

Luton & South Beds JP&TC

Notes of the Meeting of the Member Steering Group held at South Bedfordshire District Council offices on 25th May 2007

Present:

Members:

Cllr Tom Nicols (Chair) (SBDC)
Cllr Roy Davis (LBC)
Cllr John Scott (BedsCC)

Officers:

Richard Watts (BedsCC)
Ian Slater (LBC)
Alan Storah (LBC)
Keith Dove (LBC)
John Hoad (SBDC)
Bijon Bhowmick (Project Co-ordinator)
Sara Kennedy* (SBDC) *Attended for Item 1 only

Apologies Rec'd: None

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>Consultation Plan Report</u></p> <p>SK tabled copies of "Detailed Consultation Plan Report". She then took the members through the various key aspects of the report and sought their guidance in respect of the way forward. After a lengthy discussion, members generally agreed the main thrust and detailed proposals contained in the report and gave the go ahead to proceed towards consultation. However, members felt that the report would benefit from further editing but acknowledged that there was no need for them to see the revised version since it was not going to be subject of Joint Committee's consideration in June.</p> <p>SK reported that there were 3 main strands to this consultation including leaflets, exhibitions and the website. She confirmed that the Issues & Options document and the leaflet would be on the website.</p> <p>The main points emanating from the discussion included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Chairman was anxious to receive a full feedback from the consultation- it was important, therefore, to pay due regard to the way information received during the consultation was analysed;▪ Respondents should be encouraged to come up with proposals/ suggestions for growth with reference to specific named areas, including the reasons underlying the proposals;	JH

