



Housing & Land Delivery Board

Thursday 25 October 2018 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Mike Bird (Chair)
Sarah Middleton

Councillor Sharon Thompson
Councillor George Adamson
Councillor Peter Bilson
Roy Stokes
Simon Marks
Karl Tupling
Councillor David Humphreys
Councillor Ian Courts
Councillor Daren Pemberton
Councillor Richard Overton
Councillor Peter Butlin

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Black Country Local Enterprise
Partnership
Birmingham City Council
Cannock Chase District Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Environment Agency
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
Homes England
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Stratford on Avon District Council
Telford and Wrekin Council
Warwickshire County Council

In Attendance

Gareth Bradford
Carl Craney
Simon Tranter
David Warburton

West Midlands Combined Authority
West Midlands Combined Authority
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Homes England

Item Title
No.

20. Apologies for Absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Bill Blincoe (Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership), Councillor Nic Laurens (Shropshire Council) and Kevin Rogers (West Midlands Housing Association Partnership).

Apologies for absence had also been received from Tim Johnson (City of Wolverhampton Council), Gill Hamer (Marches Local Enterprise Partnership) and Mark Ryder and Geraint Stoneman (Warwickshire County Council).

21. Nominations of Substitutes (if any)

No substitutes had been nominated.

22. Declarations of Interests (if any)

Simon Marks declared a Non-Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item No. 5 (Town Centres Programme) inasmuch as colleagues at the Greater

Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership had been involved actively in this issue.

23. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the deletion of 'slowed down' in the penultimate paragraph on page 5 of Minute No. 14. and the substitution therefor of 'supported'.

24. Town Centres Programme

Gareth Bradford presented a report which updated the Board on the emerging regional town centre programme and which sought agreement to the five town centres to be selected as a vanguard and test bed for the first wave of the programme. The report also sought delegated authority to be granted to the Director of Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Housing and Land to agree the membership of the Regional Town Centre Task Force, the role of which would be to champion and support the town centre programme and to provide hands-on support, where appropriate, to the selected centres.

A supplementary report was circulated at the meeting which identified the five centres which were recommended as the first wave of centres. He explained that Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council had not made bids for consideration for inclusion in the first wave.

Councillor Ian Courts referred to the need for flexibility with the implementation of this initiative. This remark was acknowledged by the Chair who urged the Board to seize the opportunity to re-invent town centres including the acceptance that the retail offer would continue to change and the possibility of town centre living becoming more popular.

Gareth Bradford commented on the need for a structured process to assess the success of the criteria used for the selection of the first wave in order to determine how the criteria could be best adapted for the second wave. This matter would be considered at the Housing and Land Steering Group and subsequently by this Board.

The Board acknowledged the difficulties faced by town centres and the traditional market towns in competing with on-line shopping and out of town stores. Councillor Ian Courts commented on the need to identify which interventions would be successful.

Councillor George Adamson reminded the Board of the work which had already been undertaken by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership on town centres and the opportunity to benefit from this work. He also referred to the 'Designer Village' which was scheduled to open in Cannock in 2020 and the need to ensure that this did not affect detrimentally the town centre.

Councillor Richard Overton reported on a development by Telford and Wrekin Council which had focussed on the night time economy but that

nationally a number of such premises had encountered financial difficulties. He suggested that HM Government needed to consider addressing Business Rates but acknowledged that, in turn, this affected potentially, funding for local government. He supported the concept of promoting the use of town centre premises for residential purposes.

Gareth Bradford reminded the Board of the interdependencies of the report under consideration with the other two reports to be considered at the meeting (Affordability and Social Housing Supply Proposition and Housing and Land Funding) inasmuch as the town centres would play an important part in delivering affordable housing on brownfield sites and on the need for investments to be made carefully in order to generate a return which could, in turn, be re-invested.

Councillor David Humphreys referred to the problems encountered with securing the build out of developments with planning permission and enquired if there was any way this could be controlled. Gareth Bradford suggested that the sector was waiting to see if there would be an announcement in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget Statement on this matter following the independent review of build out rates conducted by the Rt. Hon. Sir Oliver Letwin MP.

