

**LUTON AND SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE
JOINT COMMITTEE – (SECTION 29 COMMITTEE)**

Minutes of the meeting of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee held at the Town Hall, Luton, on Friday, 29th February 2008 at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor R.J. Davis (Chair)	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Dolling	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Roden	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Rutstein	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Taylor	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Worlding	Luton Borough Council
Councillor McVicar	South Bedfordshire District Council
Councillor Nicols	South Bedfordshire District Council
Councillor Rawcliffe	South Bedfordshire District Council
Councillor Shadbolt	South Bedfordshire District Council
Councillor Scott	Bedfordshire County Council
Councillor Stay	Bedfordshire County Council

CO-OPTEES:	Councillor Jones	BATPC
	Mr. McKillen	Go-East
	Mr. Gelder	LSP

OBSERVERS:	Councillor Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
	Councillor Paternoster	Aylesbury Vale District Council
	Councillor Thake	North Hertfordshire District Council

OFFICERS: Mr. Atkinson (LBC), Mr. Barton (AVDC), Mr. Bhowmick (SBDC), Ms. Brereton (SBDC), Mr. Dove (LBC), Ms. Garner (LBC), Mr. Ironside (NHDC), Ms. Jones (BCC), Mr. Khan (LBC), Ms. Paradine (LBC), Mr. Pierce (SBDC), Mr. Slater (LBC), Mr. Storah (LBC), Mr. Watts (Beds CC).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

Councillor Franks (LBC) Councillor Dolling substituting

(Note: (i) The Chair welcomed John Gelder from the Local Strategic Partnership

(ii) The Chair wished farewell to Tony Pierce (SBDC) giving the Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future.

(iii) The Chair wished farewell to Ian Slater (LBC) giving the Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future.

(iv) The Chair wished farewell to Alan Storah (LBC) giving the Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future.)

2 MINUTES (REF: 2)

Resolved: That subject to:

- (i) The removal of Councillor Worthing as being present at the meeting
- (ii) The inclusion of Councillor Dolling as being present at the meeting
- (iii) Mr. Stanbridge being recorded as an Officer being present at the meeting

the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 29th November, 2007 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (REF: 4)

There were no declarations of interest.

4 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND BUSINESS PLAN (REF: 5.1)

Members were updated on the progress with actions agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Business Plan since the last meeting of the Committee.

Officers advised that it was imperative that the Joint Technical Unit (JTU) was brought together as quickly as possible. Accommodation had been secured in Church Street, Dunstable which was the most suitable location identified and negotiations were proceeding on the terms of lease. ICT services and other minor adaptations were being costed and arranged.

Officers further advised that employee resources had been agreed and affected employees were being consulted. Employee resources were as follows:

Bedfordshire County Council	-	1 seconded full time equivalent (FTE) and funding for 1 FTE
South Bedfordshire District Council	-	3 seconded FTE's, provision of interim project management and administrative support
Luton Borough Council	-	5 seconded FTE's

The manager's post, project management and Halcrow consultancy contract were all funded from the pooled budget that was administered by South Bedfordshire District Council.

The recruitment process for the JTU manager had been put on hold until the co-location had been achieved and decisions regarding Local Government Review had been made. It was intended to bring in an interim management resource for a period of 3–6 months.

Co-location at the Church Street accommodation was hoped to be achieved around Easter, but were dependent upon ICT connections and British Telecom services.

The interim member delivery group had met recently and agreed that a number of the essential technical studies required for the Local Development Framework could be funded from the latest award of GAF 3 grant (Growth Area Fund) from Central Government (including water cycle, resource efficiency and social and community infrastructure studies together with additional costs for transport modelling and master planning in Dunstable and High Town).

Members discussed the issue of reduction of core funding contribution by Luton Borough Council and increase in funding by Bedfordshire County Council.

Resolved: (i) That the progress be noted and actions taken endorsed.

(ii) That the agreement of the interim member delivery group to fund essential technical studies required for the Local Development Framework from the latest award of GAF 3 grant (Growth Area Fund) be endorsed.

(Note: The above item was considered by the Committee in pursuance of Sections 100B(4) and 100E(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair having considered that the item should be dealt with as a matter of urgency in order that there be no delay in the submission of information to Members.)