		<u>ACTION</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special Leaflet – the proposal for this leaflet was questioned – Cllr Nicols to speak to AB; ▪ Information/Luton Line – MSG would like to have a special edition of these publications which were solely devoted to the consultation issues relating to the Core Strategy and accompanied by a questionnaire; ▪ Public exhibition in the Arndale Centre of Luton – should be extended to cover the first week of September; ▪ Consultation in villages – need to have a focused display at the listed villages – in the same way as other towns; ▪ Assistance with Consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Focus should now be on preparing the ‘rotas’ and booking the staff for the consultation exercise; ii) the need to seek involvement of the trained facilitators at LBC was emphasised; iii) the meeting noted that relevant members of staff from Beds CC could also be made available to assist with enquiries regarding infrastructure issues. ▪ Cash Prizes - members did not support the proposal for a year’s free Council Tax. Instead, they agreed to award two cash prizes of £1,000 each to a resident of Luton and South Bedfordshire respectively. ▪ Breakfast meeting on the 12th June with the Press agreed - timing had yet to be decided - Councillors Nicols, Davis and Scott agreed to attend this meeting - members asked for an advance information pack to be prepared which should also be made available to the Press in advance. ▪ Panel discussion - Members welcomed the idea but wanted to know the nature of the audience it was likely to attract. JH thought that it could be in the format of Radio 4 panel and the purpose of the discussion would be to raise general awareness. SK was asked to come up with the details in consultation with the Press Officers including any information concerning the way the discussion was expected to be conducted. 	<p>Cllr Nicols</p> <p>SK</p> <p>SK</p> <p>SK</p>
2.	<p><u>Progress on Core Strategy Issues & Options Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard copies of the draft Core Strategy document (dated 25th May) were circulated at the meeting. AS explained the key changes introduced to the document and the matters agreed included the following: 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the presentation of the document in a landscape format; ▪ the front cover to be used in this document would generally be the same as that used in the SCI document but the size of the map on the cover should be larger; ▪ on all maps - yellow blobs in Herts & Bucks to specify site areas as in the original version; ▪ historic parks and gardens – small yellow dot, does not show up well; ▪ font size 12 used for this version was fine; ▪ presentation of all maps (2.1 to 2.10) - to be on separate full A4 page and the supporting text on 'Challenges and Opportunities' on the facing page; ▪ all maps to be checked for accuracy and consistency. <p>Other matters discussed under this heading included the number of copies to be printed and the deadline for getting the document printed. There was uncertainty in respect of both and AS was charged to explore further with regard to these matters. In particular, AS was asked to receive quotes for the printing of 5,000 and 10,000 copies of the above report respectively.</p>	<p><u>ACTION</u></p> <p>AS</p>
3.	<p><u>Shared Vision</u></p> <p>Councillor Nicols had circulated a draft vision entitled “Luton and South Beds - the Green Growth Area” prior to this meeting which presented a vision for the GA in 2021. Members felt that the broad substance of the vision was ‘fine’ but it would benefit being presented as a positive statement. In particular, it was agreed that the document would need to be amended to incorporate the following key suggestions from members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the document should be expressed in future tense and it was suggested in this context that the vision for Luton e.g. could be expressed by stating that “Luton will be or Luton will develop into”; ▪ there needs to be an explicit reference to the use of the concept of “sustainable growth” in the introductory part of this statement; ▪ the title “Luton and South Bedfordshire - the Green Area” should not be replicated in the Core Strategy document since the amended text of this statement would appear under the heading of “vision”; ▪ the ‘Objectives’ on Page 11 of the Core Strategy document should be replaced with the amended ‘vision’ statement. <p>AS was entrusted to produce the amended version of the ‘vision’ statement asap reflecting the above points. The revised version should be circulated to Members for their feedback and the final version (reflecting the feedback) should be incorporated in the Core Strategy document.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finally, Members were informed that the reaction of the Luton LPSB was positive to the draft vision. 	<u>ACTION</u>
4.	<p><u>Budgetary Update</u></p> <p>JH reported that we are not ready to report to the June Committee on the 'budget' but indicated that the budgetary position was not too bad and that there was enough money in the current budget to carry out consultations on the Core Strategy. JH confirmed, however, that there was no money to initiate work on major projects like the 'Transport Modelling' and emphasised the importance of attracting LDV funding for such projects.</p> <p>Members expressed conflicting views as to the way forward in resolving this issue. Councillor Davis indicated that new money was unlikely to be available before the Spending Review was completed in October and hence suggested the importance of finding resources from the existing budgets of the authorities. Councillor Nicols, on the other hand, did not appear to share Councillor Davis's views on this issue. However, both Councillor Davis and Councillor Nicols suggested the need to send letters to Henry Cleary (DCLG) and Baroness Andrews respectively airing Members' concerns about the funding issue.</p> <p>Members offered to consider a draft report on the 'Budget' at their next meeting of this Group on 22nd June and the final report on this issue should be made available for Members' consideration at the JP&TC meeting on 21st September 2007.</p>	JH
5.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>i) Work Programme - AS circulated a Draft Work Programme. Members welcomed the preparation of this document. It was agreed that AS will let Members have an updated version of the programme on a monthly basis - highlighting any 'major changes' which might happen in the interim having a bearing on the programme.</p> <p>ii) LDF Diagnostics - BB circulated copies of various attachments received from Addison and Associates on the above subject. JH introduced the paper and reported that the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had designed a support package using a diagnostic tool to enable authorities, with help from an external consultant, to evaluate the LDF function and to identify areas for improvement. These improvements may be put in place by the authority itself or with support from PAS or elsewhere.</p>	AS

	<p>The Diagnostic Review process would entail the Consultant interviewing key people in the various local authorities and preparing a report in relation to the authority's performance as judged against the diagnostic tool. The report would then be sent to the PAS and then from the PAS to the local authorities as well as the Government Office.</p> <p>JH has advised this consultancy about the need for a Scoping meeting first around the end of June and a feedback is currently awaited. Members welcomed this initiative but emphasised the need to reiterate our message/concerns being encountered in progressing our LDF during the interview sessions with the Consultant.</p>	<u>ACTION</u>
iii)	<p>Draft Agenda - The draft agenda for the next meeting of the JP&TC to be held on 15th June was agreed. Regarding the item on 'Gypsies', Members would like a sight of the draft if possible prior to its being finalised.</p>	RW