Councillor Daren Pemberton advised the Board of the interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) used by Stratford on Avon district Council where developers were encouraged to submit full planning applications rather than outline applications. A recent planning Appeal decision had also supported the Council's stance in disregarding outline planning applications in the calculation of available land supply. The Council also prepared an Action Plan for each development of over 30 units which identified any barriers to development. These Action Plans were updated regularly and, as necessary, he would, as the responsible Cabinet Member, intervene with developers seeking to ensure developments were progressed. He offered to provide a report on this matter to the Board in six months' time.

With regard to the selected five town centre schemes he questioned how success would be measured. Gareth Bradford advised that progress on early delivery and impacts versus the criteria used to determine the first wave would be monitored and reviewed by the Housing and Land Steering Group and this Board in due course and best practice shared consistently.

Resolved:

1. That the first wave of the town centre programme consist of the following five town centres:
 - Bilston;
 - Bordesley Green;
 - East West Bromwich;
 - St Thomas Quarter, Dudley; and
 - St Matthews Quarter, Walsall
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for Housing and Land to agree the membership of the Regional Town Centre Task Force with the type of expertise and sectors to be

- represented on the Task Force and its role as set out in the report;
3. That the offer of Councillor Daren Pemberton to present a report in six months' time on the Action Plan process at Stratford on Avon District Council be accepted;
 4. That examples of best practice be forwarded to the Director of Housing and Regeneration for circulation to partner authorities.

25. Affordable and Social Housing Supply Proposition

Gareth Bradford presented a report which updated the Board on the development of an Affordable and Social Housing Supply Proposition which would address the growing challenge of housing affordability in the region. He advised that a considerable increase in the supply and delivery of affordable homes, in terms of absolute numbers and as a proportion of overall supply, was needed to support the region's ambitions for economic and inclusive growth. He informed the Board that the definition of 'affordable housing' would need to align with the strategic goals of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the Industrial Strategy.

Councillor Daren Pemberton reported on the use of modular buildings at two affordable housing developments within the Stratford on Avon District Council area and on the opportunities to work with Housing Associations to encourage the use of these types of building. Councillor David Humphreys questioned the precise split between the types of affordable housing i.e. social housing for rent, shared ownership etc.

Karl Tupling commended the ambitious approach being taken in the proposal. He advised on the availability of financial assistance which could be provided by Homes England and HM Government to assist in achieving the ambitious plan put forward and committed to working with the WMCA to secure such investment. He reported on the two pre-requisites for housing associations being the availability of land and the need for local authority planning departments to process planning applications expeditiously. He also commented on the opportunity to work with a small number of small and medium sized registered providers as part of this plan to unlock new supply.

Councillor Ian Courts referred to paragraph 2.3 of the report and enquired as to the steps being taken to engage with the development industry. Gareth Bradford assured the Board that discussions were being held with the Chief Executives of major developers and house builders and there was a continuing need to engage with a diversity of house builders to get buy-in for the proposed way forward.

Councillor Richard Overton commented that the provision of social housing was a key issue. With regard to the provision of social housing units as part of a larger development he advised that he favoured the 'pepper pot' approach but accepted that this was not always popular with other residents. He also counselled caution with regard to increasing density on developments if this led to the lack of provision of open space and areas for

children to play. Gareth Bradford reported on a number of good examples of high density schemes within the region. He advised that high density schemes could be successful if the design quality was exemplary.

Councillor Sharon Thompson referred to the need for additional social housing units to be delivered in order to address homelessness, rough sleepers and those families in temporary accommodation. She reminded the Board of the linkages between improved health and housing and on the need to address neighbourhoods and open space. Roy Stokes suggested that any examples of best practice from across the country should be collated and supported the earlier comments regarding housing and health.

Councillor Daren Pemberton referred to the DemoDev algorithm to identify small sites discussed at the last meeting and enquired when such sites would be drawn to the attention of the Board. Gareth Bradford undertook to include an update on this work to the next meeting.

Councillor Peter Butlin commented on recent articles in the national press on the possible introduction of a 'Land Value Tax' under which the increase in the value of land with the benefit of planning permission for residential use would be subject to a tax which could be used for the provision of infrastructure. Gareth Bradford commented that the introduction of a 'Land Value Tax' was only speculation at this time.