5 ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO CORE STRATEGY: ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT (REF: 6)

Members were updated on the summary of responses by stake-holders, interest groups, statutory bodies and the general public to the Issues and Options Consultation which had taken place between July and October 2007.

A Member emphasised that the consultation had not been a statutory requirement and that there had been a concerted effort to get the consultation right from the outset and hoped that had been seen by the public.

The following table sets out questions raised and responses given:

Question raised by Member	Officer Response
What percentage of the responses to the 10 options had taken in the full obligation for 43000 homes to regional allocation to year 2031 and how many stopped at 2021 and how would responses be filtered?	Not possible to split the responses in this way. Given where we are in the process may have been a tendency for respondents to focus on short term, rather than long term. We need to plan for where development will go up to 2021 in the first instance whilst providing sufficient land to allow 'headroom' to allow further expansion up to 2031 as well.
What percentage of the responses to the 10 options took account of the amount of land take and the need to allocate industrial zones?	Employment areas zones had not been identified so respondents would not have been able to comment in detail. The emphasis from the consultation was that sufficient infrastructure should be provided before development is built and becomes operational. This applied to employment as much as any other kind of development. Employment development should be provided to complement the new housing.
What weighting would be applied to the analysis of the Growth Committee?	Weighting to comments of stakeholders was up to Members of the Committee.
Was there any intent to undertake demographic analysis of the consultation responses?	This information was available and had not yet been analysed in this way.

The Chair advised that the next stage, the preferred options, the Committee had to take account of the MKSM sub regional strategy housing allocation as well as the residue contained in the emerging East of England Plan (EEP) in the light of the government's view that EEP provides a minimum housing requirement.

Members discussed the consultation process and raised the following points:

- The consultation had not been a statutory requirement
- Extending the consultation period had been prudent
- There had been no real surprises in the responses
- Doing the consultation, involving people and getting their comments was a standard that was hoped to be continued through the appropriate implementation of the contents of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- Concern at the low level of response (2,000)
- Proportionally the response was similar to that of a regional level consultation
- When people were consulted on specific issues the greater their interest would become.

The next consultation, at preferred options stage would be a statutory consultation with a fixed response period of 6 weeks.

Resolved: That the findings of the analysis of consultation response to core strategy: issues and options document be noted.

6 GETTING TO A 'PREFERRED OPTIONS CORE STRATEGY' (REF: 7)

The Joint Committee received a report that:

- set out the approach and methods of involving stakeholders in the testing of options to arrive at preferred set of options for the Core Strategy
- Informed the Joint Committee of the key event and milestones in the production of the Core Strategy:
 - Community Forum and Member Enquiry (May 2008)
 - Publication of draft preferred options (June 2008)
 - Submission of Core Strategy (December 2008)

The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to the need to address the following hard policy issues:

- Confirming the level of growth in housing and jobs achievable for 2021 and 2031
- Gypsies and travellers
- Options for town centres
- Options for number and phasing of urban extensions
- Options for new employment land
- Green belt roll back
- Sustainable development in rural areas
- Integrated transport options

and that the preferred options should address:

- The range of reasonable options considered issue by issue
- A summary review of evidence
- Criteria used for evaluation of options
- General directions for growth
- Locational options for development
- Preferred locational options
- Draft policies for managing development

The Joint Committee were further advised that:

- Infrastructure would need to be sketched out by core strategy stage
- Including a draft policy for managing development

- Not just major allocations - more than blocks on maps and infrastructure and use needed to fit together
- Some consideration should be given to capacity issues.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 2 to the report (Ref: 7) that set out the spatial objectives for Luton and South Bedfordshire Growth Area.

Councillor Stay suggested the following addition to the list of spatial objectives for Luton and South Bedfordshire Growth Area:

- Protect current quality environment
- Maintain identity of settlements to avoid coalescence of communities

J. Gelder (LSP) recommended that the consultation event include an evening session to enable more to contribute.

The Chair requested J. Gelder (LSP) to feed back the comments made by Councillor Stay to his organisation.

Members raised the issue of large-scale development proposals within their authorities.

