

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hoggood (Leader of the Council)

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), T Henderson, C Hood, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

1 Public Questions

There were no questions from the public.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations on interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

4 Submission of Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document and Revised Statement of Community Involvement [Key Decision: REG/02/2023]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which advised Cabinet on the representations received following the final statutory consultation on the Publication Draft of the Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document (M&WDPD) and sought Cabinet's approval to recommend that Council agree the Publication Draft of the Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document for Submission at its meeting on 21 June 2023.

The report also sought approval of a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which sets out how stakeholders are involved in local plan and neighbourhood plan preparation and the determination of planning applications (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor E Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships extended her thanks to the Corporate Director and all her staff for bringing the vast, complex and detailed document to cabinet. The County Durham Plan was adopted in October 2020 and the Minerals Waste Policy and Development Plan document provided additional detail and clarity for new development to be acceptable. The Council had engaged with the public and stakeholders at every stage and made changes wherever possible. The document was sound, ready for detailed scrutiny and for examination in public. Councillor Scott also commented the importance of the way in which the Council consulted which has changed over the past two years. Consultation was now carried out using newer more modern techniques along with some of the more traditional approaches. It was important that the statement of community involvement reflected this.

Councillor J Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets explained that the Minerals Waste Policy and Development Plan would provide for minerals extraction and waste management to provide the infrastructure and buildings the County needed. The Council always placed great emphasis on the importance of consultation and this was recognised in the changes made to the statement of community involvement.

Resolved:

That the recommendations detailed in the report be agreed.

5 Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought Cabinet's approval to commence consultation on the first draft of the Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document. The document supported the County Durham Plan, adopted in October 2020 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor E Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships explained that the County Durham Plan was adopted in October 2020 and the Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document supplemented the content of Plan. The plan supported the Council's ambition to be net zero carbon by 2045, and responded directly to the climate emergency. It set out guidance to ensure that solar panels were sited, designed and of a scale which would ensure that they did not harm the County Durham greenbelt, biodiversity, heritage assets and would protect the County's best agricultural land.

Councillor J Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets commented that the Solar Energy Supplementary Planning

Document provided detail and clarity for acceptable solar development. It would help provide certainty for solar farm developers and reassurance for residents.

Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change commented that the Solar Energy Supplementary Planning Document ensured protection of important landscapes and community interests which was a difficult balance to achieve. The planning document provided guidance that high quality farmland should not be used for solar farms. It also suggested that where lower quality agricultural land was being used, that it continued to provide for grazing and ecological benefits, where possible. Councillor Wilkes explained that the Council were tied to nation policy framework, however, this document reminded developers of their obligations to our communities and to consider community benefit. Referring to a scheme in Scotland, Councillor Wilkes felt that the current planning system was flawed and urged the government to place a legal obligation on renewable energy farms to provide significant financial community benefit, given the significant impacts such developments had on local communities.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

6 Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought Cabinet's approval to commence consultation on the latest draft of the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document. The document supported the County Durham Plan, adopted in October 2020. (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor E Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships explained that the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document set out guidance to ensure that new development balanced the needs of cyclists, motorists and pedestrians by requiring charge points for vehicles on all new houses. The Council recognised the importance of consultation and would seek views on the document to inform the final content.

Councillor J Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets explained that the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document would add detail and clarity for developers and reassurance for residents.

Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change commented that the Council, under the previous administration, had waited a long time for a robust parking policy for new housing, which never came. The work of the Joint Administration and Cabinet would clear up the concerns raised by communities over many years of estate roads being too narrow and pavements blocked with cars.

The proposed policy would fix long standing failures made by the previous administration and give guidance and instructions required. Councillor Wilkes thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their extensive work and for taking on the views of Cabinet. Parking policy would ensure that housing would be designed correctly from the beginning and would help restrict future garage conversion where alternative parking provision had not been identified. This would also ensure that the Council were not using its resources to fix parking problems. Councillor Wilkes urge residents to support the Council and engage within the consultation to help eradicate these problems once and for all.

Resolved:

That the recommendations detailed in the report be agreed.