

Economic Regeneration, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Wednesday 20 April 2016

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Daryl Brown, Adam Connell and Alan De'Ath (Chair)

Other Councillors: Stephen Cowan and Max Schmid

Officers: Peter Kemp

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ivimy and Phibbs. Councillor Sue Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, had also sent her apologies for not being at the meeting.

The Chair said that he was disappointed that neither opposition member was at the meeting as he thought it was important that they were involved in scrutinising the administration. He also noted that Councillor Phibbs had asked for the report on the use of S.106 Money for Training and Skills which the meeting would be considering.

The Chair also apologised that there was not more on the agenda; unfortunately other reports scheduled for the meeting had needed to be withdrawn.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016 were agreed to be accurate.

44. USE OF S106 FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS

Peter Kemp, Planning Change Manager, explained that the report provided an overview of how the council used S.106 funds for training and skills.

The council's planning policy DM B3 – Local employment, training and skills development initiatives, stated that 'the council will seek appropriate employment and training initiatives for local people of all abilities in the construction of major developments and in larger employment generating developments, including visitor accommodation and facilities when these are completed.

Mr Kemp then explained that the council currently held £742,638 for Training and Skills, although the individual agreements meant that the ways in which the money could be spent were restricted. The council did not currently centrally hold information about how previous S.106 money intended for these purposes had been spent, but the Economic Regeneration team was currently carrying out a review. As well as financial contributions, developers often offered apprenticeships and work placements; around 120 apprenticeships had been offered as a result of S.106 agreements.

Mr Kemp explained that much of the mitigation previously covered by S.106 agreements was being moved to a new charge called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); Training and skills are likely to be outside of the scope of CIL and so the use of S.106 agreements for this purpose would continue.

Councillor Connell said that it was important that the council spend the funds currently held well, and also praised the current administration for their renegotiation of agreements to increase the amount of money the council could spend on improving services.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Cowan, outlined the administration's vision for training and skills. The council wanted to use money to not only help its residents find jobs, but to help them find good jobs in emerging areas of the economy. He explained that the council was working with partners to increase opportunities in the fields of micro-biology, digital industries and the arts. This included giving funding to organisations such as the Lyric theatre and the Bush theatre, as well as providing affordable office space for new businesses.

Councillor Connell said that it was important that the council identified the skills which would be useful in five years' time so that residents had the skills needed to get jobs for the long term. He supported the council's focus on arts and culture as these fields were currently being neglected by others but could provide good employment for residents.

Councillors discussed the current planning policy's focus on delivering jobs in construction, which it was felt didn't address residents needs for training and long term career opportunities. As decisions on planning applications were made based on the policies in the development plan, members discussed the need for the policy to be updated to meet the aspirations of the council.

RESOLVED

That the committee recommend that policy DM B3 be altered to cover a wider range of sectors of the economy as well as emerging sectors. The motion was proposed by Councillor Connell, seconded by Councillor Brown and agreed unanimously.

45. RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

A resident asked the what the council's view on the housing crisis was. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Cowan, explained that the administration wanted to provide genuinely affordable housing in mixed communities. He explained that through negotiations with developers he had secured considerable amounts of S.106 money which would be used to provide more affordable housing in the borough, including housing at social rents. A resident asked what genuinely affordable housing meant. Councillor Cowan said that it meant between 25 and 45 percent of market rent, rather than the 80 percent suggested by government.

A resident raised concerns about the housing department and how the service was run. The Chair agreed to discuss these with the resident after the meeting.

46. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING AND WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor De'Ath explained that the work programme was likely to change over the next few days.

Councillor Connell asked that KPIs for Mitie be brought to a meeting soon.

Meeting started: 19.00
Meeting ended: 19.50

Chair

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Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting as a correct record of the proceedings and any amendments arising will be recorded in the minutes of that subsequent meeting.