It was suggested that consideration should be given to green belt policy objectives.

Resolved: (i) That the approach to decide upon the preferred set of options be approved.

(ii) That the proposed event and activities leading to the submission of a Core Strategy to the Secretary of State (as set out at Appendix 1 to (Ref: 7)) be approved.

(iii) That the Local Strategic Partnerships be requested to consider and comment on the draft objectives, (as set out at Appendix 2 to (Ref: 7)) including:

- Protect current quality environment
- Maintain identity of settlements to avoid coalescence of communities

7 MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE (REF: 8)

The Joint Committee received a report which summarised the latest position with regard to the following major transport schemes in the Luton and South Bedfordshire Growth Area:

- **M1 Widening and A5 – M1 Link Including M1 Junction 11a**
- **Luton Dunstable Busway**
- **Other Major Transport Schemes**
 - East Luton Corridor M1 Junction 10a to Airport
 - Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme
 - M1 J10a
 - Luton Northern Bypass/Woodside connection

The Joint Committee was advised that an announcement was expected from Government on the bid to the Community Infrastructure Fund. £200m was available for growth area and growth point schemes for spend between 2009 – 11 and bids had to be submitted by the end of April. The Joint Committee were asked for an expression of their support to be included in the bid to the Community Infrastructure Fund.

The Chair commended the suggested expression of support and advised that the Member Steering Group (MSG) needed to look at this to enable as strong a bid as possible to be submitted. This would be agreed by the MSG following consultation with Member authorities on their priorities.

Members were advised that the Highways Agency had guaranteed that there would not be any road works during the Olympics. Government Office had set up a group to look at traffic in relation to the Olympics. The recommendations from that Group would be reported back to the MSG.

Resolved: (i) That the Major Transport Schemes Update report (Ref: 8) be noted.

(ii) That the final wording of the Joint Committee's expression of support accompanying the bid to the Community Infrastructure Fund be agreed by the Member Steering Group.

8 PROGRESS REPORT ON LUTON & SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY – CONSULTATION DRAFT (REF: 9)

The Joint Committee was updated on progress on the Luton and South Bedfordshire Green Space Strategy:

- Consultation period had begun today (29th February 2008)
- Consultation period end – end of April 2008
- Final document produced – end of May 2008
- Strategy adoption – 13th June 2008
- Consultation documents available on disc

The Chair requested that consultation discs be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref:9) be noted.

(ii) That a copy of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Green Space Strategy Consultation disc be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee.

9 INFORMATION ITEMS (REF: 10)

The Joint Committee considered the MSG minutes of the meetings held on 7th December 2007 and 11th January 2008.

Councillor Thake (North Hertfordshire District Council) conveyed his authority's disquiet at the discourtesy of Luton Borough Council in failing to invite North Hertfordshire to a meeting with Mr Cleary and Bloor Homes. He further advised that North Hertfordshire's Chief Executive would be writing to the Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council and Mr Cleary to register the authority's disappointment and to request that it not happen again.

The Chair gave his assurance that North Hertfordshire District Council would be involved in any future meetings. He explained that the meeting had taken place at the request of Bloor Homes. Luton Borough Council had sought to find out exactly what the proposals were, and would be seeking support from the Minister to agree that the proposals were premature until such a time as a preferred option had been agreed.

Resolved: That the MSG Minutes of 7th December 2007 and 11th January 2008 be noted.

10 HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (REF: 10A)

The Joint Committee were apprised of the work to date to develop the housing trajectory and the current position on housing land supply.

Members were advised of the need to:

- comply with the requirement of PPS3,
- give weight to the trajectory as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications
- note that the housing trajectory was a further piece of evidence to be considered in arriving at the Core Strategy preferred options.

Resolved: (i) That the Luton and South Bedfordshire Housing Trajectory February 2008, including the five year supply of housing be endorsed.

(ii) That the intention to review and regularly update the housing trajectory in light of recent feedback from developers/landowners be noted

(Note: (i) The meeting ended at 11.10 a.m.

(ii) The next meeting of the Joint Committee will be held on Friday 13th June, 2008 commencing at 9.30 am at South Bedfordshire District Council.)