY DIGEST

The report gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to Members.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Chair _____

Date _____