

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 21st November, 2022.

Present: Cllr Chris Barlow (Chair), Cllr Mohammed Javed (Vice-Chair), Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE

Officers: Simon Grundy, Sarah Robinson, Raymond Sullivan (F, D&R) John Angus (C S, E &C); Rachel Harrison, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, (CS)

Also in attendance: Faheem Farouki

Apologies: Cllr Luke Frost

**PLA
27/22** **Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

**PLA
28/22** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**PLA
29/22** **Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Place Select Committee meeting which was held on the 17 October 2022 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 17 October 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**PLA
30/22** **Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations - Progress report for the previously completed Planters in Residential Streets review.**

The Select Committee considered a second progress update including assessments of progress following the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish). The overall aim of the review had been to investigate the options for retaining, maintaining, or removing planters in residential streets. There was one outstanding recommendation in the report.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

Members were pleased with the assistance of Sep Culant in providing equipment and staff which resulted in the planters being prepared far earlier than originally forecast, which maintained the engagement of the local residents.

- Members requested a list of which planters were being worked on and what work was being completed on them.
- Members commented that residents were happy with how the planters looked.

AGREED that the Progress Update be noted and the assessments of progress be confirmed fully achieved

PLA 31/22 Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations - Progress report for the previously completed Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings review.

The Select Committee considered a third progress update including assessments of progress following the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Fire Safety of High-Rise Residential Buildings (Task & Finish). The overall aim of the review had been to establish the residential buildings in question and identify any areas of concern in terms of fire risk, particularly around the type of cladding used on Grenfell Tower. There was one outstanding recommendation in the report.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- The SBC Building Control Manager provided the Committee with the update that the Government's public enquiry had not yet concluded but was due to be completed in the near future. There had been major changes to building regulation legislation with officers being required to undertake further training.
- Members queried why sprinklers were not included as standard when new buildings were built. The SBC Building Control Manager replied that the Council were working closely with the Fire Brigade looking at the impact of fires on community and schools.
- Members asked if building regulation would be brought back in house. The SBC Building Control Manager responded the Building Safety Regulator requested the Local Authorities look at high rises in their areas as there were not enough resources within the private sector.

AGREED that:

- 1) the Progress Update be noted and the assessments of progress be confirmed fully achieved.
- 2) An update would be brought to a future Member briefing session.

PLA 32/22 Scrutiny Review of Planning (Development Management) & Adoption of Open Space

The Select Committee were provided with the opportunity to question a local planning agent about their experience of working with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) Planning team and other Local Authorities in the area.

Questions and answers were as follows:

How has the service changed over time?

- Before Covid communication with SBC's Planning team was consistent and time deadlines were all met. During Covid there were some communication issues, however post Covid (SBC) were quick to recover the delays and were being proactive regarding planning applications and advice. In the Tees Valley Region other Local Authorities were taking 6 weeks to assign an application to an officer and would take one year to determine an application.

Targets for application processing

- The deadline for planning applications was extended due to Covid resulting in applications taking longer.
- Members questioned whether planning applications being moved online would have any shortcomings for agents. The agent replied that they already uploaded his applications online and felt online applications had no shortcomings.

Why are other Local Authorities not replicating Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's best practice?

- The agent didn't know why they were not. One Local Authority in the region had significantly improved their planning service.

Staffing

- SBC's planning team's staffing problems had been resolved with the team recently hiring a new Planning Support Officer. In the region other planning teams had been stagnate in terms of employment due to there being a shortage of planning officers in the country.

Pre application advice charging

- In the Tees Valley Region most of the Councils charged for pre application advice with Stockton-on-Tees being only one of three who did not charge for pre application advice.

Review

- The site visits were scheduled for Monday 28th November 2022.
- A number of developers had been contacted to fill in a questionnaire about SBC's planning service.
- Members commented that residents had anxiety surrounding maintenance companies and often complained about paying the maintenance companies. The link officer replied that maintenance companies had contractual obligations and the Council had enforcement powers to look into issues up to 10 years from substantial completion.
- Members questioned who determined if open space was maintained by a management company or the Council. The link officer replied it was the developer's decision who they chose to maintain the open space.
- Members requested examples of the maintenance conditions.
- Members asked if SBC could share knowledge with the other Tees Valley Local Authorities. The link officer replied that Planning Managers from other Local Authorities meet quarterly to share best practice and discuss issues.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**PLA
33/22**

Chair's Update

The Chair had no further updates.

**PLA
34/22**

Work Programme 2022-2023

Consideration was given to Work Programme.

Members requested an update regarding the Review of Burial Provision. The

Scrutiny Officer replied they would contact the link officer.

The next meeting would be held on 19 December 2022 and would be an informal session.

AGREED that the Work Programme and Chair's update be noted.