Resolved:

1. That the emerging draft supply proposition be noted;
2. That the approach as detailed in the report and annex be approved;
3. That a report on the outcomes from the 'DevoDev' work be submitted to the next meeting.

26. Housing and Land Funding

David Warburton presented a report on the opportunities to enhance the existing processes in the region for the deployment of housing and land funds to make it best in class in the country and some of the challenges with the current approaches operating in the region. Enhancing the efficiency and clarity of deployment of devolved funds and its alignment with the region's housing and regeneration goals was critical to securing new investment from HM Government and achieving key targets on housing delivery, job creation and inclusive growth.

Simon Marks offered to share the work that the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership had carried out in relation to this matter.

Councillor Ian Courts requested an update on the latest position with the use of the funding provided to the Telford and Wrekin Council provided by the Investment Board in October 2017 to deliver 540 housing units across a variety of sites in that area. He also suggested that the region needed to address the need for an electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be provided. The Chair commented that there was a need to identify whether the funding provided to Telford and Wrekin Council had provided 'Value for Money'.

David Warburton updated the Board on the current position with use of the funding provided to Telford and Wrekin Council which included the creation of a pipeline of schemes to utilise the funding. Councillor Daren Pemberton acknowledged that the decision on the provision of funding pre-dated the establishment of the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Team but was concerned whether it was only now being decided what the funding was being spent on. Councillor Ian Courts commented that the decision made no link to the role of Telford and Wrekin in meeting the demands of the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area. Gareth Bradford assured the Board that the paper being discussed today, including the proposal for a single commissioning framework, would help to ensure that, going forward, funding aligned with the overall housing and regeneration strategy and would secure appropriate value for money.

Councillor Richard Overton advised that the sites in the Telford area under consideration were of a complex nature and that land values had increased following the announcement of the provision of funding. He commented that the 'Duty to Co-Operate' issues were a separate matter entirely. Roy Stokes suggested that Telford and Wrekin Council should be encouraged to comply with the latest criteria for use and eligibility for funding.

Councillor David Humphreys asked as to the likelihood of HM Government seeking to recoup any monies awarded to the WMCA for housing purposes. Gareth Bradford reminded the Board that the Housing Deal had required the region to demonstrate to HM Government best endeavours were being made to utilise any devolved funding to achieve the ambitious goals and KPI's detailed in the Housing Deal and to maximise the additional sources of finance

Karl Tupling reported on the intention to create a dedicated Planning Portal which could be used to identify potential development sites within the Walsall – Wolverhampton Corridor. He also informed the Board on proposals by Homes England to simplify its website relating to sources of available funding. He encouraged the Board to utilise national recoverable funds in the first instance on sites which could be developed more easily whilst using dedicated funds for the development of more difficult sites. Gareth Bradford welcomed this approach and commented that it aligned strongly with the proposal being discussed in the paper for a more consistent and efficient approach to housing and regeneration funding in the region, developing a single commissioning framework with a clear set of transparent criteria and a funding portal for key customers to access quickly devolved housing and land funds.

Resolved:

1. That the positive progress in deploying devolved funds to deliver significant housing and employment outputs be noted;
2. That the feedback received from developers, councils and investors on opportunities to improve further access to the different housing and land funds in the region be noted;
3. That the proposal to develop a simpler, efficient and more transparent process that was market leading in the UK for

developers, investors and local councils to access devolved housing and land funds to unlock a step change in housing and employment delivery on brownfield sites be endorsed;

4. That subject to the above, the WMCA work with partners to develop within six months a single clear commissioning framework for all devolved housing and land funds;
5. That subject to the above, the WMCA develop a more consistent approach for deploying all devolved housing and land funds;
6. That the proposal to create a clear set of criteria that enabled the Housing and Land Delivery Board to deploy funding in a manner which was consistent and more closely aligned deployment of land funds with delivering the strategic housing and regeneration of goals of the WMCA and wider goals of the WMCA (e.g. inclusive growth toolkit) be endorsed;
7. That subject to the above, a working draft proposal for a single clear commissioning framework built around a clear set of criteria be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

The meeting ended at 11.28 am.